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**A MYRTLE IN THE FOREST: DISPLACEMENT AND RENEWAL  
IN MEDIEVAL HISPANO-JEWISH LITERATURE**

**JONATHAN PHILIP DECTER**

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
Of requirements for  
The degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
In Medieval Jewish Studies

The Graduate School  
of  
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America  
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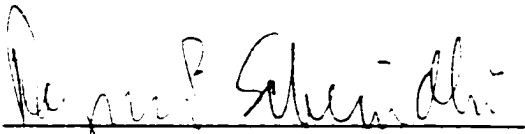
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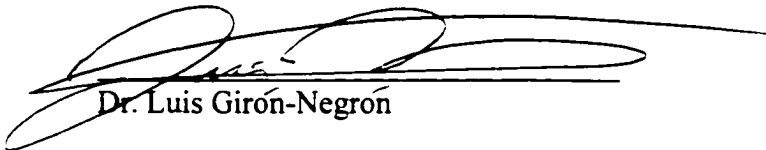
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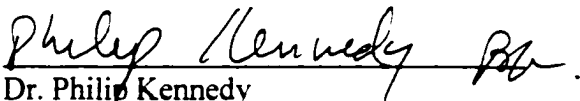
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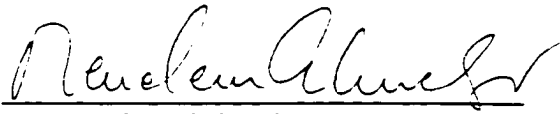
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# A MYRTLE IN THE FOREST: DISPLACEMENT AND RENEWAL IN MEDIEVAL HISPANO-JEWISH LITERATURE

Jonathan Philip Decter

## Abstract

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries constituted a period of transition for Iberian Jewry and a vibrant period for Hebrew writing. Growing intolerance toward Jews in Islamic Andalusia and the southward expansion of the Christian *Reconquista* led to the migration of Jews from the Islamic to the Christian domains. This dissertation treats attitudes toward this cultural transition as expressed in Hebrew *belles-lettres* from the period, examining how authors convey attitudes toward the Islamic and Christian environments. The focal authors treated are those who cross the border between the Islamic and Christian worlds during their lifetimes and those born in the Christian environment whose writing remains at least partially grounded in literary forms associated with Arabic. The dissertation provides close readings of Hebrew poetry and rhymed prose fictional narratives (*maqāmāt*) that elucidate reactions toward the cultural shift, reactions that range from estrangement in Christendom and nostalgia for the Islamic past to comfort in the Christian environment and a partial repudiation of values cultivated by Jews in the Islamic context. The methods used to cull attitudes toward transition out of these texts are grounded in techniques of literary analysis that have not played prominent roles in scholarship on medieval Hebrew literature. By systematically treating topics such as poetic imagery, poetic and narrative space, landscape, and form, it is shown that Hebrew authors develop methods of delineating cultural boundaries between Muslim and Christian Spain. Furthermore, they distinguish between past and present, idealize and lampoon cultural values of the past, express nostalgia and advocate cultural redefinition. The texts are also read within the context of other literatures of the Iberian Peninsula, stressing modes of expression adapted from Arabic literature and the increasing affinity of Hebrew writing for the burgeoning vernacular literature of Christian Europe.

*In loving memory of Lawrence K. Horberg*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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كَيْتَ خَلُو الندي و رب السماج و حبيب النفوس و الارواح

Benjamin Gampel read early and more recent drafts of chapters and discussed them with much thought and encouragement. I appreciate all of his warmth and kindness throughout the years. Soon after this dissertation was defended, Dr. Magda al-Nowaihi, one of my original advisers, passed away. Even while she was ill, she was kind enough to read parts of this dissertation and made many valuable suggestions. She was an inspiring figure who is sorely missed. Philip Kennedy kindly stepped in for the defense and read the dissertation with care and insight. While I was completing the dissertation in Jerusalem, I enjoyed the support and attention of Matti Huss and Yosef Yahalom, both of whom read drafts of chapters and offered many helpful comments.

My family and friends know well the efforts that have gone into this project. I cannot imagine these years without them all. I wish to thank my parents for their love and support as I worked steadily through my doctorate. Adam, Margie, Noah and Jacob provided a safety-net at key moments for which I am very grateful. My grandparents, aunts, uncles and many cousins have always provided much fun and been extremely encouraging. I owe much gratitude to my dear friend רבנו מצענים (may he find home in this new path) who heard from me at moments of doubt.

Most of all, I wish to thank my wife Nikki who, I am happy to say, played no role in the typesetting of this manuscript, but was always an attentive reader, an outstanding editor, a patient listener and a loving companion. She is my myrtle in the forest, ahavati, kalati, ra'ayati, sherti, habībati, hayāti wā rūhi.

# **A MYRTLE IN THE FOREST: DISPLACEMENT AND RENEWAL IN MEDIEVAL HISPANO-JEWISH LITERATURE**

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### LITERATURE AND HISTORY

The interdependence of literary and historical scholarship is becoming increasingly apparent. While historians grapple with the implications of literary criticism on their ability to reconstruct events of the past, literary scholars' interpretative power is checked by their knowledge of social and historical contexts. The dialectical nature of these disciplines is evident in scholarship treating the Jews in the middle ages. Some of the fiercest debates that have raged in this field may be reduced to problems of interpretation, both of texts that have been viewed traditionally as "literary" as well as those that have been considered "historical." Do the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles convey facts about the events of 1096<sup>1</sup> or does their preconceived structure and affected style preclude the possibility of retrieving actual information about the events?<sup>2</sup> Do the records of the Spanish National Inquisition offer an accurate record of crypto-Jewish practices<sup>3</sup> or does their status as confessions obtained under duress relegate their contents to accusation and fiction?<sup>4</sup> Do references in medieval Hebrew poems to erotic desire for a male beloved indicate homosexual practice<sup>5</sup> or literary fashion?<sup>6</sup> Such problems, often intractable, are

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Chazan, "The Facticity of Medieval Narrative: a Case Study of the Hebrew First Crusade Narratives." *AJS Review* 16 (1991): pp. 31-56.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots." *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): pp. 40-52; idem., "The Representation of Reality in the Narratives of 1096." *Jewish History* 13 (1999): pp. 37-48.

<sup>3</sup> Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial. The Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, translated by Yael Guiladi (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Ben Zion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 15th to the Early 17th Century According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*, second ed. (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Norman Roth, "'Deal Gently with the Young Man' Love of Boys in Medieval Hebrew Poetry in Spain." *Speculum* 57 (1982): pp. 20-51.

<sup>6</sup> Nehemia Allony, "ha-Sevi ve-ha-gamal be-shirat sefarad ." *Ošar yehudei sefarad* 4, no. (1961): pp.

always dependent upon how scholars conceive of the relationship between texts and their contexts.

This dissertation analyzes a body of literary texts emanating from a transitional period of Iberian Jewish history. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed a shift of the Hispano-Jewish population from territories under Islamic domination to those under Christian control. Beginning with the early stages of the Christian *Reconquista* (after 1085) and continuing with the invasions of the Almoravids (1090) and the Almohads (1140s), Andalusian Jews, intellectuals among them, emigrated to the Christian North and to destinations beyond the Iberian Peninsula in the Christian and Islamic worlds. Throughout this period, Jewish authors composed Hebrew *belles-lettres* in the forms of poetry and rhymed prose fictional narratives.

The dissertation endeavors to read the Hebrew literature of twelfth and thirteenth century Spain as a corpus emanating from a culture in transition. By focusing on literary topoi (such as poetic imagery, landscape, form, and the use of narrative space), the dissertation shows how Hebrew authors delineate borders between the cultures of Islamic and Christian Spain and express attitudes toward cultural transition ranging from desperate nostalgia for the Islamic past to acculturation in the Christian environment. By situating these texts within the contexts of other literatures of the Iberian Peninsula, the dissertation highlights the specific modes of expression adapted from Arabic and European vernacular literatures. Whereas the environment of Arabic literature is shown to lend Hebrew writing its poetics of loss, estrangement and nostalgia, European vernacular literature infuses some Hebrew writing with a new spirit in the post-Andalusian environment. Studying the changing orientation of Hebrew texts between Arabic and European literatures is essential for understanding the cultural identities of Jews caught between Islamic and Christian cultural environments.

The situation of Jews between Islamic and Christian Spain may be abstracted into a more general theory of a minority negotiating between two majority cultures. First, upon leaving the first majority culture, the minority group must decide whether to maintain its internal cohesiveness as distinct from the second majority population. Second, the minority group must determine to what extent the language, manners and values of the first dominant culture are integral to its identity in the context of the new cultural hegemony. Third, the minority group must determine to what extent the cultural values of the new society may be adopted without rupturing the group's distinctiveness and cohesiveness.

With respect to the Jews of the Iberian peninsula, many pertinent questions should be considered. How do Jews view and represent the Christian present over against the Islamic past? Do Andalusian Jews see Arabic mannerisms as integral to their identities or is their "Arabness" an outer skin that is easily shed? Do they cling to the cultural values, customs and language of the past (Andalusian and Andalusian-Jewish) or adopt those of the new culture (Christian Spain)? To what extent do hopes for the renewal of Jewish communal structures depend upon identification with the past? What is the place of Andalusia in the collective memory of Jews in the post-Andalusian period? What range of attitudes toward the new environment exists and how are these attitudes expressed? Before turning to the analysis of poetry and prose, more detail will be given concerning the period, its literature and some perspectives of historians and scholars of literature.

## **A PERIOD OF TRANSITION**

In its broadest outlines, the transition of Hispano-Jewish society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries involved the redistribution of the Jewish population from Islamic to Christian territories as Jews emigrated and political borders were redrawn. A schematic



vision of this process might read as follows: Prior to 1085, the vast majority of Iberian Jewry lived under Muslim control in Andalusia, which retained an Arabic-Islamic character from the Islamic invasion of 711 through the periods of the Umayyad Amirs (756-928),<sup>7</sup> the Umayyad caliphate (929-1031) and the Taifa kingdoms (1031-1091). 1085 marks the capture of Islamic Toledo by the forces of the *Reconquista*, bringing part of Andalusian Jewry within the sphere of Christian domination. One year later, Almoravid troops--originally petitioned by al-Mu'atamid Ibn 'Abbad, the tottering king of Seville, to aid him in his struggle against the Christians--entered Andalusia and proceeded to dismantle the numerous Taifa kingdoms, instituting a single state under Almoravid rule. During the Almoravid period, Andalusian Jewry began to decline, leading some individuals to emigrate to Christian Spain and other destinations. Almoravid hegemony collapsed when the Almohad revolution, which had already deposed the Almoravids in North Africa, seized control of Andalusia in 1147. The intolerant and fanatical Almohads persecuted the Jews of Andalusia leading to forced conversion and mass flight, mainly to Christian Spain, but also to destinations in Egypt, the Maghreb, the Islamic East, Provence, Italy and England. The Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were thus transferred from Islamic to Christian hegemony as they emigrated from south to north and as the political border of Christian Spain moved southward. In Christian Spain, Jews retained some aspects of their Andalusian culture while novel developments occurred in intellectual and spiritual life.

This schematic vision is problematic on a number of levels. First, scholarship has shown that Andalusia and Northern Spain, Islamdom and Christendom, Arabic and Romance, were never hermetically sealed off from each other.<sup>8</sup> Bulliet estimates that by 961, only one half of the population of Andalusia would have adopted Islam, reaching

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<sup>7</sup>Dates of Islamic history in Spain generally follow Mahmoud Makki, "The Political History of al-Andalus (92/711-897/1492)," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 3-87; some of these dates are marked slightly differently in other scholarly works.

<sup>8</sup>for this and some of the following information, see Consuelo López-Morillas, "Language," in *The Literature of al-Andalus*, edited by Maria Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells

perhaps eighty percent by 1100.<sup>9</sup> Islamic historical narratives and jurisprudence reveal that Muslim officials sometimes spoke a local, Latin-derived vernacular and that the Qur'ānic story of Joseph was recited in Andalusia in Romance as late as 1120. Looking at the major Hebrew poets of the Spanish "Golden Age"<sup>10</sup> (late tenth through the middle of the twelfth centuries)--Samuel ha-Nagid, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, Moses Ibn Ezra and Abraham Ibn Ezra--only the first two may be said to have lived in a "strictly" Arabic environment. But even Ibn Gabirol was part of an environment that was still largely Christian, both linguistically and culturally. He writes in a poem complaining about contemporary Jews' disregard for learning the Hebrew language, "half of them speak *Edomit*<sup>11</sup> while the other half (speaks) the language of *Qedar*<sup>12</sup> that darkens."<sup>13</sup> With the exception of the kingdom of Granada following the mid-thirteenth century, Andalusia always retained a Christian population and was penetrated by Latin derived vernaculars in Christian and non-Christian environments.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the survival of Christian culture in the Arabic environment, the impact of Arabic literary culture on the emergence of Spanish literature has become increasingly accepted.<sup>15</sup> Even after the *Reconquest*, many cities engulfed by Christian Spain, notably Toledo, retained their Arabic and Islamic character, preserving Arabic as a spoken or at least a written language for centuries

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 33-59.

<sup>9</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> see the section on periodization below regarding the concept of the "Golden Age."

<sup>11</sup> i.e. "Christian-speak," probably some Latin-derived vernacular.

<sup>12</sup> A descendant of Ishmael, thus Arabic.

<sup>13</sup> see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shira ha-ivrit be-sefarad ha-muslemim*, edited, supplemented and annotated by Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the article by López-Morillas, consult : Yosef Yahalom, "New Clues from an Encounter with Old Spanish," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden, Boston, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1999), vol. I, pp. 561-67; David J. Wasserstein, "The Language Situation in al-Andalus," in *Studies on the Muwaššah and the Kharja (Proceedings of the Exeter International Colloquium)*, edited by Alan Jones and Richard Hitchcock (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1991), 1-15; S. M. Stern, "Les vers finaux en espagnol dans les muwaššahs hispano-hebraïques: una contribution à l'étude du vieux dialecte espagnol 'mozarabe'," *Al-Andalus* 13 (1948): pp. 299-346.

<sup>15</sup> Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*

Second, many mysteries concerning the decline of Andalusian Jewish culture remain unresolved. Various moments have been identified as “ends”<sup>16</sup> of periods. The historical narrative of Eliahu Ashtor’s influential *The Jews of Moslem Spain*<sup>17</sup> oddly concludes in the year 1085 with the Christian conquest of Toledo, at least 75 years before the Jewish presence in Islamic Spain ceases to be detectable. Ashtor attributes the reason for decline to the incursions of the *Reconquista* only, omitting the Almoravid expansion that would disrupt the Taifa kingdoms and transform the political climate of Islamic Andalusia only one year after the fall of Toledo. Ashtor’s narrative concludes with the beginning of the end of Jewish life in Islamic Spain, or at least one beginning of one end, and not with the end itself.

The history of the Jews in Almoravid and Almohad Andalusia has never attracted the attention of scholars in the same way as the Taifa period. Excluded from Ashtor’s history, one of the most extensive treatments remains a discussion on “intellectual currents during the Reconquest” in Baer’s *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, which suggests that Jewish courtiers sought to continue their customary life under Almoravid hegemony or to begin similar careers in Christian Spain.<sup>18</sup> For Ashtor and Baer, it would seem that Almoravid Andalusia is already the era of the Jews of Christian Spain, despite the fact that Jews continued to live and study largely as they had during the Taifa period.

The Almoravid invasion engendered a more dramatic shift for Christians than for Jews; struggles between the Almoravids and the *Reconquista* led to the persecution of Christians, resulting in voluntary emigration to the Christian North and incidents of mass deportation to North Africa. In comparison, the status of Jews declined only moderately.

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

<sup>16</sup>see also the dissertation of Gil Anidjar, “Our Place in al-Andalus”: Declinations of Context in Arab-Jewish Letters” (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1998), which is discussed further below.

<sup>17</sup> Eliahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 3 vols. in 2 with new introduction and bibliography by D. J. Wasserstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, translated by Louis Schiffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961-66) p. 64 ff.

During the Taifa period, the small courts of the numerous kingdoms required many minds and bodies to execute their administration, thus making Jews attractive and necessary appointees.<sup>19</sup> The centralization of power following the breakdown of the Taifa kingdoms led to a competition for government positions leaving Jewish grandees displaced. Still, Jewish doctors, engineers and intellectuals continued to be employed in some measure, as in the court of ‘Ali Ibn Yūsuf (1106-43).<sup>20</sup> This same amir, however, placed limitations on Jews’ freedom of movement and burdened them with heavy fines.<sup>21</sup> Despite the existence of distinct Jewish quarters in certain cities, it is also clear that Jews and Muslims remained highly integrated, most often in business relations but also, as some *fatwas* indicate, in residential areas.<sup>22</sup> In the well-known market regulations of Ibn ‘Abdūn<sup>23</sup> (Seville, early twelfth century), Jews are precluded from slaughtering meat for Muslims, being served by Muslims in the public baths and from holding positions in the police force (*ṣāhib al-shurṭā*); Muslims are forbidden from selling books to Jews. Such regulations reveal the deep interpenetration of Jews and Muslims in urban society even as they point to a growing segregationist ideology.

Although Jewish merchants remained active during the first half of the twelfth century, the arrival of the Almoravids seems to have reduced their commercial opportunities.<sup>24</sup> The only evidence of the physical persecution of Jews during the

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<sup>19</sup> David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Qādarī Būṭshīsh, *Mabāḥiṭh fi al-tārīkh al-‘ijumā’ī li-l-maghrib wa-l-andalus khilāl ‘aṣr al-murābiṭīn* (Beirut: Dar al-ṭalī’a li-l-ṭabā’a wa-l-nathr, 1998), p. 95; some Jewish dwellings actually bordered mosques.

<sup>23</sup> See the English translation by Bernard Lewis in Olivia Remie Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 175-79. Similar stringencies are also observed in the North African context: see Būṭshīsh, *Mabāḥiṭh fi al-tārīkh*....., p. 101.

<sup>24</sup> Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 93. After the activity in Andalusia of the Egyptian trader Ḥalfon ben Natanel in the 1130s, the Geniza and other records cease to document Jewish merchant activity; Constable suspects that this is the result of a decline in business more than a decrease in documentation.

Almoravid period recounts the storming of Jewish homes in Cordoba in 1134-35, leading to a number of deaths and the seizing of property; a similar attack may have affected the Jews of Granada twenty days later.<sup>25</sup> Jewish safety was thus no more compromised than during the Taifa period, which witnessed the more extreme massacre of Granadan Jewry in 1066. There is no noteworthy decline in intellectual activity during the Almoravid period; Isaac Alfāsi, Judah Halevi, Joseph Ibn Saddīq, Solomon Ibn Ṣaḡbal, Abraham Ibn Ezra and Moses Maimonides were all active (or at least educated) in Almoravid Andalusia.

Soon after the Almoravid invasion, numerous Jewish notables, Moses Ibn Ezra prominent among them, began to emigrate to the Christian North, perhaps because their lives and property were severely disrupted in the aftermath of the attacks, because their esteemed positions put them at particular risk as associates of the former regime, or simply because they feared worse.<sup>26</sup> Emigration out of Andalusia continued throughout the Almoravid period, including the notable departures of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi in 1137 and 1140 respectively.<sup>27</sup> A thorough history of the Jews in Almoravid Spain remains to be written.

Even more obscure remain the precise effects of the Almohad takeover of Andalusia with the first troops crossing the Straits of Gibraltar in 1125 though not securing power until 1147. Scholars such as Munk and Halkin attribute the forced conversion of the Jewish population to the early years of the Almohad attacks.<sup>28</sup> They believe that there was an (undocumented) violent persecution during the reign of Ibn

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<sup>25</sup>Only the Cordoba attack is mentioned by Mark Cohen, "Persecution, Response and Collective Memory: The Jews of Islam in the Classical Period," in *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity*, edited by Daniel Frank (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 147, note 6. Būṭshīsh, *Mabāḥiṭh fī al-tārīkh*... p. 101, mentions the Cordoba attack and also the incident in Granada, relying upon an anonymous source.

<sup>26</sup>It is unclear why Constable states that "The year 1090 brought another purge in Granada (reminiscent of the riots in 1066):" *Trade and Traders*... p. 93. The motivation of the Almoravid attack of the city was hardly anti-Jewish in character. The political change affected Christian emigration more profoundly.

<sup>27</sup>Although some believe that they fled as a result of Almohad violence and persecution; see below.

<sup>28</sup>Abraham Halkin, "le-Toledot ha-shemad be-yemei ha-almohadin," in *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume* (New York, 1953), pp. 101-10.

Tūmart (d. 1130) that forced Jews to accept conversion, flight or martyrdom. Because of these persecutions, the theory goes, Abraham Ibn Ezra left Andalusia in 1140 and Moses Maimonides' family fled Cordoba for Fez over a decade later. If this is correct, then the Maimonides' family's choice of Fez (also under Almohad control) would suggest that the persecutions were not endemic to the entire Almohad empire, or that the family was able to elude being detected as Jews.<sup>29</sup> The family's emigration out of Fez in 1165 may signal a deepening threat. In a revision, Corcos-Abulafia argues that the conversions to Islam in the early Almohad period were voluntary, that the Almohads generally continued the policies of the Almoravids, upholding the tolerant Islamic posture toward other monotheistic faiths and strengthening the economic position of Jews in trade. In the author's view, the status of Jews deteriorated only in 1165 following the execution of a Jewish notable, initiating a short period of unrest and forced conversion throughout the Almohad territories.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, Maimonides' family left Andalusia for Morocco voluntarily and fled from Morocco to Egypt only during the persecution after 1165. The responses of other historians to this revision have been mixed.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>On the other hand, the situation may have been generally worse in the Maghreb than in Andalusia. One letter of an Almerian trader describes widespread killings in Tlemcen, Sijilmisa and Marrakesh. See Constable, *op. cit.*, p. 96, note 59. The evidence is contradictory. Others maintain that Maimonides (and his family) converted outwardly to Islam, making their emigration to Fez possible despite the violence: see Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 100.

<sup>30</sup>D. Corcos-Abulafia, "Le-ofi yahasam shel shelītei ha-al-muwahhādūn li-yehudim," *Zion* 32 (1967): pp. 137-60.

<sup>31</sup>The responses are summarized nicely by Olivia Renie Constable, *Trade and Traders...*, p. 95 note 58: "The theory of Almohad oppression is widely accepted, although D. Corcos Abulafia has argued that the Almohad period did not represent a time of unmitigated Jewish persecution. He saw a period of forced conversions and repression only under the rule of Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf I (1163-84) (Corcos Abulafia, "The Attitude of the Almohadic Rulers Toward the Jews," *Zion* 32 (1967) pp. 137-60). Stillman considered this attempt at revision to be "not altogether convincing" but Roth has called Corcos-Abulafia's theory "brilliant" (Norman A. Stillman, "Aspects of Jewish Life in Islamic Spain," in *Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middle Ages*, Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 73; Roth "Some Aspects of Muslim-Jewish Relations in Spain" *Estudios en homenaje a D. Claudio Sánchez Albornoz* (Buenos Aires 1983, II p. 179). Other scholars, including R. Le Tourneau, have proposed that Jewish persecutions continued beyond 1184, and certainly through the reign of Abu Yūsuf Ya'qūb (1184-99) (Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the 12th and 13th centuries*, Princeton, 1969 pp. 57, 77). H. Z. Hirschberg, on the other hand, considered that by the middle of the 12th century, after the first years of Almohad rule, Jewish tribulations had abated (*A History of the Jews in North*

Still, it does not seem that even the Almohad persecutions, whenever they occurred, actually brought Jewish life in Islamic Spain to an absolute end. Although we know of no Jewish intellectual life from the Almohad period, Islamic Spain does not appear as devoid of Jews. It should be remembered that the poet Ibn Sahl al-ʿIsraʿīlī (1212-51), a famous convert to Islam, was born in Almohad Seville to Jewish parents.<sup>32</sup> Also, when Andalusian cities were conquered by Ferdinand III and Alfonso X during the thirteenth century, Jewish landholdings in Andalusia increased. It seems unlikely that Jews migrated from other communities in the Christian North to settle Andalusian cities completely devoid of Jews. The presence of Jews in Andalusia is proved by a writ issued by Alfonso X to Joseph Shabbetai in 1255. Following the conquest of Almohad Seville, the monarch confirmed that the Jew would retain the property rights “which he had enjoyed under the Moors...behind the stalls of the Jewish money-changers.”<sup>33</sup> Clearly, a Jewish population had survived the Almohad invasions and continued to live in Andalusia as Jews, though it is possible that they had temporarily converted to Islam to do so. Nonetheless, the Almohad period does mark an “end” of sorts, even if it is not an absolute one.

The shift of the Jewish population from Islamdom to Christendom in the Iberian Peninsula remains relatively unexplored. The only subjects to be treated thus far have been the position of legal scholars, philosophers and exegetes between the Jewish academies of Andalusia and Northern France and, on a more limited level, the encounter between the “indigenous” Jewish population of Christian Spain with Jews of Andalusian stock.

In Baer’s view, the communities of Christian Spain succeeded in retaining communal structures inherited from Andalusia while Jewish religiosity progressed from

*Africa*. [Leiden, 1974], p. 136.”

<sup>32</sup>On Ibn Sahl in general, see James Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 304-07.

decadent rationalism to literalist exegesis and pious mysticism, developments that Baer admires and applauds.<sup>34</sup> A more nuanced view that avoids such tenuous dichotomies as “faith versus reason” is offered by Bernard Septimus’ *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*,<sup>35</sup> which positions a thirteenth century *halakhist* of Toledo between the intellectual traditions of Andalusia and Northern France. Septimus sketches the postures of Hispano-Jewish intellectuals between rationalism and literalism and their place within the Maimonidean controversy, concluding that their attitudes were not always black and white. Similarly, in an article, Septimus shows that Nahmanides, the first prominent Hispano-Jewish intellectual in Christian Europe, usually portrayed as a strict anti-rationalist and anti-Maimonidean, really possessed a more ambivalent, sometimes laudatory, attitude toward rationalism, allegorical exegesis, Maimonides, and the Andalusian tradition as a whole.<sup>36</sup> Yom Tov Assis has also considered the *halakhic* shifts negotiated by thirteenth century Aragonese rabbis between the customs of Andalusia and Northern France.<sup>37</sup> Finally, in another article, Septimus explores the tension between the traditional Jewish community of Catalonia and the rising body of Andalusian aristocrats.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the work completed thus far has focused on issues internal to Jewish autonomy, and intellectual and legal history.

<sup>33</sup>Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain...*, I, p. 113.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*; see also the assessment of Baer’s perspective in the volume’s introduction by Benjamin Gampel.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Ma and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Septimus, “‘Open Rebuke and Concealed Love’ Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition,” in *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, edited by Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 11-34.

<sup>37</sup>see, for example, his discussion of the shift in Ibn Adret’s thought concerning polygamy, “Sexual Behavior in Medieval Hispano-Jewish Society,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, edited by Ada Rapaport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London, 1988), 25-59 and *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry* (London: Portland, Or: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), chapter five.

<sup>38</sup> Bernard Septimus, “Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, edited by Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 197-230.



## LITERATURE AND TRANSITION

This dissertation endeavors to supplement our knowledge of Hispano-Jewish culture in transition by studying literary texts. It does not intend to create a comprehensive *Zeitgeschichte* but rather to interpret a corpus of interrelated texts. Through literary analysis, it treats poetry (particularly the *qasīda* form) and rhymed prose fictional narratives (*maqāmāt*), texts that have been designated by scholarship as “literary”--in the sense that they are imaginative works--as opposed to “historical,” “legal,” “philosophical,” or “mystical.” These divisions between textual genres, of course, are somewhat contrived and the product of the organization of academic disciplines as much as the particular qualities of given texts. Still, the limited corpus of this dissertation is justified in that the texts form a close-knit, though not hermetically sealed, system. Hebrew poetry and prose narratives make up a universe in which authors recognize and utilize material existing elsewhere in that universe. In this universe (whose starting point is really the Hebrew Bible), words, phrases, names, places and themes linger and reverberate, allowing authors to create meaning through evocation and reuse. At the same time, these texts maintain a complex relationship with non-Hebrew texts that border on and shape this universe.

The Hebrew literary tradition of Spain began in late tenth-century Muslim Andalusia when Hebrew poetry was revolutionized through the importation of Arabic poetry’s prosodic and thematic features. In addition to liturgical poems, Hebrew authors composed poems of entertainment on secular themes such as wine-drinking, sexual desire and garden description.<sup>39</sup> The explosion in intellectual output paired with the privileged social status of Jewish authors has led many scholars to call tenth and eleventh century Andalusia the Jewish “Golden Age” of Islamic Spain. Great Hebrew poets such as Samuel

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<sup>39</sup> in general, see Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986); idem., *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems*

ha-Nagid (993-1056), Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1021-1053?), Judah Halevi (1075-1141), Moses Ibn Ezra (1055-1138) and Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) had thorough educations in Arabic learning ranging from poetry to mathematics, astronomy, social etiquette, and Qur'ān. The Andalusian background of these authors, including those who spent only parts of their lives in Andalusia such as Halevi and both Ibn Ezras, has been considered so definitive that the authors' contact with the Christian world has seldom been contemplated.

Similarly, the works of post-Andalusian poets such as Todros Abulafia (1247-d. after 1298) and *maqāma* authors such as Joseph Ibn Zabārra (born c. 1140), Judah Ibn Shabbetai (1168-1225), Judah al-Ḥarīzi (c. 1166-1235), and Jacob Ben El'azar (mid-thirteenth century) have generally been read through the lens of Arabic literature only with little attention given to the Christian context.<sup>40</sup> Rather than assigning these texts to specifically "Islamic" or "Christian" contexts, they are considered in this dissertation as products of a period of transition during which the borders of Islamic and Christian Spain were in flux. The need for such a study is already suggested by Baer, "A further study of the writings of Ibn Sabbatai and his colleagues, Judah al-Harizi and Joseph Ibn Zabara, may help delineate the character of this period [the Reconquest] more sharply"<sup>41</sup> The question, then, is how such texts can be used to interpret the historical period, what methods of analysis can be applied to make the literary texts talk history.

A work such as this, which aims to use literary texts to evaluate authors' cultural attitudes, is in need of much apology. If anything, the field of medieval Hebrew literature has been troubled by too much positivism, always rendering the study of literature ancillary to the reconstruction of historical facts, particularly the biographies of "great men."<sup>42</sup> One teaching that emerged from Russian Formalism, the New Criticism and other

*on God, Israel and the Soul* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> This topic will be treated extensively in part two of the dissertation.

<sup>41</sup> *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain...*, p. 95.

literary movements is that texts may be read for their literary merits only, without having to answer to such questions as social reality or author's intent.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the critic's business is to study how devices such as sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, meter, and rhyme function within a textual system, and not to reduce all literature to autobiography. On the other hand, it is nearly impossible to interpret texts properly without at least some contextualization. Words and ideas have histories; identical utterances carry one meaning in one period and quite another meaning in another.

This dissertation strives to study literature for literature's sake while demonstrating that sensitivity to literary issues is also a requisite skill for the historian. Historians must accept that "historical" texts also possess a literary dimension while students of literature must accept that texts cannot be wholly severed from their contexts. Of course, the exact interplay between text and context is complex and remains difficult to define. One great trap that readers must avoid is the vicious cycle of interpreting texts in view of a preconceived historical narrative. The subject of transition out of Andalusia is already circumscribed by several narratives that have become stable among academic and popular communities. If one begins with the simplistic assumption, "Jews displaced from Islamic Spain must have viewed the past nostalgically since, according to the common wisdom, life was better for Jews under Islam than under Christianity," and then proceeds to read texts under the tyranny of this assumption, misreadings will certainly ensue. Every text would be interpreted as a further piece of evidence, another telling artifact, verifying and ratifying the presumed narrative. Furthermore, it is difficult to approach the subject without feeling the powerful and romantic position Andalusia has occupied in the minds of Muslims, Jews and Christians who have looked to Islamic Andalusia as a model of religious tolerance and multi-confessional cultural glory. Nostalgic expressions may be

<sup>42</sup>For example, the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid has been treated much more in the context of reconstructing the poet's (fascinating) biography and eleventh century Andalusian culture than in the context of literary study.

found in the modern period from Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*<sup>44</sup> to Borges' account of Ibn Rūshd (the Latin Averroes)<sup>45</sup> and popular reports that North-African families of Hispano-Arabic descent preserve the keys to their houses in Spain.<sup>46</sup>

Nostalgia for Andalusia, of course, was a natural response for some Andalusian Jews who saw themselves as displaced from their homeland. Moses Ibn Ezra, who settled in Navarre after fleeing Granada in 1090, constantly referred to himself as a fugitive longing for the past while disparaging the Jews of Christian Spain as Philistine ignoramuses.<sup>47</sup> Yet nostalgia was only one of numerous possible responses. The narratives that have become stable in the popular and scholarly imagination held no currency for medieval writers. In fact, toward the end of the thirteenth-century, the phrase "better under Edom (Christendom) than under Ishmael (Islamdom)" was cited sporadically by biblical commentators, revealing a preference for life in Christendom over (at least a conception of) life under Islam.<sup>48</sup>

During the period of transition, a great number of options were open to Andalusian Jews. They could choose to settle in the Christian or Islamic spheres. They could continue to write in Arabic, innovate the Hebrew language to render it sufficient for subjects traditionally treated in Arabic (exegesis, philosophy, science, mathematics, astrology, etc.), or write in the local Christian vernacular (a choice seldom made). They could continue the intellectual tradition of the past or seek new paths of participation in

<sup>43</sup>Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction...*, introduction, chapters one and three.

<sup>44</sup>Washington Irving, *The Alhambra*, with an introduction by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, illustrated by Joseph Pennel (London: Macmillan and Co., 1931).

<sup>45</sup>Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964), pp. 153-4.

<sup>46</sup>L. P. Harvey, "The Political, Social and Cultural History of the Moriscos," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), p. 201; on the nostalgic legacy of Andalusia, see the review essay of Jayyusi's volume by Robert Irwin, "Andalusia of the Mind," *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 August 1993, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup>see chapter one.

<sup>48</sup>Bernard Septimus, "Hispano-Jewish Views of Christendom and Islam," in *In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews Between Cultures, Proceedings of a Symposium to Mark the 500th Anniversary of the Expulsion of Spanish Jewry*, Bernard Dov Cooperman (Newark, NJ and London, England: University of

Jewish intellectual life. It is difficult to know exactly why individual intellectuals chose different paths. Why did Moses Ibn Ezra remain in Christian Spain while his friend Judah Halevi set out on a pilgrimage to Palestine and Solomon Ibn al-Muʿalim moved to Morocco? Why did Abraham Ibn Ezra choose to wander the lands of Europe while his son Isaac chose to settle in the Islamic East? Why did Maimonides' family remain in the Islamic world while many of their coreligionists chose Christian Spain as their refuge? Ultimately, the answers to these questions depend on an author's particular circumstances, religious, cultural or intellectual convictions, and conceptions about the destination to which he was going.

This dissertation studies a wide range of attitudes expressed toward transition by Andalusian Jewish authors. In considering the attitudes toward transition reflected in the texts discussed, it should be kept in mind that the authors are only representative of a small segment of Iberian Jewry. This is the case not only because the texts are the products of a cultural elite--men of education, talent, and sometimes wealth--but because the authors' very choice to write Hebrew poetry and rhymed prose already betrays them as bearers of one of Andalusian Jewry's hallmark traditions. To renounce the Andalusian heritage out of hand might have entailed a rejection of its literary values. Still, even within this small sample of authors, a range of attitudes toward transition is apparent.

## **WAYS OF READING**

Throughout the dissertation, much attention is paid to ways of interpreting texts, focusing on underutilized analytical tools and strategies that are constructive in textual analysis. In doing so, the dissertation builds upon the insights of earlier scholars while approaching previous scholarship with critical distance. As many interpretations emerging from methods of reading are presented, it is only natural that individual readers will find

some interpretations convincing and others unconvincing.

In the field of medieval Hebrew literature, analytical tools have traditionally adhered to the pattern of medieval Arabic criticism--focusing on the construction of the individual line--combined with the philological study of the Hebrew language. Fine examples include Brody's masterful verse by verse commentary to the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra<sup>49</sup> and David Yellin's *Torat ha-shirah ha-sefaradit*,<sup>50</sup> which methodically introduces the student to the critical topics most central to medieval critics--quantitative meter, rhyme, types of word play and conventional themes. Other modern studies have treated specific poets and broader literary history (arranged according to poets and chronology),<sup>51</sup> while some studies have treated genres,<sup>52</sup> forms,<sup>53</sup> and themes.<sup>54</sup> Less common are works that offer close readings of individual poems.<sup>55</sup> Even more limited have been studies dedicated to topics current in literary disciplines outside of medieval Hebrew literature such as imagery, poetic or narrative form, gender, space, time, and non-genetic comparative approaches.<sup>56</sup> While this dissertation does not tackle all of these topics or exhaust any one of them, it does treat a number of them methodically in order to

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<sup>49</sup> Moses Ibn Ezra, *Diwan*, edited by Hayim Brody (Vol. I, Berlin, 1938; Vol. II, Jerusalem, 1941).

<sup>50</sup> David Yellin, *Torat ha-shirah ha-sefaradit* ((Third edition), Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Jefim Schirrmann, *Toldot ha-shirah ha-ivrit... muslemit...*, idem., *Toldot ha-shira ha-ivrit be-sefarad ha-nosrit u-be-darom sarfat*, edited, supplemented and annotated by Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> Israel Levin, *Me'il tashbes* (Israel: Ha-Kibbus ha-Meuhad, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> Tova Rosen-Moqed, *Le- ezor shir: al shirat ha- ezor ha- ivrit bi- yemet ha- beinayim* (Haifa, 1985) : this book is a literary history of the Hebrew girdle poem (*muwashshah*) more than a work of form criticism per se. Ya'el Feldman's *Bein ha-qetavim le-qav ha-meshaveh - shirat yemet ha-beinayim: tavnuyot semantiyot ba-shir ha-murkav* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 1987) is a study of the Hebrew *qasida* that focuses on the topic of poetic unity; this work is discussed extensively in appendix A of this dissertation.

<sup>54</sup> Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> One of the finest studies remains Dan Pagis' *Shirat ha-hol ve-torat ha-shir le-Moshe Ibn 'Ezra u-benei doro* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970), which details the literary qualities of Moses Ibn Ezra's poetry in light of medieval but also contemporary literary theory. Other examples include Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death...*; idem., *The Gazelle...*; Tova Rosen-Moked and Eddy M. Zemah, *Yesirah mehukamah: ayun be-shirei Shmuel ha-Nagid* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1983).

<sup>56</sup> Noted already in the fine review of scholarly literature by Dan Pagis, "Trends in the Study of Medieval Hebrew Literature," *AJS Review* 4 (1979): pp. 125-41. Despite some exceptions, Pagis' observations remain true for the most part.

illustrate the importance they hold for the study of medieval Hebrew literature and Jewish history:

Following trends in the study of Arabic literature over the past thirty years, this dissertation enters areas of literary analysis not considered explicitly by medieval authors or critics. One might wonder whether analysis that extends beyond the methods of medieval criticism is justifiable since the classical critics were certainly closer to the literature in its original context than modern scholars. Noting that medieval Arab critics were content to consider the individual line as the ultimate unit of analysis, seldom venturing to study the structure of clusters of lines or whole poems, Scheindlin concludes, "we must go beyond the native critics."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, remarking on the deficiencies of medieval Arabic criticism in treating subjects that interest modern students of literature, Heinrichs suggests looking at such literary features as development and theme.<sup>58</sup> Scholars of Arabic literature have turned to myth analysis, structuralism, comparative literature and anthropology as analytical approaches for studying the poetry and prose of classical periods.<sup>59</sup>

In response to recent trends, van Gelder questions why medieval Arab critics should not be allowed to represent Arab culture themselves and argues that studying medieval criticism is tantamount to the study of poetry itself.<sup>60</sup> Although there is a need for a careful application of the many literary methods employed today and critics must take heed to use their methods with some consistency, van Gelder's comments seem to miss the mark in several respects. First, to study criticism is not to study poetry. The relationship between poets and critics was undoubtedly complex in the medieval period as

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<sup>57</sup> Raymond Scheindlin, *Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Mu'attamid ibn 'Abbād* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency," in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, edited by Gustave von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden, 1973), pp. 19-69.

<sup>59</sup> see bibliography throughout.

<sup>60</sup> G. J. H. van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), p. 208.

it is today.<sup>61</sup> It is rare, in fact, for poets themselves to be critics or vice versa.<sup>62</sup>

Innovative poets flout the conventions praised by critics precisely to keep poetry from becoming stale. Second, it is simply possible that those aspects of writing that are most interesting to modern critics were either uninteresting to medieval critics or so deeply entrenched in medieval culture that no classical critic would think to comment on them.

This dissertation strives to build upon scholarship in the field of medieval Hebrew literature by utilizing tools current in the fields of classical Arabic literature and comparative literature in general. The dissertation also helps elucidate the transitional period in Hispano-Jewish culture, which is still only partly understood. By reimagining the context of Hebrew letters emanating from the periods of the Almoravids, Almohads and the *Reconquista* as one of transition rather than one of Jewish-Arabic symbiosis, much light can be shed on Hebrew literature and Jewish history.

## PERIODIZATION

Insofar as this dissertation treats transition between periods, it is useful to consider ways in which periodization has been imagined by modern historians and students of literature. In much of nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship, it became common to refer to the period of Jewish life in Islamic Spain as the "Golden Age," a grandiose term betraying a fantasy of coexistence whereby Muslim rulers recognized Jews not only as subjects but as equals. This vision is now considered a myth debunked, originally constructed to serve the exigencies of European Jewish scholars who found precedent for their own acculturation by romanticizing the period of Muslim-Jewish coexistence.<sup>63</sup> The value of the "Golden Age" has usually been measured as a function of

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<sup>61</sup>see also the review of van Gelder's book by James E. Montgomery, "On the Unity and Disunity of the *Qasīdah*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24 (1993): pp. 271-77.

<sup>62</sup>The Jewish poet-critics Moses Ibn Ezra and El'azar Bar Y'a'qov are exceptional.

<sup>63</sup>Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute YearBook* 34 (1989): pp. 47-66; Bernard Lewis calls the "golden age of equal rights" a "myth;" "The Pro-Islamic Jews," in *Islam in*



acculturation with classical Arabic culture,<sup>64</sup> a standard that has led many scholars to view Jewish life in Islamic lands as simply "better" than it was in Christian lands, where Jews were less acculturated.<sup>65</sup> One might argue that the very notion of a "Golden Age" is ill-conceived as it is entrenched in a conception of cultural worth that is measured solely by the intellectual achievements of an elite class. For these reasons, some have preferred to speak more modestly of a "golden age of Spanish Jewish culture"<sup>66</sup> or a simply a "Golden Age of Hebrew literature,"<sup>67</sup> consciously limiting the notion to a cultural or literary history.

Within works of literary history, the parameters of the "Golden Age" have not been completely stable. Delitzsch, apparently the first scholar to use the term,<sup>68</sup> divides the Hebrew poetry of Spain into three periods: "the golden age" (940-1040), "the silver age" (1040-1140), and the "age of roses among the thorns" (1140-1240); in this scheme, made according to subjective aesthetic values, the "Golden Age" ends even before the death of Samuel ha-Nagid while Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi fall into the "silver age." Ashtor's chapter, "The Golden Age of Hebrew Literature"<sup>69</sup> concludes with Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Bahya Ibn Paquda, both authors of the eleventh century, and does not include such luminaries as Judah Halevi, Moses Ibn Ezra or Abraham Ibn Ezra. In the introduction to his anthology of Hebrew Poetry of Spain and

*History: Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East* (New York: The Library Press, 1973), p. 135; Yitzhak Baer writes, "Politically this period [the Taifa period in Andalusia] was not a 'Golden Age' at all." *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain...*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup>S. D. Goitein sees the Hebrew poetry of Spain as the absolute acme of Jewish-Arab "symbiosis;" *Jews and Arabs: Their Contact Through the Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 155ff.

<sup>65</sup>For a critique of this tendency, see Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>66</sup>Gerson Cohen, "The Jews in the Arab World," in *Columbia History of the World*, edited by John A. Garraty and Peter Gay (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 292, referring to the Taifa and Almoravid periods collectively.

<sup>67</sup>see below.

<sup>68</sup>Franz Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie* (Leipzig: 1836). See Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy..." p. 61.

<sup>69</sup>Itself a misnomer, since several of the texts discussed by Ashtor are not written in Hebrew but in Judeo-Arabic.

Provence. Jefim Schirmann, using terms more descriptive than “golden” or “silver,” offers the following division of periods: “beginnings of Hebrew poetry in Spain” (c. 950-1020), “classical period” (c. 1020-1150), “post-classical period in Spain” (c. 1150-1300), “decline” (c. 1300-1492).<sup>70</sup> Schirmann seems to measure classicism and quality as functions of adherence to Arabic models. Others have counted all poets with some experience in Islamic Spain as “Golden Age” poets. Abraham Ibn Ezra generally representing the final entry.<sup>71</sup> Authors of post-Andalusian Hebrew poetry have often been denigrated as “epigonic” and even “pathetic”<sup>72</sup> while some recent scholarship has attempted to consider intrinsic merits to the innovations of the poetic schools of Christian Spain.<sup>73</sup>

It is useful to consider scholarship’s placement of Abraham Ibn Ezra between the Muslim and Christian worlds. Ibn Ezra was born in Tudela (in Christian Spain) in 1092 and educated in Andalusia, leaving Spain circa 1140 for Italy, France and finally England where he died in 1167. Straddling the temporal border between Schirmann’s division of classical and post-classical periods and crossing the physical border between the Islamic and Christian worlds, Abraham Ibn Ezra has been viewed as a transitional figure whose place is difficult to pin down. He has been portrayed as an embodiment of Andalusian

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<sup>70</sup> Jefim Schirmann, *ha-Shirah ha-ivrit be-sefarad u-be-provans* (Tel Aviv: Dvir; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1954-60), p. iv. (These volumes are herein abbreviated HHSP).

<sup>71</sup> Leon Weinberger, *Twilight of a Golden Age: Selected Poems and Poetry of Abraham Ibn Ezra* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1997).

<sup>72</sup> Ezra Fleischer, “The ‘Gerona School’ of Hebrew Poetry,” in *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, edited by Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 35-49; see p. 37, where the poetry of Todros ha-Levi Abu’afia is called “epigonic” and the fifteenth century Saragossa school “pathetic.” Nahmanides and Meshullam Dapierra, however, are considered original poets by Fleischer.

<sup>73</sup> Ross Brann and Angel Saenz-Badillos, “The Poetic Universe of Samuel Ibn Sasson, Hebrew Poet of Fourteenth-Century Castile,” *Prooftexts* 16 (1996): pp. 75-103; Raymond Scheindlin, “Secular Hebrew Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, edited by Benjamin Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 25-37; Angel Saenz-Badillos, “Metrica romance y metrica hebrea,” *Congreso Internacional ‘Encuentro de las Tres Culturas’* 3 (1988): pp. 143-54; Aviva Doron, *Meshorer be-hasar ha-melekh: Todros ha-Levi Abu’afia - shirah ivrit be-Sefarad ha-nosrut* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1989); Angel Saenz-Badillos, “Hebrew Invective Poetry: The Debate Between Todros Abulafia and Phinchas Halevi,” *Prooftexts* 16 (1996): pp. 49-73.

intellectual ideals and a proponent of Judeo-Arabic symbiosis, a conduit of Andalusian Jewish culture to the burgeoning Jewish communities of the Christian world,<sup>74</sup> a literary innovator and harbinger of a new age, the poetic mourner over the devastated cities of Andalusia,<sup>75</sup> and a tragic wanderer able to endure his suffering with a measure of humor.<sup>76</sup> The ambiguity of his place is reflected in his leap from being the final entry in the first volume of Schirmann's anthology *Hebrew Poetry in Spain and Provence*<sup>77</sup> (thus located in Muslim Spain) to the first entry in volume two of Schirmann's posthumous publication on the history of that poetry (thus located in Christian Spain and Provence).<sup>78</sup> Abraham Ibn Ezra not only traveled great distances during his lifetime but has "traveled" in the imagination of scholars.

In a recent doctoral dissertation, Gil Anidjar<sup>79</sup> analyzes the modern project to represent the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the "end" of Andalusia, one of several "ends" of Jewish life in Spain, culminating with the Expulsion in 1492. Noting that scholarship uses such ends to delimit hermetic boundaries between periods--that periods and places such as Andalusia only "appear as they disappear"--Anidjar studies texts belonging to different genres (located by scholarship as philosophical, mystical and literary), sharing only the feature of their context, that Andalusia is disappearing or has already disappeared. The present dissertation, in contrast, seeks to understand how medieval authors themselves, witnessing or remembering the disappearance of Andalusia, represent the former homeland and how they construct literary borders between Islamic

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<sup>74</sup>both his Bible commentaries and his poetry were introduced to Jewish intellectuals in Europe: Ibn Ezra's correspondence with Rabbenu Tam even reveals that the French Rabbi learned to compose poetry in the prosodic style of the Andalusian school.

<sup>75</sup>as expressed in his famous poem, *aha ki yarad 'alet sefarad*; see Leon Weinberger, *Twilight of a Golden Age...* Ross Brann, "Tavniyot shel galut be-qinot 'ivriyot ve-'araviyot be-sefarad," in *Sefer Yisrael Levin* (1994), I, pp. 45-61.

<sup>76</sup>Israel Levin, *Avraham Ibn 'Ezra: hayyav ve-shurato* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Qibbus ha-Me'uhad, 1966), p. 22. <sup>77</sup>HHSP.

<sup>78</sup>where he does not exactly fit either, since the author also spent much time in Italy and England. *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat...*

<sup>79</sup>"At Our Place in al-Andalus..."

and Christian Spain, between past and present. Because Jewish authors in the Islamic world were generally reticent about responding directly to incidents of persecution,<sup>80</sup> literary texts remain some of the most telling expressions available for reading attitudes toward cultural transition.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is first divided into two main parts, "Poetry" and "Prose," separated because different strategies of reading are employed for these different literary forms. The division is also pertinent because there is a rough (though not absolute) correspondence between the literary forms and the division of Andalusian and post-Andalusian periods. Poetry dominated the literary scene during the Andalusian period while the rhymed prose narrative (*maqāma*) dominated in Christian Spain, although the Hebrew *maqama* originated in Andalusia while poetry continued to be written in Christian Spain through the fifteenth century. The dissertation offers close readings of select texts--including many that predate the period of transition and others that are composed outside of the Iberian Peninsula altogether--in order to develop ways of reading that are useful in gleaning attitudes toward cultural transition.

Within each part of the dissertation, the chapters are arranged according to literary topics--imagery, space and form--that are pertinent in examining the question at hand. Chapter two, "Imagery: The Protean Garden," demonstrates how authors manipulate imagery in garden poetry to create different emotional tenors, sometimes signifying distress and estrangement. In particular, the chapter contrasts two garden poems by Moses Ibn Ezra--one written from the context of Andalusia and the other from the poet's exile in Christian Spain--showing that the poet utilized different fields of imagery for expressing the contrasting emotions of comfort and distress. Chapter three, "Space:

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<sup>80</sup>Mark Cohen, "Persecution, Response and Collective Memory...".

Landscape and Transition,” explores the cultural significance of three landscapes of medieval Hebrew poetry--garden, desert and forest. The chapter shows how these landscapes succinctly express an author’s sense of place and capture his emotions of estrangement and nostalgia. Chapter four, “Form: Varieties of Nostalgia in Hispano-Jewish Poetry” contrasts poems by three authors on the decline of Andalusian Jewish culture during the *Reconquista*, the Almoravid attacks and the Almohad persecutions. By utilizing different literary forms, authors situate their mourning within contrasting literary and cultural traditions, lamenting personal or communal loss either with the voice of an Arab poet or with the voice of a Jewish liturgical poet.

Part two of the dissertation opens with an introduction (chapter five) to the Hebrew *maqāma* that stresses the form’s location between classical Arabic fiction and Romance literature. The remaining two chapters contrast aspects of two Hebrew *maqāma* collections, the famous *Tahkemoni* by Judah al-Ḥarīzi and the lesser known *Sefer ha-meshulim* (The Book of Parables) by al-Ḥarīzi’s younger contemporary Jacob Ben El’azar. It is shown that the two works reflect contrasting attitudes toward cultural transition. Chapter six, “Form: Imitation, Exploitation and Realia” introduces the two authors and their works, highlighting the contrasts in literary form between the two works. The chapter shows that al-Ḥarīzi remains faithful to classical Arabic norms while Ben El’azar turns to new literary models, self-consciously manipulating and subverting Arabic literary conventions and Andalusian cultural values. Chapter seven, “Space: Landscape, Geography and Transition” shows that the two works, although both written by authors born in Christian Toledo, reflect the perspectives of authors with contrasting world views. While al-Ḥarīzi continues to idealize the landscape of the palace garden so central to the memory of Andalusia, Ben El’azar rejects the aristocratic landscape and turns toward a new vision of nature more consistent with European models. Furthermore, while al-Ḥarīzi

retains the geographical perspective of an author of the Islamic world, Ben El'azar stands out as an author of the Christian world looking outward at the world of Islam.

In addition, there are two appendices: Appendix A, "A Literary History of the Hebrew *Qaṣīda*" is the first in-depth discussion of the *qaṣīda* form in Hebrew literature from the perspectives of formal composition and literary history. The discussion complements the treatment of the *qaṣīda* as a form of nostalgic expression in chapter four. Appendix B, "A Note on Medieval Translation Theory" compares methods utilized in Hebrew adaptations of Arabic literary and philosophical works in Christian Spain and Provence.

# **PART ONE**

## **POETRY**

## CHAPTER TWO

### IMAGERY: THE PROTEAN GARDEN

‘Image, all image,’ he cried to the fallen tower  
as the night came on. ‘Whose harp is the sea?  
Whose burning candle is the sun?’ An image of  
a man, he rose to his feet and drew the curtains  
open. Peace, like a simile, lay over the roofs of  
the town. ‘Image, all image,’ cried Marlais,  
stepping through the window on to the level  
roofs

Dylan Thomas. “The Orchards”

It is generally recognized that the gardens described in Hebrew Andalusian garden poems are idealized. The poems always describe similar garden beds, flowers, trees, water courses, fountains, beds for reclining, entertainers, wine goblets and wine. Throughout the corpus, the poems seem to describe “the same” garden, pointing to the idealized social setting of a courtier class.<sup>1</sup> However, a garden poem is seldom about a garden only. Through poetic imagery, the poet links the garden to some external reality of a social, devotional or personal nature. In fact, the external theme often seems more central to the poem’s meaning than the ostensible subject of the garden. While the idealized garden is stable with respect to its physical accoutrements, its poetic existence is protean, always changing identity through imagery. This chapter reconsiders Hebrew Andalusian garden poetry from the perspective of poetic imagery, a topic that has not gained sufficient attention in scholarship. The chapter begins with a general discussion of poetic imagery and an analysis of select garden poems by Dunash Ben Labrat, Samuel ha-Nagid and Solomon Ibn Gabirol. In the final section, two poems by Moses Ibn Ezra--a major Hebrew poet displaced by the Almoravid invasion--are contrasted from the perspective of imagery. One of the poems was composed while the poet resided in Andalusia whereas the other was composed from his exile in Castile. The discussion demonstrates the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Weiss, “Tarbut haṣranit ve-shirah haṣranit,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies I* (1947), pp. 8-9.



centrality of imagery analysis for reading the poetics of displacement and exile.

## IMAGERY

Like many terms in literary criticism, *imagery* has been used to signify various aspects of literature and as such its meaning has been unstable and imprecise. Even a quick glance at major works on literary terms and theory reveals that this term has been construed in any number of ways. Most basically, and closest to the term's original sense, is the understanding of an image as a "mental picture," though such a definition is of limited value for literary studies. In criticism, most authors agree that images are "sensuous"--that they are artistic expressions of the sensual (i.e. visual, audible, tactile, olfactory) world and allow the reader to recreate that world through the mental faculties. They also generally differentiate between "concrete", or literal, images and "abstract," or figurative, ones. An example of a concrete image might be "Red roses covered the white wall"--the words signify something sensuous and allow the reader to recreate a picture through the mental faculties. "Figurative" images--e.g. "She is a rose"--make use of tropes, or figures of speech (including metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc.), and also relate to mental pictures, even if the picture suggested by a phrase is abstract and not strictly obvious.

Some definitions of imagery have included the following:

1) What do we understand, then, by the poetic image? In its simplest terms, it is a picture made out of words. An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it being purely descriptive, but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality.<sup>2</sup>

2) The use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience;<sup>3</sup>

Dan Pagis, *Shirat ha-hol ve-torat ha-shir...*, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> C. Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Fourth Edition) (Oxford and

3) A pattern or series of interconnected word pictures that make an object or feeling come alive in the mind by evoking a single unified sense impression.<sup>4</sup>

4) A rather vague critical term covering those uses of language in a literary work that evoke sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or 'concrete' objects, scenes, actions or states, as distinct from the language of abstract argument or exposition.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, in its broadest applications, "image" has referred to any sensuous effect provoked by literary language, any striking language (as in "what a beautiful image"), symbol, metaphor or other figure of speech. Some critics have pronounced this shifting application, particularly the contradictory senses of "mental picture" and "figure of speech," as treacherous and advantageous only to "lazy criticism."<sup>6</sup> Still, "imagery" remains more valuable than "metaphor" or "simile" as independent terms for it emphasizes the common ground of tropes over the subtle distinctions of their construction.

Until the New Criticism, imagery had been considered an ornamental aspect of literature that contributed little to the meaning of a work. As a manifestation of style, imagery was relegated to mere decoration. Imagery could inspire pleasure in the reader who, upon recognizing the similarities in seemingly disparate objects, would appreciate reality in a new way. An image might have been considered beautiful but it did not participate in the meaning-making of a poem.

Among theorists identified with the New Criticism,<sup>7</sup> the concept of imagery claimed a new prominence in both the study of prose--in which it figured more central than author, narrator, plot and argument--and poetry, which was considered nothing if not

Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1998), see "imagery."

<sup>4</sup> Gary Carey and Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *A Multicultural Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1999), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 106-7.

<sup>6</sup>see, for example, P. N. Furbank, *Reflections on the Word Image* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970); Roger Fowler, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 119-20.

<sup>7</sup>on the New Criticism, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2nd ed. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), chapter three.

a complex amalgam of images. No longer seen as mere ornament, imagery became a fundamental tool for interpreting the very meaning of literature. A new interest developed not only in the ostensible subject of a poem but also in the comparates (sometimes called “vehicles”) used to describe that subject (what in Arabic criticism is called *al-mushabbah bihi*, “that to which something is likened”). Thus, when a poet would state *A* (the subject) is like *B* (the compare), the reader is intended to think of *B*; ultimately, *B* might be more significant to the meaning of the poem than *A*. The New Critics were especially insistent upon revealing *patterns* of images that were considered more essential in the analysis of meaning than the text’s “deliberate” effects.

As an extension and corollary of this area of analysis, some critics became interested in the psychological interpretation of texts and their imagery. According to this theory, imagery analysis entails more than evaluating an author’s demonstration of skill. A text might betray the psychological condition of the author at the time of writing. Following Freudian analytic methods, the imagery on the page is said to present a trajectory of the author’s unconscious yearnings and inclinations. Poetic images are like images in a dream, the theory goes, operating according to a system of codes that can be interpreted. Yet, problems of interpretation in this area of analysis are as plentiful as they are in dream interpretation,<sup>8</sup> critics have attacked such readings as mere “message hunting” and the foundationless pursuit of “psychological biography.”<sup>9</sup>

The only pre-modern theorist to develop a psychological theory of imagery is the eleventh century Arabic critic al-Jurjānī (d. 1078 or 1081). In many instances, his opinions prefigure the conclusions of the keenest modern Western linguists and literary theorists.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>e.g., is the code by which an image may be interpreted universal or specific to a given author? See the many illuminating discussions by Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, edited by Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 198.

<sup>10</sup>Such is the presentation of Kamal Abu-Deeb, who often compares al-Jurjānī with modern critics, see his *Al-Jurjānī’s Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1979). For the purposes of his study, Abu Deeb understands *imagery* in its figurative manifestation only; i.e. “She is a rose” would

Al-Jurjānī maintains that there is a psychological dimension of imagery, which has the power to affect the listener but, more importantly, reveals the psychological state of the poet.<sup>11</sup>

In order to illustrate al-Jurjānī's method of psychological interpretation, let us consider his reading of the following verses by Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 908) describing the crescent moon at the end of Ramadān.

The reign of fasting is now over, and the illness of the crescent moon heralds the coming of the 'id.  
The moon chases the Pleiades like a greedy eater opening his mouth to eat a bunch of grapes.

Clearly the metaphors and similes in the verses suggest a mental picture, one which the reader can readily associate with the sky being described. The moon is "ill," meaning that it is lean and slight like a crescent. The concave shape of the moon looks like a mouth in profile facing, hence "chasing," the Pleiades, a cluster of stars likened to a "bunch of grapes." Thus, the lines would state that the month of Ramadān is over and the appearance of the crescent moon announces the arrival of 'id. The imagery is effective in that the metaphors employed fit together logically and accurately describe the moon and the Pleiades. The reader may even experience pleasure, reflecting upon the affinity between the subjects and their comparates.

Al-Jurjānī ventures beyond such an interpretation and incorporates biographical information about the author into his reading. He maintains that Ibn al-Mu'tazz was irreverent and that his life and poetry were consumed with drinking and eating. For the poet, Ramadān was tantamount to supervised deprivation and compulsory abstinence, causing him to experience the month as "the reign of fasting" (*dawlatu al-ṣiyāmi*). The "illness" of the moon probably refers to the poet's own emaciation. For Ibn al-Mu'tazz, 'id did not arouse thoughts of religious contemplation but only of ravenous consumption:

constitute an image whereas "Red roses covered the white wall" would not. Al-Jurjānī focuses on the nature of relation between a subject and the compare used in describing it.

hence the moon is a “greedy eater” about to consume “a bunch of grapes”--a fine simile for the Pleiades but representing food and, more importantly, drink (i.e. wine) on a deeper level.<sup>12</sup>

This type of analysis might also be performed in the analysis of Hebrew poetry. Consider the following couplet by Solomon Ibn Gabirol, which also describes a crescent moon.<sup>13</sup>

The moon between white and black is like a maiden peering<sup>14</sup> through a hole.  
It stuck out its lip from the violet<sup>15</sup> but retracted as if on account of your lip.<sup>16</sup>

The images are descriptive and provide a fine simile (like a maiden, line 1) and metaphor (attribution<sup>17</sup> of a lip, line 2). The crescent moon, part light and part dark, is like a woman’s face behind a lattice, partly viewable yet partly obscured. In line 2, the moon protruding through the darkness also resembles a single lip because of its concave shape. However, this analysis leaves aspects of the verse unexplained; what is the significance of the *action* of the lip? Whether the lip is about to be kissed, is refusing to be kissed or has already been kissed, its likeness to the moon is not altered. If the moon’s action, having “retracted as if on account of your lip” is not essential for conjuring up the intended mental picture, then does it have a function?

One might read a psychological dimension into these images along the lines of al-Jurjānī’s method. Ibn Gabirol is a poet believed to have been frustrated in love. Scholars

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 274ff.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., p. 285-86.

<sup>14</sup>The Arabic superscription reads, *wa-lahu fi al-hilāl*, “and by him concerning the crescent moon.” Jarden, p. 347 poem [192].

<sup>15</sup>such is Jarden’s reading, based on Judges 5:28. Alternatively, *nishqafa* could mean “shining,” as in Song of Songs 6:10, “Who is this shining like the dawn?”

<sup>16</sup>i.e. the darkness. See other examples in Y. Ratzaby, “Iyyunim be-darkhei shirateinu ha-sefaradit,” in *Baruch Kurzweil Memorial Volume*, edited by M. Z. Kaddari et al (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1975), p. 325.

<sup>17</sup>i.e. it stuck out its lip but quickly retracted once it realized it was going to be kissed by “your” lip.

<sup>18</sup>a type of metaphor (*isti’āra*) constructed by endowing an object with an attribute that it cannot possess by nature. See Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti’āra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Steiner [In Komm], 1977); Mordechai Z. Cohen, “Moses Ibn Ezra Vs. Maimonides: Argument for a Poetic Definition of Metaphor (*Isti’āra*),” *Edebiyat* 11 (2000): pp. 1-28.

generally find his love poems unconvincing and unrealistic and believe that he led a lonely life deprived of intimacy and social companionship. He was haughty, acerbic, afflicted with a disfiguring disease and lacking in social grace, generally incapable of personal or romantic intimacy.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the reader should not be surprised to find that the moon conjures up a cloistered maiden kept at a distance, love impossible and desire unfulfilled. The moon is a lip that is offered but then retracted when an attempt at intimacy is made; “your” lip in the verse is surely that of the poet. For this reason, the moon is not a luscious lip waiting to be devoured by a capable lover nor one that has been satiated with lovemaking, even though such metaphors would serve the visual quality of the image equally well. Indeed, alternative images would have changed the emotional quality of the verse. The two visual suggestions are linked through their shared concern with desire and frustration and betray the emotional and psychological state of the author. The couplet’s true subject is frustrated love and is not determined through its ostensible subject, the crescent moon, but through its comparates.

Al-Jurjānī’s evocative method of criticism made little impact on subsequent critics of Arabic literature, medieval or modern, let alone critics of medieval Hebrew literature. The heyday of modern imagery criticism also came and went, barely affecting the study of medieval Hebrew poetry. This is not altogether surprising since the progenitors of this field are philology, Jewish history, and aesthetics to some extent, but not literary criticism. Insofar as the scholars of medieval Hebrew literature laid traditional Arabic literary criticism as the foundation of their analyses, the critical sources explored also presented little interest in imagery as an explanatory concept of meaning in poems. Medieval Arabic poetics, of course, is deeply mindful of rhetoric and the figures of speech that are included within the rubric of modern concepts of imagery.<sup>19</sup> In Arabic criticism, the basic unit of

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<sup>18</sup>see, for example, Yehudah Ratzaby, “Holyo u-bediduto shel Ibn Gabirol le-or shirato,” *Sinai* 84 (1979): pp. 1-8.

<sup>19</sup>e.g. *isti’āra*, metaphor; *tashbīh*, simile based on physical attributes; *tamthīl*, non-physical simile. These

analysis is the individual line, thereby privileging the isolated image over its function within the context of a whole poem. Thus, not surprisingly, scholarship on medieval Hebrew literature has treated imagery as an ornamental aspect of poetry, itself defined as “ornate speech” (following Moses Ibn Ezra<sup>20</sup>). For example, David Yellin’s treatment of imagery in his classic explication of Andalusian Hebrew poetics is limited to categorizing the various figures of speech as understood within medieval Arabic criticism.<sup>21</sup> The concept of imagery dominating the field of medieval Hebrew literature thus derives from the limited contextualization characteristic of medieval Arabic criticism and is ratified by nineteenth century notions of reading.

In two articles treating imagery in medieval Hebrew poetry, Dan Pagis<sup>22</sup> also focuses on imagery’s formal and ornamental aspects. Pagis accurately portrays the conception of imagery within the Iberian school, looking primarily at areas of poetry that are particularly dense in imagery and ornamentation. Pagis discusses the various types of imagery wherein figures of speech (metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc.) are combined with rhetorical figures (antithesis, word play, alliteration, etc.) to produce novel effects. Thus, Pagis is specifically interested in the areas of writing wherein the *raison d’être* is the manneristic interplay of images, sometimes revolving around a central conceit. For example, Hebrew poets (particularly those writing in Christian Spain) demonstrated their acumen and dexterity by stringing together as many images as possible within the rhythmic and spatial constraints of a single line (e.g. In seven my beloved shines, and he alone can thus excel: He is a star, cloud, myrrh, or lion, he is Heman,<sup>23</sup> balm, or a gazelle<sup>24</sup>).

translations are approximate; the terms shift within the corpus of classical Arabic criticism. On the transformation of the term *isti’āra* from a specialized sense of metaphor distinctive of early Arabic criticism to a more generalized usage in the Aristotelian sense, see Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind*..., Mordechai Z. Cohen, “Moses Ibn Ezra vs. Maimonides...”.

<sup>20</sup> Moshe Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muhādara wa-l-mudhākara*, edited by A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem, 1975), p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> *Torat ha-shurah ha-sefardit*..., pp. 152-87.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Pagis, “Šiburei dimuyyim,” in *ha-Shir davur ‘al ‘ofnav* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), pp. 109-23 (originally printed in *Mehqarei yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit*, 1 (1981), pp. 196-210) and “Play and Substance: Aspects of Hebrew-Spanish Imagery,” in *Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages and the*

Toward the end of the English article, Pagis redirects his thinking and departs from medieval conventions of reading. He offers an interpretation of the sophisticated imagery suffused throughout Ibn Gabirol's famous storm description in *ami ha-'ish*. The main passage analyzed reads as follows,

Then the wind assailed the moon with sailing clouds, and they covered his face with a mask... The skies robed themselves in darkness. It seemed as if the moon had died, and the cloud had buried him... Then the night put on an armour-plate of darkness: thunder, with a spear of lightning, pierced it; and the lightning flew about the skies...spreading its wings like a bat; the ravens of the dark fled when they saw it.<sup>25</sup>

Pagis calls attention to the recurring imagery of war and death, which is not limited to this section of the poem but also surfaces in a personal key near the poem's conclusion. "And God closed in my thoughts... He bound my heart with ropes of darkness. Yet it arose like a warrior breaking out of a siege." Pagis, who lauds Ibn Gabirol for introducing "searching introspection" into Hebrew poetry, finds significance behind the imagery that can only be called psychological. He writes, "The entire passage (the storm description), with all its local metaphors of battle and death, in fact depicts an actual storm; but the point is also an *extended metaphor of the poet's mind*" (italics mine). In stepping beyond the categories of imagery as delineated by medieval criticism, Pagis enters an area of modern criticism that touches upon difficult areas of interpretation. If Pagis is correct, there is greater significance to imagery than ornament or the sheer pleasure experienced upon recognizing the relationships between seemingly incongruous objects.

One wishes that Pagis had developed his passing yet pregnant suggestion into a fuller theory of interpretation. Although he is hardly explicit here about a methodology, one may glean a few points from his terse comments: 1) interpretation relies upon finding a *pattern* of imagery; Ibn Gabirol supplies the storm not with one but with several images of war and death; 2) the imagery crosses over between parts of the poem, in this case

*Renaissance* (1991), pp. 25-43.

<sup>23</sup>a biblical sage (I Kings 5:11) and also a poet. Heman the poet (*ha-meshorer*) (I Chronicles 6:18).

<sup>24</sup>by Jacob ben El'azar, see p. 114 of "Šiburei dimuyim..." or p. 32 of "Play and Substance..."



between the description of the storm and the poet's self-referential conclusion; 3) there is some relationship between the poet's personal experience, his biography and disposition and his writing. These points have more in common with the New Criticism and the psychological strain of analysis than with the poetics of Moses Ibn Ezra and the medieval critics who influenced him.

Pagis' analysis raises more questions than it answers. How do we know that the link is truly psychological? Is it not possible that Ibn Gabirol only utilized similar imagery in different parts of the poem to create a sense of cohesion and unity? <sup>26</sup> If Ibn Gabirol did infuse imagery with a personal aspect, did he do so consciously or unconsciously? If Ibn Gabirol was the first Hebrew poet to infuse verse with "searching introspection," then where do we find this after him? What is the relationship between emotive, expressive imagery and conventional, ornate writing? Are they mutually exclusive or might imagery convey emotion even in a writer such as Moses Ibn Ezra who explicitly defines poetry as "ornate speech"?

If imagery is to be seen as anything other than ornamental speech, a method of interpretation must be formulated. Below is a suggested formulation, a set of guidelines for imagery analysis that will be applied in the subsequent discussion to one area of Hebrew writing, garden description. The critic should:

- 1) document *patterns* of imagery within poems;
- 2) situate images *vis a vis* convention. Unconventional images are the most suggestive substrates for psychological interpretation, although a dense concentration of conventional images may also be significant;
- 3) evaluate the emotional quality of an image; such evaluations may draw on extra-textual knowledge (linguistic, cultural, biographical and historical) insofar as it may be derived from the poet's cultural ambiance and not from the critic's own cultural

<sup>26</sup>"Play and Substance...." p. 42. the Hebrew poem is found in Jarden, p. 211ff., poem [102].

assumptions. Despite the possible pitfalls of psychological readings of imagery, such readings should not be banished from the discourse of critical reading. One must proceed with caution, but one may proceed. At stake in the issue is the very meaning of poetry, how and why it is composed. Al-Jurjānī writes that in choosing an image, the poet looks *fī nafsihi*, into himself, his psyche, his soul.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, although writing 850 years later in a vastly different cultural context, Dylan Thomas remarks in a letter to his friend Henry Treece, "I make one image--though 'make' is not the word; I let, perhaps, an image be 'made' emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess...."<sup>28</sup> Even within highly conventional writing, the poet is faced with choices. Is the crescent moon a greedy eater or a delicate lip? Is the Pleiades a bunch of grapes or an intimate gathering of friends? Is the full moon a beautiful face or a love-struck insomniac wandering through the night? Are the stars wine goblets soaring across a table or military troops ready to wage war? Is the water in a garden canal a river of Paradise or a brandished sword? Are roses red from the bloody tears of a lover, the blood of grapes, an infection? Such differences are essential in creating meaning within the poem.

### **OF GOD, DISEASE AND ARISTOCRACY: IMAGERY IN HEBREW ANDALUSIAN GARDEN POEMS**

Scholarship on medieval Hebrew literature has been interested in the garden on cultural and literary levels and has focused on three primary areas of research: 1) to trace the repertoire of motifs found in Hebrew poems to precedents in the Arabic poetic tradition,<sup>29</sup> 2) to make inferences from the poems about the material, social, and cultural

<sup>26</sup>on the concept of "unity" in literature. see Appendix A of this dissertation.

<sup>27</sup>Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory*.... p. 291.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Treece, *Dylan Thomas, 'Dog Among the Fairies'* (London: L. Drummond; distributed by John de Graff, New York, 1949), p. 47, note 1.

<sup>29</sup>e.g. Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death*.... introduction and chapter one; Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and*.... pp. 181-216 treats the garden as one among several subjects under the heading "Nature Poetry;" the chapter is divided according to various conventional motifs--the description of the garden as a woman, the wind as a transmitter of greetings, birds, descriptions of the heavens, rains.

environments in which the poems were composed,<sup>30</sup> 3) to trace the development of the genre within Hebrew letters in order to isolate earmarks of individual authorship and style.<sup>31</sup>

These three areas--influence, realia, and taxonomy--while useful, are all extrinsic and fall short of interpreting poetic meaning. In contrast, the present discussion explores a new direction for research based upon the concept of imagery. Before returning to the topic of cultural transition through the analysis of two poems by Moses Ibn Ezra, a number of short poems by several authors are studied from the perspective of poetic imagery. The analyses are intended as etudes in imagery criticism that demonstrate various uses of imagery in the Hebrew corpus. The discussion shows that the various descriptions of gardens utilizing comparates as distinct as a woman, a scroll, a weapon, etc. are not created haphazardly, motivated only by a poet's desire to describe and reveal links between ostensibly disparate objects. Rather, the images participate in the production of meaning within the poem. Poetic imagery is an indispensable measure of shifting cultural mentalities across a corpus of highly conventional writing.

Medieval Hebrew poems are hardly monolithic in their use of imagery. Some poems include almost no figurative imagery while others group together several figurative images, sometimes in the service of describing a single object. The earliest Andalusian Hebrew poem to include a garden description, Dunash Ben Labrat's *ve-omer al tishan*, makes almost no use of tropes.

I. Someone said, "Don't sleep! Drink aged wine!"

night, stars, etc.--adducing examples of each from the Hebrew and Arabic traditions. See also Schippers' comments in the conclusion, pp. 321-33.

<sup>30</sup>See discussions in Joseph Weiss, "Tarbut hasranit..."; Jefim Schirmann, "The Function of the Hebrew Poet in Medieval Spain," *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (1954): pp. 235-52; Gerson D. Cohen, *Sefer ha-qabbalah...*, pp. 269ff.; Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death...*, pp. 3-33 and others. For the minority view that medieval Hebrew poems were not intended for the elite only but also for the populous, see Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 85-106.

<sup>31</sup> Masha Itzhaki, *Elei ginat arugot: shirat ha-gan ve-ha-perahim ha-ivrit be-sefarad* (Tel Aviv: Makhon

2. With camphor and rose, frankincense and aloe.
3. In an orchard of pomegranate and date, and grapevines too.
4. And flourishing<sup>32</sup> plantings and varieties of tamarisk trees.
5. The tumult of pipes and the sound of lutes
6. On the lips of singers with harps and lyres.
7. Where every tree is raised high, its branches' fruit lovely.
8. And every bird of every feather sings among the leaves.
9. The doves coo as if they were singing melodies.
10. And the turtledoves answer and flutter like flutes.
11. We drink on garden beds enveloped in roses.
12. We banish worries with all types of carousing.
13. We eat delicacies and drink from basins.
14. We act like giants and drink from bowls.
15. In the morning I rise to slaughter bulls.
16. Fattened choice ones, rams and sheep too.
17. We anoint with fine oil and burn a tender branch.
18. Before the Day of Destruction comes, we will attain peace...<sup>33</sup>

The furnishings of the garden are presented in an almost list-like fashion. The imagery is almost exclusively of the "literal, concrete" type offering little room for the interpretation of comparates. The similes in lines 9 and 10 are not very suggestive, except that they echo the musical theme introduced in lines 5 and 6. The most suggestive comparison is the likening of drinkers to "giants," *'anaqim*, in line 14, connoting indulgence, pleasure and perhaps even gluttony.<sup>34</sup> The reader is alerted to the various accoutrements of the garden--wine, trees, vines, flowers, birds, musicians, etc.--but is offered no sense of the arrangement of space or emotional associations apart from general joy and revelry.

The garden figures as a central topic of description in the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid, who employed figurative imagery much more extensively than his predecessors. Central to his depictions is the organization of space, as in the following poem,<sup>35</sup>

Katz, 1988).

<sup>32</sup>*nitei na'amanim* - although referring to a specific plant name (identified by modern scholars as the Adonis plant). Abraham Ibn Ezra defines the phrase, appearing in Isaiah 17:10, as a "fast-growing" plant, linking the root *n'm* with its Arabic cognate, "to flourish, to be green and tender."

<sup>33</sup>Jefim Schirmann, HHSP, I, pp. 34-5.

<sup>34</sup>Perhaps a sign of poor manners. Hence Scheindlin's translation "like giants at their meat." The word *'anaqim* might also suggest "those with long necks" (related to the alternate meaning of *'nq*, "necklace"), enabling them to drink from bowls.

<sup>35</sup>Jarden, p. 294 poem [154]. After studying and writing about this poem, I realized that it had been discussed by Tova Rosen-Moqed and Eddy M. Zemah, *Yeširah meḥukamah*...., pp. 101-06.

1. Gather, for now Time is in balance<sup>36</sup> the line of night is equal to the line of day.<sup>37</sup>
2. See! The face of the earth has garbed itself in the king's daughter's embroidered robes.
3. Drink the blood of grapes by a rose, its buds like a scarlet thread or blood.
4. See! The face of its leaves that have blossomed in a joined and matching fashion.
5. Like the perfumed face of a lovely woman cleaving to a blushing face.

Time and space are both highly organized; Time is balanced with the equal distribution of hours of light and darkness while the earth's leaves have blossomed in a neat and well-fashioned manner (literally "composed" (*meḥubarim*) and "properly matching" (*mat'imim*<sup>38</sup>)). In this sense, the arrangement of leaves is like poetry itself, often called *meḥubar* (as opposed to *mefurad*, "scattered") in medieval Hebrew parlance.

Rhetorically, the short poem is held together tightly by the opening of lines 1-4 with an imperative, the repetition of the command "see" (2, 4), the repetition of the word "blood" (3), and the four-time repetition of the word "face" (*panim*, 2, 4, twice in 5). The extended metaphor and enjambment of lines 4-5 give the poem a sense of conclusion by departing from the syntax of the previous lines. On the level of figurative imagery, the poet creates numerous effects. First, the scene is set against a general backdrop of *redness*; the wine and the rose are both bloody and the lover's face is blushing. Second, the poet introduces a number of human actors into the poem (2, 5) through simile and metaphor. In lines 4 and 5, the blossoming leaves are likened to the extended simile of lovers cleaving (i.e. kissing) face to face. The two faces of the lovers remind the reader of the other two faces in the poem--that of the earth and that of the leaves--suggesting that their relationship is also intimate.

Now we should consider whether there is any clear significance to the use of imagery apart from lending form and cohesion to the poem. Beyond the dense repetition of words and themes, is there any logic to the selection of comparates--a princess in robes.

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<sup>36</sup>literally 'sound, complete.' Rosen-Moqed and Zemah link the root to *mat'imim* in line 4 (translated here as "well-fashioned"); citation below.

<sup>37</sup>i.e. the spring equinox, when day and night are in equal proportion. Perhaps the "line" refers to the markings on a sundial.

blood, and lovers kissing? What does it mean to have a well-organized stage with a red backdrop on which lovers and a princess carouse? It is difficult to delineate a pattern in this imagery or to define an emotional tenor apart from a general sense of intimacy and passion, emotions associated with much of the Nagid's verse. It would be presumptuous to make any far-reaching conjectures about the poet's state of mind or psychological profile based on such a poem. There is nothing in the poet's biography that would suggest that the imagery fits a psychologically meaningful pattern.

The organization of space is also central in the following poem by the Nagid. The poem is introduced in the *diwan* with an Arabic superscription by the poet's son, Joseph, giving the occasion for the poem's composition.

*I planted a circular garden and enclosed it with a circular stream. I entreated him [my father] to go there and relax; he did so and took pleasure in it and because of it and said:*

1. With a word Joseph inclined his father's heart to grant any request, great or small.
2. And said, "Let us go to a garden for its buds and flowers are full of bloom.
3. There I planted a circular space for my relaxation. I made it a treasured place for my ease.
4. A canal rings around it as the heavens surround the earth."
5. We went out to the flower beds of the garden, which were arranged in it like the lines of a scroll.
6. In the heart of every generous person are highways, and to their doors every petitioner has access.
7. In the palace, we sat in the shade of pomegranate and plane trees, not in the shade of terebinth and oak.<sup>38</sup>
8. Beneath us we had grasses for couches while the leaves above our heads were a swaddling-band.<sup>4</sup>
9. With rubies the wine pourer filled a cup and placed it on a boat of variegated papyrus.
10. He sent the cup like a bride in her palanquin over water to the drinker, her groom.
11. He drank and returned his cup to the others, and addressed the pourer as at the beginning.
12. He (the pourer) never tired from extending his hand to the drinker and saying to

<sup>38</sup>based on Song of Songs, 4:2 (speaking of teeth).

<sup>39</sup>Jarden understands this verse to mean "we sat *as if* in a palace...", suggesting that the shade of the pomegranate and plane trees created an enclosure similar to a palace, generally constructed out of terebinth and oak. Although there is a certain logic to this, supplying the absent "as if" seems somewhat forced. Given that such gardens are generally found in the courtyards of large houses and palaces, the more literal reading seems preferable and does not detract from the effect of contrasting trees.

<sup>4</sup>*hatula*- "swaddling band," i.e. a covering, as in Job 38:9, "I made cloud its garment, and thick darkness

him, "drink, there is no roaring sound!"<sup>41</sup>

13. It is a wonder and its sight is magnificent, whoever has not beheld its like has not beheld greatness!

14. There is no activity like the activity of brethren drinking in a round space along a canal in a garden.<sup>42</sup>

The entire scene is suggestive of comfort, ease and repose. The garden described is a garden of plenty full of buds, flowers, water and wine. The drinkers, only implied in the previous poem, recline in the garden, surrounded by trees on all sides, leaves and grasses above and below.

As in the previous poem, the physical space of this garden is highly organized. In particular, the poet and also the scribe emphasize the idea of *roundness* and the circularity of space. In the superscription, Joseph tells us that he planted a *marjan mustadīran*, a round garden or grassy area, which is rendered in Hebrew as *kikar* (lines 3, 14), itself suggesting the idea of roundness.<sup>43</sup> On the semantic level, the root of the word is *krr*, evoking the Arabic cognate meaning "to repeat, return." Surrounding the circular space is yet another circle, a river, ringing it as the heavens encompass the earth (4); the repetition of the root *ḡl*, "to be rounded," in the verse reinforces the feeling of roundness. The garden is likened to a scroll (line 5)--derived from the root *ḡll*, "to roll,"--and the garden beds are arranged like lines of writing. The garden is a magnification of the scroll and a reduction of the sky. Thus, the subject (*kikar*) and the comparates in figurative images constitute a clear pattern of roundness.<sup>44</sup> The image of the leaves as a swaddling-band (8)<sup>45</sup> is also appropriate.

its swaddling-band."

<sup>41</sup>as in Ezekiel 1:24, the sound made by the movement of the heavenly beasts, associated with the sound of a military camp

<sup>42</sup>Jarden, p. 283, poem [132].

<sup>43</sup>as in *kikar lehem*, a (round) loaf of bread; see Brown, Driver and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson Publishers, c1979), pp. 502-3.

<sup>44</sup>on the significance of roundness in poetry, see the enlightening discussion by Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated from the French by Maria Jolas, foreword by Etienne Gilson (New York: Orion Press, 1964), final chapter.

<sup>45</sup>while the word should not be confused with the usage in modern Hebrew, associated with the cuddling of infants (and also "pampers"), it does suggest enclosure, being surrounded.

The physical dimension of this description is complemented by the action of the poem, which emphasizes the idea of *repetition*. In lines 9-11, the wine pourer fills the glass with wine, offers it to the drinker who empties it and returns it to the pourer, restoring matters to their original state. Line 12 emphasizes the perpetual nature of this arrangement, for the process will continue *ad infinitum*--i.e. as long as the pourer keeps pouring wine, an action of which he never tires. Thus, the action taking place within the *kikar* is reminiscent of the space itself, for it is cyclical and repeating. The idea of repeating is even echoed phonetically in the poem's final verse, beginning and ending with the word *pe'ulah* (activity). The parallel patterns of circularity and repetition permeate the different parts of the poem, imbuing the text with a feeling of comfort and repose.

The wine pourer, of course, is a stock character of the medieval wine poem. He (sometimes she) often plays an erotic function. Common depictions of the wine pourer entail comparing his beauty to that of celestial bodies, praising his murderous glances and the ironic "power" of his languid, lispng speech, lamenting the treacherous hairs that sprout on his pubescent face, etc.<sup>46</sup> He is generally associated with illicit behavior and rampant (if repressed) desire. In this poem, the wine pourer is hardly a murderer or powerful figure, nor is he described as erotic. He merely appears as a dutiful and indefatigable servant. In fact, the licit quality of the scene is complemented by infusing the wine-pourer's action with the imagery of bridegroom and bride, of proper rather than illicit union. This is accomplished in line 10, the densest string of comparisons in the poem: the wine drinker is likened to a groom receiving his bride, the wine cup, which the pourer has sent over water in "her palanquin," the variegated boat of papyrus. The wine pourer makes proper matches between drinkers and their drink. The image also suggests a certain mutuality of relation, which matches well with the themes of circularity and repetition. The poet creates the emotional tenor of the poem through such carefully

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<sup>46</sup>On the wine pourer, see for example, Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death...* pp. 19-20, 83-84; and



chosen metaphors.

From the perspective of Romantic definitions of unity, this poem is well crafted, characterized by a consistency of imagery and emotional balance. Yet, can anything be said about the psychological or emotional state of the poet at the time of composition? It would be erroneous to draw any far-fetched conclusions such as “the Nagid had marriage on his mind” or “he only emphasized licit imagery because he was in the presence of his young son.” Still, the poem does suggest ease, luxury, and generosity. Moreover, in the same way that the previous poem suggests *balance*, this poem emphasizes *perpetuality*: the cyclical and infinite quality of the space of the garden and the practice of drinking therein. The poem is at ease with the culture it is describing and conveys the expectation that this culture should continue indefinitely.

Far from the gardens of the Nagid are those that appear in the poetry of Solomon Ibn Gabirol, generally a more reverent, contemplative and anxious poet. Consider the following garden description, which refers to wine, flowers, and other aspects of the traditional garden,

1. When its (a cloud's) waters pile up like a heap. God sends forth his word and melts it.
2. It drips eternally upon the branch even as its wine drips upon me.
3. The garden bed blossoms, every crocus opening its hooks for us.<sup>47</sup>
4. It sends myrrh to our nostrils as they (our nostrils) set out to greet its myrtles.
5. Should you go, it will offer you every blossom. Give yourself wings<sup>48</sup> lest you tread upon it.
6. The semblance of the sun's face is the face of a bride, her finery illuminated by her face.
7. It flees along the pavement of the sphere without a pursuer to chase it.
8. So that we thought it the chariot of a king, bounding with his horses.
9. Should you pass by a garden, you will see its earthen vessels silver-plated.
10. At the time when day turns to evening, it (the sun) spreads its (the garden's) ends with yellow gold.
11. You will think that when it (the sun) departs, bending low, that it prostrates itself upon the ground before its Maker.
12. As it hurries to set, you will imagine that God has covered it with violet.<sup>49</sup>

The poem begins and ends with God. In the opening phrase, the image of “waters piled

Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*..., pp. 120-25, 145-80.

<sup>47</sup>the hooks on the edges of the curtain in the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:6), probably the bulbs or petals.

up like a heap” leads the reader to reflect upon God’s miracles, specifically the miracle of dividing the waters of the Sea of Reeds (Exodus 14). God then creates another miracle through a command and causes the waters to rain down. As mentioned, the poem does not fail to incorporate the standard aspects of conventional garden poetry: rain (1), garden beds (3), flowers (2, 3, 4), vessels (9), and wine (2), although notably there is no wine pourer. In contrast with the gardens of Samuel ha-Nagid, the poem has an ethereal quality; the poet is less concerned with comfort and pleasure in the garden but rather gazes upward to the heavens (6-12). Although wine drips figuratively on the poet (2), he does not seem to stand within the garden nor are there wine drinkers present. The poet tells the reader that if he goes to the garden, he will “fly” above the scene (5). The poet is more cognizant of the “ends” (10) of the garden than its center. The perspective is that of one hovering above the garden rather than one relaxing within it.

In contrast with the *perpetuality* of the Nagid’s poem--the cause of which is human action--Ibn Gabirol portrays the process behind nature as *eternal* (2) with God as the cycle’s First Mover. The sun is likened to three comparates in the poem: a bride’s luminous face (6), a king’s chariot bounding with horses (8), and a supplicant bending prostrate before the Creator (11). Despite its superlative beauty and speed, the sun is still God’s petitioner, guaranteeing God’s superiority over worldly beauty and power. Although this garden is “the same” garden as the one in the poems of the Nagid, it has a very different identity, bearing testimony to the power of God more than the leisure of aristocrats.

In reconstructing Ibn Gabirol’s biography, scholars have been fascinated by references to skin disease in his verse.<sup>50</sup> The poet often refers to his disfigurement explicitly, while in other cases the language of disease penetrates descriptions. In one

<sup>48</sup> *Šis* - cf. Jeremiah 48:9. Ibn Janāh, *janāh*, “wings.”

<sup>49</sup> Jarden, p. 338, poem [181]=Brody-Schirmann p. 84 [138].

<sup>50</sup> See, among others, Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...muslemit...*, pp. 264ff. and p. 265, note 56 for further

poem, the poet thanks an addressee for a gift of roses, which he describes as follows.

Its appearance is plaguish green<sup>51</sup> like a sick girl, her robes tattered.  
Red - a man beholds in them what his heart beholds in dreams.<sup>52</sup>

In another poem, Ibn Gabirol describes a garden through the language of sacrifice and disease.

My heart beheld the wonders of God when it beheld the cloud weeping while it (the garden) laughed.  
It (the cloud) sprinkled its drops with a skillful hand like the hand of Aaron sprinkling (blood) at the altar.<sup>53</sup>  
It tattooed<sup>54</sup> a design in the buds, inscribing a setting<sup>55</sup> of crimson and byssus.  
The spice field offered<sup>56</sup> the smoke of frankincense before a cloud that broke open and rushed to suckle.  
Upon seeing its plants, they said, "they have been covered"<sup>57</sup> but they were not covered, not with green plague nor with inflammation.<sup>58</sup>

Again, Ibn Gabirol opens a garden description with the wonders of God. The sprinkling of blood, the offering of frankincense and the diseased appearance of the garden make this garden very different from the poems previously discussed. Even though the poet denies that the garden is truly afflicted, the reader cannot help but to imagine plague and infection. It is worth considering whether the references to disease relate to the psychological profile of the poet. The red and green colors of disease, of course, do have a logical relationship with the colors of the garden. Still, the mention of disease does not seem to fit the mood of certain contexts, as in the shorter excerpt above (i.e. "thank you

references. See especially: Yehudah Ratzaby, "Holyo u-bediduto...".

<sup>51</sup>*yeraqreqet* - The green color of plague spots, Leviticus 13:39, 14:37.

<sup>52</sup>Jarden p. 73, poem [40], lines 4-6.

<sup>53</sup>as in Leviticus 17:6, "And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord..."

<sup>54</sup>Leviticus 19:28, "You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or *incise any marks* on yourselves," i.e. tattoo. The idea of nature tattooing a design on the earth is also found in the pre-Islamic poet Labīd, "The torrents exposed the ruins as if they were books whose pens renewed their texts, or the repetitive motion of a tattoo artist dripping antimony on palms, their tattoos appearing upon them." Translated from Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-qaṣā'id al-sab' al-ṭiwāl al-jāhiliyyāt*, edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn 2d ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), pp. 526-7 (lines 8-9).

<sup>55</sup>referring to the design of the high priest's breastplate, Exodus 28:11.

<sup>56</sup>*qiter* - this verb is especially associated with offering sacrificial smoke as in I Kings 22:24, "The people still sacrificed and offered (*mezabhim u-meqatrim*) at the shrines."

<sup>57</sup>i.e. afflicted, stricken.

<sup>58</sup>afflictions listed in Deuteronomy 28:22, probably suggesting the colors red and green.

for the roses, they are lovely, like the plague”). Numerous scholars<sup>59</sup> hold that it is because of Ibn Gabirol’s own affliction that the poet sees disease in flowers, filtering images through his personal experience of suffering. Such a style of interpretation resembles that involved in reading the descriptions of crescent moons by Ibn Gabirol and Ibn al-Mu’tazz in the introductory section of this chapter.

In the following poem by Moses Ibn Ezra, the garden stands out not only as the meeting place of aristocrats but also as a veritable microcosm of aristocratic culture.

1. The garden wears an ornamented coat, the grasses’ raiment is an embroidered robe.
2. Every tree wears checkered shifts, displaying wonder to every eye.
3. Every bud in springtime comes out laughing to greet the coming of his lord.
4. Before them a rose passes, a king, his throne borne on high.
5. Going out from the guard of his leaves, and casting off his prison clothes.
6. Whoever does not drink to his honor, must accept the blame for his sin.<sup>60</sup>

The poem’s subject is hierarchy; it is about flower-courtiers and a flower-king, all dressed in finery and putting on courtly airs. The predilection for metaphor over simile is highly effective. The rose *is* a king, the garden and the trees *are* wearing fine clothes. The idealized social order is recreated through the imagery of the description, enabling the garden to function as a self-contained court scene. In comparison with the arrangement of space in the circular garden of Samuel ha-Nagid’s poem, space here is arranged hierarchically. Buds shuffle to call their lord; the rose/king is before them and above them. The poem closely mimics the aristocratic world outside. In fact, it is unclear whether the “whoever” in the final verse--i.e. those who are charged to drink--are human observers outside the wondrous scene or the grasses, buds and trees of the garden, the rose’s courtiers as it were. In this manner, the poet blurs the distinctions between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

This extended introduction has shown that the garden’s protean character is discernible through its imagery, now conveying perpetuity, now eternity, now divinity,

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<sup>59</sup>see e.g. Pagis, “Play and Substance...”, p. 43.

<sup>60</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, *Shirei ha-hol*, edited by Hayyim Brody (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1978), p. 7 [5]; see also

now disease and now aristocracy. The garden carries different meanings for different poets and within the corpuses of individual poets. Although the garden described is ultimately “the same” garden, mere description is seldom the ultimate goal of the poet. Through poetic imagery, the poet privileges other, less tangible, subject matters over the ostensible subject of the garden. Returning to the topic of cultural transition in medieval Spain, we must keep it in mind that the gardens of medieval Hebrew verse--despite their conventionality--bear mutable identities and significations.

### **IMAGERY AND TRANSITION: GARDENS OF LIFE AND DEATH IN MOSES IBN EZRA’S VERSE**

The following discussion contrasts the imagery of two garden poems by Moses Ibn Ezra, one written during the poet’s years in Andalusia and one from his exile in Castile. When asking whether a substantive change in imagery can be detected between poems written within and beyond the Andalusian context, one problem immediately presents itself: With respect to poets who spent part of their lives in Andalusia and part elsewhere, how do we know which poems emanate from which context? It is sometimes difficult to know whether poems treating Andalusian themes--such as wine, love and the garden--were necessarily written within the borders of Andalusia. Ezra Fleischer asserts that Isaac ben Abraham Ibn Ezra, who spent his youth in Andalusia and emigrated to Egypt and Iraq, composed love poems and wine poems in Andalusia but only monothematic panegyrics outside of Andalusia, reflecting a shift in cultural context. While this may be true on the whole, it is not clear that every poem addressing Andalusian subjects was necessarily composed on Andalusian soil. Although some of Isaac Ben Abraham Ibn Ezra’s poems suggest a life of comfort and ease while others emphasize the vicissitudes of Time and distress, it would be a priori reasoning to associate the former type with Andalusia and the latter type with Egypt and Iraq only.<sup>61</sup>

In the case of Moses Ibn Ezra, there is more evidence available for determining the provenance of poems and it is certain that he treated Andalusian themes while residing in Christian Spain. First, there are many pre-modern scribal superscriptions in manuscripts identifying the location of the poet at the time of composing the poem. While these superscriptions do not supply incontrovertible facts, for it is possible that the scribe is making a subjective analysis based on the poem's content, they do offer fairly strong evidence. Second, the poems themselves often offer details that suggest the poet's location; i.e. there are references to "wandering amidst a foreign folk," "stammerers of speech," "men of no reputation who are like wild beasts," etc., all of which refer to the Christian environment in Ibn Ezra's corpus.

The two poems, *qera'ani gevir* and *gedudei leil nedod*, have both been addressed in scholarship,<sup>62</sup> though not from the perspective of contrasting cultural contexts.

*Qera'ani gevir* is the poet's response to an invitation to a wine feast. As such, the poem not only reflects but is also an artifact of a thriving aristocratic culture. *Gedudei leil nedod* derives from Ibn Ezra's wandering in Castile, before reaching his final place of

the discussion of this poem by Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death...* pp. 34-39.

<sup>61</sup>Isaac Ben Abraham Ibn Ezra's *ba'arah ba-lev* (Jefim Schirmann, *HHSP*, I, p. 622 [285] = Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Yishaq ben Avraham Ibn Ezra: Shirim*, edited by Menahem H. Schmeltzer (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1980), p. 141), one of the poet's *muwashshahs* that suggest the poet's desire for a young woman or man, provides an excellent example of this problem. The poet is isolated and depressed when a "lovely (female) gazelle" approaches and reveals the secret of his despair: He is distressed on account of "Isaac's" departure, an event that also caused Orion to withhold its light. Through her beauty and the cup in her hand, the woman brings the poet to rejoice and forget separation. Fleischer assumes that this poem was written while the author was still in Andalusia because there was no "market" for such poems in Egypt or Iraq (Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat...*, p. 90). Fleischer's assumption, although reasonable, is arbitrary. It is just as likely that the poet was situated beyond the borders of Andalusia and composed a personal poem in an Andalusian style, just as Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra did. Even outside of Andalusia, the poet remains an Andalusian. It might even be that the departed "Isaac" in the poem is self-referential, that Isaac Ibn Ezra is lamenting his own wandering, and that passion and drinking are his only comforts. In short, a range of interpretations seems possible and we must not conclude that every poem evoking Andalusian themes necessarily emanates from the Andalusian context.

<sup>62</sup>e.g. Ya'el Feldman, *Bein ha-qetavim le-qav ha-meshaveh...* pp. 24-50. Feldman is primarily interested in the relationship between the garden and panegyric sections of the poem, focusing on the topic of poetic unity. Imagery is thus an ancillary topic to the central subject of unity. Despite her penetrating remarks on unity, the topic of imagery is not discussed with specific reference to cultural context.

settlement in Navarre. The gardens in the two poems contrast one another like a photograph and its negative; they describe one and the same place, yet their portrayals and meanings could not be more divergent. These opposing depictions, created through patterns of imagery, may be logically associated with the poems' respective contexts. The two poems are translated (the latter partially) and discussed below.

*Qera'ani gevir*<sup>63</sup>

Superscription (Arabic): *And by him describing the invitation<sup>64</sup> of Abu Ishaq Ibn Mātar*

1. The lord who bid his guests invited me and brought me together with the company of his friends.
2. To loved ones sweet to my mouth as his love, and companions precious like his thoughts.<sup>65</sup>
3. In a palace garden surrounded with grace, beauty in its four sides.
4. Dressed in silken robes, wrapped in a coat of scarlet and linen, its colors variegated.<sup>66</sup>
5. Without an embroiderer or designer its garden beds are inlaid, its couches are roses.
6. As if Time whittled their surfaces with statues of palm trees and carvings of colocynths.
7. The sun's light is like hammered gold above them and the trees are its firmament.
8. Its waters pour earthward like my tears for the absence of my heart's brethren and companions.
9. A turtle-dove seeks out myrtles for his singing and a swift rejoices on the height<sup>67</sup> of its plantings.
10. Singing amongst the choice vine, chirping and ringing out like a drunkard because of his wine.<sup>68</sup>
11. Birds break open all of its breaches; there they gather together as a brood and hatch their eggs.<sup>69</sup>
12. When those who slept through joy awoke, Time blocked up its eyes and its misfortunes<sup>70</sup> were dispersed.
13. Its (Time's) moments rushed to teach opportunely<sup>71</sup> their rejoicing to its weary ones.

<sup>63</sup>Brody p. 170, poem [172].

<sup>64</sup>i.e. to a wine party.

<sup>65</sup>*re'av* - Ibn Janāh (root *rah*) includes the definition for some instances (Psalm 139:2, Ecclesiastes 2:22, Daniel 2:29 where the quote is Aramaic "thought, examination, attention" (*al-fikr, al-tafaqqud wa'l-rī'āya*) note that the last term is a cognate of the Hebrew term being explained. Thus Ibn Janāh sees common meaning for the root in Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic. Abraham Ibn Ezra sometimes explains the meaning similarly; see Brody.

<sup>66</sup>"variegated," based on Judges 5:30.

<sup>67</sup>*gapei* - Ibn Janah understands the word according to an Aramaic cognate meaning "wings," though he understands it figuratively as meaning the "extreme part of something."

<sup>68</sup>"wine," based on Exodus 22:28.

<sup>69</sup>based on Isaiah 34:15.

<sup>70</sup>literally "occurrences, events" but clearly in a negative sense (as in I Kings 5:18). Also, perhaps, influenced by the Arabic cognate *fajā'a*, "misfortune, calamity, disaster."

its seconds to give comfort.

14. The table had the semblance of a sphere and the basin was like the moon, its cups stars.

15. Its platters were full of delicacies, its shovels and fire pans with the finest of spices.

16. A cup of beryl which rose like a star in the hand of a wine-pourer, red water in its (the cup's) innards.

17. [was] like a lover whose tears froze on his cheek while a flame (burned) within his ribs.

18. From the gold of Ophir it (the cup) cut threads upon its hand to illuminate its arms.

19. To remove sorrow from a pained heart and to comfort an agitated heart with its rest.

20. Gently it murmurs so that the head grieves, infatuated with its love, and its wounds are enduring.

21. Its preciousness is without end or limit, like Abraham in his praiseworthy qualities and knowledge.

22. Flowing like the dew of his speech; and as for kindness, its very coming and going<sup>72</sup> are in his hand.

23. Broad-hearted, striding wide to perform good, but how short his steps are to perform evil!

24. He walks modestly with God and with men, wisdom is with his humbleness.

25. He planted his tent as a mast for those who wander lost in the gloom of distress.

26. In him the embittered restore their souls and those tired from toil put their weariness to rest.

27. For those whose pericardium is pierced by the arrows of wandering, his mouth will mend its gash.

28. For his words are smooth like oil but in a battle of wits<sup>73</sup> he shatters stones with them.

29. People are forced into slavery by him, free men become his impoverished, permanent servants.

30. So much so that clouds blush for his generosity and the nobles and magnates of the people thank him.

31. Whoever plants righteousness during the days of his life shall reap his seed according to his righteousness.

33. He will live in tranquility until he gives his glory as an inheritance, his status to the children of his delight.

*Gedudei leil nedod*<sup>74</sup>

Superscription (Arabic): *And by him belonging to the art of description:*<sup>75</sup> *he appended to it the praise of Abu al-Hasn Ibn al-Battât. He wrote it while residing in Castile.*

1. The troops of a night of wandering are too tired to run, too weary to move across the sky.

2. I thought them silver nails planted in the firmament, or narrow<sup>76</sup> portals.

<sup>72</sup>*la-ut* - meaning uncertain. According to Brody, some interpreters understand the derivation to be from *et*, time, thus "to say something at its proper time." Ibn Janâh explains "to give understanding." Brody prefers another option, "to satiate, give drink."

<sup>73</sup>literally "its departures and alighting."

<sup>74</sup>see Brody's note to poem 9 line 11.

<sup>75</sup>Brody, p. 185, poem [185].

<sup>76</sup>or perhaps, "containing various kinds of description."

<sup>76</sup>see I Kings 6:4 and Rashi's commentary.



3. The moon sleepless like a lover while they (the stars) watch him like scouts.
4. I imagine that their numbers are diminishing but no, they multiply at every moment.
5. Yet on a night of companionship, they are immediately swept away, driven out by the stars of morn.
6. As if taskmasters were urging them on, hastening and pressing to make them vanish.
7. A night whose end<sup>77</sup> is mixed with its beginning, its extremes gathered together.
8. A night whose color is like the color of coal, the wind like a bellows and the lightning like sparks.
9. There is no light except the light of plaited goblets full of golden waters.
10. Warriors set out to wage war against distress until they were smitten by their swords.
11. The wine pourer, languid of speech though mighty men fall prey to his words.
12. His eyes are wide with magic, they are beautiful, they are sorcerers.
13. He gives life with them though sometimes he murders for they are (both) powerful and weak.<sup>78</sup>
14. To the humble they teach the ways of innocence but paths encompassed (with evil)<sup>79</sup> to those who go astray.<sup>80</sup>
15. Likewise, the righteousness of cherubs is upon his cheeks though the deception of idols is upon his hair.
16. Might rests upon his neck and flowing myrrh has dispersed droplets upon his face.<sup>81</sup>
17. A rose garden upon his cheek for which he appointed *seraph* serpents<sup>82</sup> to keep guard.
18. In thought we kiss his lips and pluck his buds with the pupil's hand.
19. Our eyes are satiated with every good thing though our lips are faint with hunger.
20. We drank until we hurried to exchange the dross of gloom for the silver of twilight.
21. The buds of the sky vanished for they were swept away by the waters of the dawn's rivers.
22. They were quickly snatched up by the hand of twilight and light grasped the end of the earth.
23. There, the stars of the garden beds rose and were scorched by the sun's eye.
24. The water of the channels are like flowing waters of silver though they are the unsheathed blade of a sword.
25. Dew rests upon buds as if there were grains of crystal gathered upon them.
26. Upon the red surface of the garden bed, they resemble drops of sweat upon the faces of the exhausted.
27. The scent of every spiced tree restores souls to bodies after death.
28. The bird sings out among the branches like songstresses behind veils<sup>83</sup> of branches.
29. With a stammering tongue they sing, changing their tune from one moment to the next.
30. And a breeze blows the myrtles, their heads swaying to the voice of the bird.
31. Without wine they reel like a drunkard, by the wind they stagger, bent over.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>accepting Brody's emendation, reading *sof* instead of *şuf*, honey. Brody's emendation is supported by the reading in a manuscript to which he did not have access; see the note by Pagis in volume three of the *Diwan*, p. 225.

<sup>78</sup>"weak" or "languid" (as in line 11). I translate "weak" here to contrast "powerful."

<sup>79</sup>based on Psalm 40:13.

<sup>80</sup>*sattim* - probably thinking of the Arabic *dālīn*, "those that turn from the path, go astray" as in Qur'ān 1:7 and many other places.

<sup>81</sup>Brody suggests that these droplets are beauty marks.

<sup>82</sup>Numbers 21:6, or "fiery serpents."

<sup>83</sup>*sitret* "veils" or "coverings." "Veils" is suggested by the Arabic cognate *sitār*, "veil, drape, screen"

<sup>84</sup>*ne'etafīm* - or "faint, weary." "bent over" is based on the Arabic cognate *'atf*, "to incline, bend" as

32. As if they heard the mention of Joseph and hurried to bow down to the earth...

These two masterful poems, both *qaṣīdas*,<sup>85</sup> exhibit complex and composite structures. *Qera'ani gevir* opens with mention of the *mamdūh* (the one praised, the patron) and the occasion of the gathering (1-2), turning quickly to a description of the garden and everything in it (3-21). Line 21 is the transitional verse (*takhalluṣ*), shifting from the wine cup to Abraham, pivoting on the shared quality of unlimited preciousness. Praises (21-30) and blessings (31-32) for the *mamdūh* continue until the poem's conclusion. In *gedudei leil nedod*, less logically unified motifs intermingle. The poet begins by describing the long night of wandering (1-4), a theme harking back to pre-Islamic poetry and evoking emotions of loss and nostalgia. Through contrast, line 5 opens the transition to the night of companionship and hence the theme of the garden and feast (5-32). Line 32 is the transitional verse (*takhalluṣ*) in which the movements of the birds of the garden evoke thoughts of the *mamdūh*. The praise continues until the poem's conclusion (33-54, not translated here).

It is worth noting that *qera'ani gevir* is written to a friend in gratitude for being invited to a wine party, whereas *gedudei leil nedod* is written from the context of Christian Spain and opens with the theme of complaint. In the first case, the garden is a logical theme for the poem since it is produced for the occasion of a garden wine party; the poem thus participates in the very culture it describes and idealizes. *Gedudei leil nedod*, on the other hand, places the garden, a memory of the past, in stark contrast with the poet's current reality of displacement and wandering. The poet is contrasting what is with what was. Yet, even as the garden section of *gedudei leil nedod* is an idyll and the night of companionship stands in opposition to the night of wandering, the pessimistic introduction of the complaint persists in coloring the tenor of the garden description.

As expected, both garden descriptions are highly conventional and depict "the

suggested in numerous biblical verses cited by Ibn Janāh.

same” idealized garden. The physical spaces and furnishings are almost identical: both contain garden beds, species of trees and birds, water channels, a table, wine goblets, a wine pourer and drinking companions. Still, the imagery of the poems, although overlapping in some respects, reveals that the poems are describing gardens with very different identities. While one tends toward life and leisure, the other tends toward destruction and death.

### *Qera'ani gevir*

The poet creates an overall positive emotion in this poem through a carefully chosen cadre of images tending toward slowness, comfort, leisure and life. Given that the poem is composed as a gift for a gracious host, the poet aims to suggest a mood for the actual gathering. The only hints of separation and complaint are found in lines 8 and 25-27; here, the theme is hardly pronounced and functions as a convention, almost a requisite courtesy addressing the temporary separation of friends. In fact, the theme is merely a setup for praising the patron who is able to relieve the suffering of “wanderers” by inviting them to gatherings. The poem is noteworthy for its remarkable use of time and images of plenty and life. These points are detailed here:

**Slowness** - Time, the dreaded force of inevitability that pursues human beings through so much medieval verse,<sup>85</sup> here appears as pliant and comforting. Ironically, it works slowly, always for good and not for ill. In line 5, it is imagined as the carver who fashions the surfaces of the garden with palm trees and colocynths. The act of carving is slow and deliberate, artfully executed with concentration and intent. In line 12, Time violates its expected nature and blocks up its eyes so that those who had missed out on joy might take part. The only rushing in the poem is found in line 13, where the subunits of

<sup>85</sup> on the Hebrew *qasīda*, see chapter four and Appendix A of this dissertation.

<sup>86</sup> see Israel Levin, “Zeman ve-tel be-shirat ha-ḥol ha-ivrit be-sefarad bi-yemei ha-beinayim.” *Oṣar yehudei sefarad* 5 (1962): pp. 68-79.

Time hasten to teach gaiety and bring comfort to the weary, acting zealously because the proper time has arrived.

**Life** - Although birds are constant fixtures of garden poems, in this poem they are given a specific action apart from the conventional act of weeping: they gather as a brood and hatch open their eggs (11). Bringing forth life and the succession of generations are themes that befit the poem's celebratory emotional quality. The process of hatching eggs is also suggestive of the slow-moving model of Time. Like Samuel ha-Nagid's garden poems discussed above, there is a sense of perpetuality and no hint of an end to the delight.

**Comfort and Plenty** - As mentioned, Time plays its opposite part and brings comfort to the weary. In lines 19-20, the wine cup murmurs gently, lifts sorrow and comforts those in pain. Similarly, in line 26, the patron restores the souls of the embittered and grants the weary rest. The resources of the garden are extremely plentiful, it is full of delicacies and fine spices (15).

The images in this poem work in concert to produce a general feeling of continuity and comfort. Metaphors describing different aspects of the garden setting belong to the same semantic field and occur in a clear pattern. The flourishing culture being described seems timeless, as enduring as the generations of birds and as deliberate as Time's carvings. In *gedudei leil nedod*, the imagery works to quite the opposite effect.

### ***Gedudei leil nedod***

Unlike *qera'ani gevir*, this poem begins with a description of the long night that harks back to the nostalgic longing of pre-Islamic poetry. The poet expresses his loneliness by contemplating the limitless night sky and projecting his insomnia onto the wandering moon.<sup>87</sup> This topos is common in Ibn Ezra's poetry from the Christian North.

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<sup>87</sup> on this topos, see chapters three and four of this dissertation.

Although describing a very similar garden with respect to its accoutrements to that of *qera'ani gevir*, *gedudei leil nedod* draws upon an almost antithetical repertory of images. The overall imagery is hardly one of comfort, but rather conjures up pictures of rushing, war and death. The garden of *gedudei leil nedod* is not imagined to be dressed in courtly robes and thus is not majestic like the garden of *qera'ani gevir*. Time is a dominant theme of *gedudei leil nedod*, although it functions in its more common role as the aggressive pursuer of humans and their delight. A few images are common to *qera'ani gevir* and *gedudei leil nedod* such as the resemblance between the wine cups and stars. However, even this stock image may bear a different valance in *gedudei leil nedod* because the stars remind the reader of the other stars in the poem, the marshalled troops of the long night that oppress the lonely poet (1). The patterns of imagery are considered presently:

**Rushing** - A dominant theme of this poem is the notion that pleasure is fleeting whereas the misery of separation is endless. This stands in direct opposition to *qera'ani gevir*, in which Time works as an advocate for pleasure and beauty in the garden. In the opening complaint, the poet laments the slow passage of the night of wandering. He watches the motionless stars as if he were watching the second-hand of a clock that did not seem to move at all. This long night of wandering stands in direct opposition to the night of companionship, every aspect of which seems to rush toward its end. Lines 5 and 6 contain a striking concentration of adjectives of force and speed (*nishafim*, swept away; *hadufim*, driven out; *me'isim*, urge; *mevohalim*, hastened; *dehufim*, pressed), which are complemented by the subject *nogsim*, taskmasters, specifically the taskmasters of Egypt who violently press the Israelites to accelerate their work (Exodus 5:13). In line 20, the drinking companions hurry (*hashnu*) to exchange night for morning. In line 22, the buds of the sky are quickly (*hish*) snatched up. In line 29, the birds among the branches change their tunes from one moment to the next (*le-rega'im*). In lines 32 and 33, the myrtles

(who, like the men at the party, appear drunk) hurry (*hashu, miharu*) to prostrate themselves at the mention of the patron's name. Even the weather on this night of companionship suggests speed and degeneration; in line 8, the night is described as "a night whose color is like the color of coal, the wind like a bellows and the lightning like sparks." On one level, the verse provides logical similes of appearance. However, the similes possess more profound implications; the bellows is *fanning* the flames, causing the coals to burn quickly and spark wildly. The pattern of rushing thus permeates many parts of the poem; beyond functioning to create unity, the images act together to create an emotional backdrop of fury and desperation.

**Exhaustion** - Not surprisingly, the themes of rushing and exertion are complemented with exhaustion. Exhaustion is introduced in the first line of the poem with reference to the troops of night (the stars) that are too tired to move. Even though we might expect the garden to stand in contrast with the stars, exhaustion resurfaces in the imagery of line 26 where the dew drops are likened to drops of sweat on the face of the fatigued. The repetition of theme and imagery is reinforced by the syntactic repetition of the synonymous and paranomastic roots *yf* and *'yf* in the final words of the lines (1 and 26).

**Death and War** - Other repeating images relate to the idea of death and war, a register of imagery that does not appear at all in *qera'ani gevir*. In line 1, the stars of night are depicted as troops. Further, the waters of the channels in line 24 are like the unsheathed blade of a sword. In line 10, the drinking companions are described as warriors bearing swords; they fall prey to the words of the wine pourer (11) who is a murderer (13). The wine pourer is a complex of innocence and treachery while in *qera'ani gevir* he appears as a willing and docile servant only. Both poems set up parallel relationships between Time and the wine pourer, each to quite a different end.

In *gedudei leil nedod*, the drinkers are nearly impotent before nature and Time. Every aspect of the poem conveys the message that the seeds of destruction are inherent in beautiful moments. It is stated most succinctly in verse 7: the night's end is mixed with (i.e. inherent in) its beginning. Lines 23-27 share the rhetorical quality of presenting something positive but then shifting to a metaphor of exhaustion and danger. The garden flowers rise but are soon scorched by the sun; the waters seem like flowing silver but are really an unsheathed sword; dew drops resemble sapphire but are really the sweat of the fatigued. The listener imagines flowers, water and dew but also imagines the burning sun, a brandished sword and dripping sweat. The garden bears witness that beauty is deceptive and that pleasure is fleeting.

Moses Ibn Ezra has painted the gardens of *qera'ani gevir* and *gedudei leil nedod* with very different strokes and hues. Through careful patterns of imagery, the poems create gardens with different identities, conveying divergent meanings and evoking opposite emotional responses. Although both poems draw exclusively on images that are "conventional," the images work together in patterns to create vastly different results. It is difficult to imagine that the poet's only drive for consistency among motifs was the achievement of cohesion or unity. The divergent depictions are better understood in the contexts of their cultural settings.

In *qera'ani gevir*, the garden is part of the same perpetual and enduring aristocratic culture as that celebrated by Samuel ha-Nagid. It is the emblem of a life of leisure, the shared cultural space of the poet and his addressee. The garden is a fixed space of the poet's cultural world; he has experienced it in recent memory and anticipates his return to it. The poem emanates from the context of Andalusia before the poet fled to the Christian north and functions in the economy of gifts in Andalusian Jewish aristocratic culture.

*Gedudei leil nedod* was clearly written from the context of the poet's exile in Christian Spain where the poet felt isolated and distressed. The misery that characterizes the introductory passage of the poem also penetrates the poem's garden description. Flowers are scorched and exhausted and stand before weapons of war. These are logical images for expressing the displacement of the exiled poet who may have felt threatened and exposed to such "dangers" during his wandering. The garden described is not within the poet's grasp but is a construction of memory, now recognized as ephemeral and even deceptive. The poet sees that the seeds of cultural demise are inherent in the garden's very form.

Beyond aiming to create a sense of "organic unity," the poet looks *fī nafsihi*, into himself, his psyche and soul, to produce images expressive of mood and circumstance. It seems unlikely that such consistent patterns of imagery would be created by an author unconsciously, although this is impossible to verify. The garden that rushes toward death is an expression of Ibn Ezra's anxiety and distress in Christian Spain. In the following chapter, the garden is considered as one of several landscapes that are laden with cultural significations in the medieval Hebrew corpus.



## CHAPTER THREE

### SPACE: LANDSCAPE AND TRANSITION

‘O Sir,’ said his [Don Quixote’s] niece. ‘pray order these [books of poetry] to be burnt with the rest: for should my uncle be cured of this distemper of chivalry, he may possibly, by reading these books, take it into his head to turn shepherd, and wander through the woods and fields singing and playing on a pipe.’

Miguel De Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

Had *Don Quixote* been set in eleventh century Andalusia rather than the unified Spain of the sixteenth century, the delusional knight errant’s niece would have feared her uncle, upon reading books of poetry, would think himself a courtier drinking wine in palace gardens rather than a shepherd wandering woods and fields. Landscape has long been a pivotal construct in the definition of culture, both of Self and Other. Latin authors, identifying themselves as refined urban dwellers, derided the barbarians by portraying them as primitive forest dwellers dependent upon the hunt for sustenance. Germanic culture reclaimed the forest as a locus of spiritual and artistic virtue, immune to the decadent seductions of urban life.<sup>1</sup> Pre-Islamic poets depicted the desert as a wasteland in which individuals and tribes displayed bravery, generosity and chivalry while animal protagonists faced the dangers of thirst, starvation, heat, and human hunters. In the urban ‘Abbasid empire, Arabic poets of Persian descent mocked Arab origins by stripping the desert of its noble associations and portraying Bedouin customs as primitive and backward.<sup>2</sup> In Romance literature, the wooded forest appeared paradoxically as an anti-courtly refuge and as an unknown place of peril and exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter approaches the subject of landscape in medieval Hispano-Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A. A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1995), pp. 83, 98.

<sup>2</sup>The so-called *shu’ubiyya* poetry, see Julia Ashtiany et al., eds, *Abbasid Belles-Lettres (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 187.

literature, beginning with the garden and contrasting it with the desert and forest. Andalusian culture--both Muslim and Jewish--elevated the palace garden as an expression of urban glory, idealizing nature through art while subduing it through engineering. As discussed in chapter two, the palace garden was a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden bound by an organized conception of space and a scripted set of cultural practices. In the post-Andalusian period, the garden emerged as a succinct image of the past whereas the contrasting landscapes of desert and forest became central to the poetics of displacement and nostalgia. The study of landscape in medieval Hebrew verse testifies to authors' perceptions of Andalusia and Christian Spain as different places, distinguished from each other by language, culture and ecology.

## **GARDEN**

### **A Perpetual Spring**

Since the earliest descriptions of medieval Spain, Andalusia has been portrayed as a veritable garden, a landscape that has hovered between the realms of the natural, the human and the divine. In this sense, the palace garden functions as a microcosm of the natural landscape of Andalusia and the paradisaal realm. The palace garden simultaneously mimics and recreates nature, altered by the hands of artful, technologically skilled landscapers. In turn, poets further reformulate the garden using language reminiscent of the paradisaal gardens in holy books.<sup>3</sup> In the *Nafḥ al-tīb min ghuṣn al-Andalūs al-raṭīb*, the exhaustive compendium of Andalusian history and literature compiled by al-Maqqarī in the seventeenth century, the impression is given that Andalusia was covered by a

<sup>3</sup> Corinne Saunders, *Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge [England] : Rochester, N.Y. : D.S. Brewer, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>On the use of Qur'anic imagery in Arabic garden poetry, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Intoxication and Immortality : Wine and Associated Imagery in al-Ma'arri's Garden," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, eds. J. W. Wright Jr. and Everett K. Rowson (1997). On the Andalusian garden in general, see Fairchild Ruggles, "The Gardens of the Alhambra and the Concept of the Garden in Islamic Spain," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, edited by Jerrilynn D. Dodds (New York:

continuous garden. Quoting the ninth century Sheikh Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā al-Rāzi, al-Maqqarī notes.

The land of al-Andalus is the western extreme of the fourth clime. In the opinion of the wise it is a land plentiful in lowlands with good, arable soil, fertile settlements (*janāb*), flowing copiously with plentiful rivers and fresh springs. There are few poisonous beasts. [It possesses] a temperate climate and pleasant breezes. Its spring, fall, winter and summer are relatively temperate and well-balanced such that no season generates excess... Its fruits are ripe at most times, not wanting.<sup>5</sup>

One nineteenth century translator of this passage did not seriously distort its sense when he embellished, "it may be said that a perpetual spring reigns over Andalus, this being the reason why most of the fruits of its earth grow in all seasons."<sup>6</sup> What al-Rāzi omits from the landscape are the desolate and arid regions abutting the areas of growth, resembling desert more than a verdant garden. As Thomas Glick has pointed out, wide stretches of the southern Peninsula resembled "the face of the moon" during this period due to the effective deforestation projects of the Romans.<sup>7</sup> According to medieval Arab historians and geographers, Islamic Iberia was considered a naturally cohesive region. It was temperate and constant due to its location at the edge of the fourth clime, which somehow ended just beyond the border of Muslim settlement.

Centuries after al-Rāzi, the traveler Ibn Baṭṭūta would find a similar landscape in Granada, then the last remaining stronghold of Muslim Spain.

[Granada] is the capital of Andalusia and the bridegroom of its cities. Its environs are unparalleled on earth. It covers forty miles and is crossed by the well-known Genil river and many rivers like it. Many types of gardens (*riyādāt, jannāt, basātīn*), palaces and vineyards surround it on every side.<sup>8</sup>

Granada is a remnant of Andalusia, continuous in landscape and in cultural values. Still

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).

5 Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsānī. *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, edited by Iḥsān 'Abbas (Beirut, 1968), I., p. 129.

6 Aḥmed b. Mohammed al-Makkari. *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, translated by Pascual De Gayangos (London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1840), p. 18.

7 *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 54.

8 al-Maqqarī. *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*...p. 176 = *riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūta* p. 665, 670.

absent is any mention of landscapes other than the garden. The presence of bald, desolate spaces in Granada would be emphasized centuries later by the English author Washington Irving. Following his journey from Seville to Granada in 1829, the author produced descriptions of the landscape that diametrically oppose those of the Arab historians and geographers. Irving writes in his *Tales of the Alhambra*,

Many are apt to picture Spain to their imaginations as a soft southern region, decked out with the luxuriant charms of voluptuous Italy. On the contrary, though there are exceptions in some of the maritime provinces, yet, for the greater part, it is a stern melancholy country with rugged mountains, and long sweeping plains, destitute of trees, and indescribably silent and lonesome, partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa. What adds to this silence and loneliness is the absence of singing-birds, a natural consequence of the want of groves and hedge...<sup>9</sup>

This is not to say that Irving never found the landscape described by Ibn Battūta and al-Rāzi; his description of Granada does incorporate some living elements of the medieval landscape. Yet verdancy seems to come forth miraculously from the desert, the underlying landscape, which is somehow forced to violate its very nature and give forth life,

[Granada] is one of the most mountainous regions of Spain. Vast sierras or chains of mountains, destitute of shrub or tree and mottled with variegated marbles and granites, elevate their sunburnt summits against a deep-blue sky, yet in their rugged bosoms lie engulfed the most verdant and fertile valleys, *where the desert and the garden strain for mastery, and the very rock is, as it were, compelled to yield the fig, the orange and the citron, and to blossom with myrtle and the rose...* We at length emerged from the mountains and entered upon the beautiful vega of Granada. Here we took our last midday's repast under a grove of olive trees, on the border of a rivulet, with the Moorish capital in the distance and animated by the ruddy towers of the Alhambra, while far above the snowy summits of the Sierra Nevada had shone like silver...<sup>10</sup>

The plant life that emerges from the desert is that most closely associated with luxuriant Mediterranean culture and the Andalusian pleasure-garden in particular. Unlike the medieval accounts, the gardens and groves are perceived as oases rather than the normative, perpetual ecology of the fourth clime.

Of course a certain amount of ecological transformation did occur between the

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<sup>9</sup> Washington Irving, *The Alhambra*, with an introduction by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, illustrated by Joseph Pennell (London: Macmillan and Co., 1931), p. 1.

centuries of Ibn Battūta's visit and Irving's. The southern Iberian ecology changed as the agrarian methods of Muslim Spain, ideal for an economy intertwined with urban centers, were neglected following the *Reconquista* and the flight of the Muslim population. Northern habits of land-devouring pastoralizing soon took over,<sup>11</sup> creating the ravaged landscape Irving perceived as "desert." Irving's depictions are fueled by his expectations of finding in Andalusia the remnants of the medieval Moors and ancient Arabians. He saw himself as a veritable *picaro*,<sup>12</sup> entering a region unfamiliar and unexplored by his European audience, a region with "the savage and solitary character of Africa." For Irving, Andalusia was created by the descendants of a people who were paradoxically sophisticated urban innovators and primitive desert Bedouin. His expectations seem to materialize wherever his eye turns.

In ranging over these boundless wastes, the eye catches a sight here and there of a straggling herd of cattle attended by a lone herdsman, motionless as a statue, with his long slender pike tapering up like a lance into the air; or a long train of mules moving slowly along the waste like a train of camels in the desert... Thus the country, the habits, the very looks of the people, have something of the Arabian character.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the lone herdsman was more likely descended from a family of Northern Christian herders than the Bedouin of *Najd*.

This phenomenon exemplified by Irving's writing highlights a central premise of this dissertation: authors find landscapes that they expect to find and project cultural significations onto natural settings. To borrow from Simon Schama's insightful comment, "landscapes are culture before they are nature."<sup>14</sup> An author's sense of place, belonging, and displacement are produced by preconceptions of and reactions to the landscape being

10*ibid.*, p. 1 (my italics).

11Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain...*, p. 103.

12consider the following passage. "Such were our minor preparations for the journey, but above all we laid in ample stock of good-humour, and a genuine disposition to be pleased: determining to travel in true *contra bandista* style; taking things as we found them, rough or smooth, and mingling with all classes and conditions in a kind of vagabond companionship. It is the true way to travel in Spain." *The Alhambra...*, p. 14.

13*ibid.*, p. 6.

encountered. In turn, descriptions of those places are molded by the author's associations with the given landscape. This point is as important for reading the Hebrew authors displaced from Andalusia as it is for reading Ibn Battūta and Washington Irving.

In Arabic writing, Andalusia is not the only place to be identified with the garden. In fact, the initial appearance of Andalusia as a garden is in no small measure owed to the Syrianization of the Andalusian landscape, a vast scientific project of the early Spanish Umayyads. That the Andalusian landscape was not originally identical with that of Syria is captured in a verse composed by ʿAbd al-Rahmān I, the first Umayyad prince in Cordoba (ruled 756-788). Confronting his own sense of displacement, he addresses a palm tree planted in his garden,

A palm tree set for us upon the pavement, in the Western Land<sup>15</sup> remote from the Land of the Palm.<sup>16</sup>

I said, "like me in estrangement, remoteness and the duration of separation from my children and family.

You have grown in a land in which you are a stranger, you and I in our alienation and separation."<sup>17</sup>

Through the introduction of Syrian methods of agriculture including an irrigation system suited to the needs of a predominantly urban economy, the landscape itself came to be a mirror of the original seat of the displaced Umayyads.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, early geographers often compare Andalusia with Syria<sup>19</sup> and Andalusian cities, particularly Granada, with Damascus.<sup>20</sup>

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, following the political upheavals of the Almohad invasions, authors invert this paradigm and ironically emphasize that Damascus reminds them of Andalusia. Thus, Ibn Saʿīd al-Andalūsi remarks that no place in the East

14 *Landscape and Memory*.... p. 61.

15 i.e. Andalusia.

16 i.e. Syria.

17 translated from Fātima Ṭaḥṭah, *al-Ghurba wa 'l-hanīn fi 'l-shi'r al-andalusī* (Casablanca, 1993), p. 53.

18 Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*.... p. 55.

19 e.g. Abu ʿAmar al-Sālamī and Abu ʿUbayd al-Bakrī. See al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-rīb*.... I:126.

20 e.g. al-Shaḡīndī, "As for Granada, it is the Damascus of the cities of al-Andalus." See al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-rīb*... p. I:147.

reminds him of his native home of Granada with the exception of Damascus.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Judah al-Harizi, a thirteenth century Iberian Jewish author who portrays Spain nostalgically as "the Garden of God, . . . the life of souls, the flowers of her garden like the stars in heaven,"<sup>22</sup> describes Damascus in an Arabic *maqāma* using similar terms,

Afterwards, I came to Damascus and found it to be a garden for souls, a shield from all harm, a delight to every raised eye, a bright blaze on the noble brow, and a pearl for the royal necklace. How plentiful are its lofty luminous stars! The flower beds of its rivers are scattered, the garden beds of its garden are topaz, the gardens of its blossoms gold. The torrent beds of its elevated places are like those of *Najd*: it is all plantation. In it are lovely gazelles in their covert glowing with beauty as if they were brides... How brilliant its dust! How fragrant its perfume! How redolent its scent! How luminous its countenance! You would think that the scent of musk was stolen from it, or that the stars of the horizon were created from its lamps...<sup>23</sup>

The landscape is perceived and portrayed as a garden even as it harks back to another idyllic place, *Najd* of the Arabian Peninsula, a place as laden with nostalgia in Arabic literature as Arcadia is in the western imagination.<sup>24</sup> Al-Harizi's *Najd* is not the wasteland of Washington Irving's primitive Bedouin but the pristine font of Arabic literary culture. It is an idyllic place of memory commonly evoked in Arabic writing. When writing in Arabic, al-Harizi utilizes the reservoir of images available to the Arab poet, playing on the nostalgic resonances of mythic places.

The other garden of al-Harizi's day was Alexandria, which is described in the author's collection of Hebrew *maqāmāt*, the *Tahkemoni*,

Heman the Ezrahi speaks: "I was in the land of Egypt, which at that time was a delight to behold and comely as Jerusalem. Its pastures were full of delicacies, its choice fruits were new and old, its gardens fresh and luxuriant, planted with plants of pleasantness, like a bride with the Nile on her neck as a necklace..."<sup>25</sup>

Moses ha-Dari,<sup>26</sup> a twelfth century Karaite writer of Andalusian descent,<sup>27</sup> nostalgically

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21 Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*...., p. 63.

22 Yehuda al-Harizi, *Tahkemoni*, edited by Y. Toporovsky (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 3, 345.

23 Yehudah Ratzaby, "Maqāma 'aravit me-'eto shel al-Harizi," *Biqoret u-farshanut* 15 (1980): p. 30.

24 Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 114ff. The nostalgic association originates, it seems, in the 'Udhri poetry of the early 'Abbasid era.

25 al-Harizi, *Tahkemoni*, p. 89.

26 On Dari' and his *maqāma*, see Moshe bar Avraham Dari', "Maḥberet No Amon u-Miṣrayim," edited by

recalls the days of youth spent in his birthplace, Alexandria, by evoking the image of the city as a garden.

When the time of my youth had not been emptied out from the vessel of company into the vessel of wandering, and the days of my prime were fragrant oil dispersed for my respected name, and the seasons of toil were as distant from me as the East is from the West and would not approach, I suckled a teat of joy-spiced wine and the wine of the pomegranates of repose. I roamed and leapt upon the mountain of spices. All the pleasures of the world did not depart from my fattened soul. I was delighting and secure on the lap of youth and freedom, lying in the bosom of tranquility in the city of *No Amon*, the city full of the preciousness of grace like a pomegranate. Word of its beauty was heard throughout the ends of the earth like a bell, the city blessed and filled with every beauty, with good construction from an ancient time. The horn of every other city is bent like bulrush before her... And the spacious houses, their beams cedars anointed with gold and vermilion, inlaid with every type of gem... Their courtyards did not lack alabaster, ivory or pearl. And the gardens and orchards covered them as the waters (cover) the sea... all of its plants found favor in my eyes like the aloes that God planted so that her residents and citizens called her by the name "My delight is in her."<sup>28</sup>

Finally, Al-Maqqarī himself describes Damascus of the seventeenth century in similar terms.

I was resolute upon travel to the city whose refinement and merit shines. Damascus of the Levant (*al-Shām*), possessing beauty, splendor, modesty and decorum, lofty trees and fragrant breezes. It is where [one finds] revered shrines, esteemed meeting places, luxuriant surroundings and gardens... elongated shadows, verdant branches, flowers that look as if they were smiling with dew as their saliva, tender branches, whose sweet smell yearns for the eternal garden.<sup>27</sup>

What is the significance of these similar depictions of Andalusia, Alexandria and Damascus from the pens of Muslim and Jewish authors between the ninth and seventeenth centuries?

What is the relationship between an author's memory of one place and his experience of another? The similar depictions do not point to an absolute continuity of landscape but rather to a certain typology of place. Undoubtedly there were real similarities between the appearances of fourteenth century Granada and seventeenth century Damascus, especially

Israel Davidson, *Madā'ei ha-Yahadut* II (1927): pp. 297-308. See also Moshe bar Avraham Dari', *Jewish Poet in Muslim Egypt: Moses Dari's Hebrew Collection*, critical edition with introduction and commentary by Leon J. Weinberger (Leiden; Boston, Ma: E. J. Brill, 2000).

<sup>27</sup>The author reports with pride, "They bore me in *No Amon* (Alexandria) though my progenitors are from Spain, in the land of the west. Since my youth poetry has been my craft, my heart moans for it and trembles for it." Correcting *lo*, "for it" in place of *li* "for me" per Davidson's suggestion (note 13).

<sup>28</sup>"My delight is in her," *hefsi ba* (Isaiah 62:4). Dari', pp. 300-01.



as both cities were molded by the technological and agricultural styles of the Umayyads and their descendants. Yet more than this, the authors were projecting similar ideals onto natural phenomena and planned landscapes. The landscape is tame, suited for human settlement and ultimately for the advancement of intellectual, especially literary, culture. It is as if *all of these* places were nourished by a single perpetual spring. The recollection of a place as a garden represents culture lost; discovering the garden in places visited represents culture found. This landscape, this garden, becomes a concise way of evoking a cultural model, an icon that comes to stand for the culture itself. Al-Maqqarī assembles typological descriptions of these “garden-places” because he sees them as culturally continuous. In his writing, the places appear as stars in different spatial planes, their rays of light originating in different temporal moments, now appearing to shine with equal magnitude and forming a single constellation.

### **The Garden as Icon in Medieval Hebrew Poetry**

Even before the dissolution of the Jewish communities of Andalusia, the garden takes on the status of a cultural icon in Hebrew literature. As shown in the previous chapter, the garden stands out not only as the meeting place of literati and aristocrats but also as a microcosm of the celebrated culture.<sup>30</sup> As the Andalusian cultural context begins to dissolve in the twelfth century, the garden takes on a pivotal role in cultural identification. It becomes the landscape that Andalusian authors displaced from the Andalusian environment recognize as their own.

Hebrew and Arabic poetry expresses personal and communal loss by remembering the past as a lost garden. The Arabic tradition preserves a large corpus of poems specifically dedicated to mourning the destroyed cities of Andalusia.<sup>31</sup> In Ibn Shuhaid’s

<sup>29</sup>al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb*..., p. 58.

<sup>30</sup>see chapter two of this dissertation.

<sup>31</sup>An anthology of these has been compiled and studied by ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad al-Zayyāt, *Rithā’ al-*

(992-1035) lament over Cordoba, which was razed in 1013, the past glory of the lost city is conveyed through garden imagery,

I was well acquainted with it (Cordoba), its state of affairs brought together its people.  
life in it was verdant.  
The scent of its flowers appeared to them with winds, exposing the sleeping quarters.  
Perfection set up its quarters in its dwelling while wanting could not make itself known.  
The people dwelt secure in the variation of its handsomeness, they wrapped themselves  
in its beauty.  
How good they were in its palaces and women's quarters. In its palaces full moons  
came to rest...  
O dwelling place upon which and upon whose people the bird of separation has alighted  
so that they changed and became unknown,  
Tigris and Euphrates, Nile and Kauthar, all overflowed between your banks.  
While you were suckled by a cloud with the water of life, reviving your gardens and  
causing them to blossom.  
My grief is for a dwelling whose spring encampments I knew well and whose gazelles  
would strut through its open courtyards...<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Ibn Khafāja remembers his lost home of Valencia as a garden, which in turn is likened to a new bride whose veil has been removed,

A garden in al-Andalus  
Is a bride's beauty first unveiled,  
a perfumed breath  
  
Its morning splendor is a dazzling,  
smiling mouth,  
The darkness of its night,  
the deepest hue of lips  
  
And when the wind blows from the east,  
I shout: How I yearn for you,  
O Andalus!<sup>33</sup>

Concerning these lines, J. Stetkevych has written, "he expresses his yearning for that garden which has been his native land and which was lost and then remembered as fragrance, color, purity, joy, and passion, all sensations and things of beauty which conjure the intermediate metaphor of the woman as a garden."<sup>34</sup>

Andalusian Jewish expressions of lost culture appear in great numbers following

*mudun fi al-shir al-`arabi* (Bengasi, Libya, 1990).

<sup>32</sup>Arabic text, al-Zayyāt, *Rithā` al-mudun...*, pp. 657ff.

<sup>33</sup>quoted from J. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd...*, p. 189.

the Almoravid invasions of the 1090s although earlier precedents also exist. The sentiment of loss is associated not with the destruction of Andalusian Jewry as a whole nor with Andalusia itself but with the displacement of individual poets. Seldom in the Hebrew tradition is there reference to displacement from a particular city as we find in the Arabic tradition. Aviva Doron has taken the general absence of place names as a sign that Jews did not relate to the physical aspect of Andalusia in the same manner as non-Jews.<sup>35</sup> This leads to an important question regarding whether the garden being evoked through memory in the Hebrew corpus stands specifically for Andalusia and its cities or more generally for a way of life. While the Hebrew poets occasionally refer to specific place names,<sup>36</sup> their longing seems to be more culturally based. Prioritizing culture over cities allows them, in some instances, to find “new gardens” in other places.

The following is an excerpt from a poem by Samuel ha-Nagid that the scribe introduces as “a poem from his youth, when he departed Cordoba,”<sup>37</sup>

By God and His worshipers! A man such as I will keep his pledge!  
 With my legs I will ascend a cliff<sup>38</sup>and descend into a pit, get stuck in valleys.  
 I will sew together the edge of one desert with another, and traverse the sea tossed about  
 in every ship.<sup>39</sup>  
 I will wander until I reach and ascend a peak. It will be forever known.  
 My enemies will find terror in me but my friends will find salvation!<sup>40</sup>  
 I will pierce holes in the ears of free men while my ear will be pierced for my friends.<sup>41</sup>  
 I have a soul that grasps companions, I have a soul that repels opposers.  
 And in it for you is a garden, filled with friendship, planted along the river of love...

In his prideful boast, the wandering poet fears neither desert nor sea, cliff nor canyon. In his soul he maintains a garden of friendship for his distant companions. With the poet

<sup>34</sup>ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Aviva Doron, “Arim ba-shira ha-ivrit be-sefarad,” in *Sefer Yisra'el Levin* (1994), I, pp. 69-78.

<sup>36</sup>most prominently Granada (*Hadar Rimon* (Moses ibn Ezra, Brody p. 67 [67], line 31) or *Bet Rimon*), significantly figured as the house of the pomegranate. The only poem to name cities in this period is Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Aha yarad 'al sefarad*, which is discussed in chapter four of this dissertation. In addition to the discussion there, see Mark Cohen, “Persecution, Response and Collective Memory...”, 37ed. Jarden, p. 209 [67]; *wa-lahu fi al-ṣabā 'ind intiqālihi min qurtuba* (lines 13-20).

<sup>38</sup>*sefa*, usually “boulder” but cliff seems more appropriate.

<sup>39</sup>*soḥah* - literally swimmer, i.e. something afloat.

<sup>40</sup>The Hebrew is stated in the passive. “In me will be found terror for my enemies, etc.”

<sup>41</sup>Boaring a hole in one's ear is a sign of voluntary servitude (Exodus 21:6).

severed from the luxurious and familiar landscape of the Andalusian garden and (figuratively) caught between deserts and seas, the garden is refashioned into a portable miniature of itself.

The two outstanding poets to write nostalgic poems following the Almoravid invasions are Moses Ibn Ezra, who resettled in the Christian North, and Judah Halevi, who died just before or after completing a pilgrimage to Palestine. For each of these poets, the garden would remain a symbol of cultural refinement. In a *qaṣīda* addressed to Moses Ibn Ezra, Halevi writes,

The daughters of Time bore us separate, though the daughter of love bore us as twins!  
We were raised on spice gardens, nursed on the breasts of vines.<sup>42</sup>

The garden is the shared place of origin for the poet and his addressee, both displaced from Islamic Spain. It is the lost, mythic locus of their common literary culture and their very source of sustenance. In other contexts, Halevi expresses longing for friends by evoking the garden that persists in his heart and dreams,

In my heart there are flourishing<sup>43</sup> plantings for you,  
But for your wandering there are enduring wounds.  
When I mention your name, I gather the greatest of spices,  
But for your separation, I suck the poison of asps.  
Due to your kindness, there are corals between my lips,  
But due to your wandering there are thorns in my kidneys.  
My loves offer you peace [so great] that  
The clouds cannot sustain it.  
As [vast] as the waves of the sea between you and me,  
Like winds, lands and settlements.  
A friend, because of whom I call out to my dream,  
"Be gentle until I behold a garden of delight!"<sup>44</sup>

The absence of actual gardens is apparent in their replacements in the poet's heart and dreams. The poet expresses his longing by internalizing the symbols of society, friendship, literature, and delight.

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<sup>42</sup>Brody, I:154, poem 101 lines 35-38.

<sup>43</sup>*nā'aman* - Isaiah 17:10. Although probably the name of a specific plant, perhaps the Adonis plant, Abraham Ibn Ezra understands this as "fast growing," based on the Arabic cognate *n'im*, "to be tender, green." There is also a red flower called *shaqā'iq al-na'amān* in Arabic, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*,... p. 1578.

After leaving Andalusia, Halevi found other gardens in place of the lost garden. Most concretely, he discovered a new garden in Egypt, a stopping ground on his journey to Palestine.

Has Time stripped off the clothes of terror and garbed itself in clothes of preciousness?  
The earth is dressed in fine weaving and embroidery, and made supports inlaid with gold.  
Every sown area along the Nile is chequered as if the dwellings of Goshen (Egypt) were girded with the breastplate's colors...  
Those noble and virtuous girls<sup>45</sup> along the Nile, they are gazelles though they are heavy.<sup>46</sup>  
Their hands are encumbered by bracelets, and their strides made short by anklets.  
The heart is enticed and forgets its old-age and remembers that it is still among boys and girls.  
In the Garden of Eden in Egypt along the Pishon (Nile), in gardens and fields along the river's bank.<sup>47</sup>

The laudatory description of the areas around the Nile is characterized by common images of the Andalusian repertory (earth dressed in embroidery, the planted area is chequered, dwellings are girded with the colors of the priest's breastplate, etc.). Beyond the function of extolling Egypt's beauty, these images allow for a continuity between Andalusia and Egypt, blurring the spatial and temporal gaps and allowing the poet to "forget his old age."

Some have argued that Halevi departed from Spain on his famous pilgrimage journey to Palestine due to the social upheaval of his day.<sup>48</sup> It might be that he did not leave the "West" only because he considered it worthless and opulent, but also because the life he knew and enjoyed there had decayed. Although Halevi's vow of pilgrimage was the outcome of a deep religious conviction we must also be mindful of the contributing factor of Andalusian decline. In Egypt, Halevi found Andalusia resurfacing,

<sup>44</sup>Brody, I:56, poem 41 lines 1-12.

<sup>45</sup>*shidah ve-shidot*, occurring only once in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 2:8), the meaning is uncertain. Halevi's usage is consistent with Ibn Janāḥ's definition (from the root *shdd*), 'azīza - 'azā'iz, karīma - karā'im (precious, high-minded, virtuous, generous women).

<sup>46</sup>corpulence was a sign of beauty.

<sup>47</sup>Brody, I: 112, poem 78 lines 1-6.

<sup>48</sup>see the discussion, for example, in Lenn E. Goodman, "Judah Halevi," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 220.

the garden serving as the icon of that culture. Again he enjoyed the company of intellectual companions, dwelling among them as a celebrity.<sup>49</sup> Whether or not he found this “New Andalusia” ultimately satisfying is another question.

Unlike Halevi, Moses Ibn Ezra never embarked on a pilgrimage to Palestine but spent his final years in the northern Iberian kingdom of Navarre. Until the end of his life, Ibn Ezra referred to himself as a refugee and fugitive, wasting away in a prison of isolation. In many poems written from the Christian North, Ibn Ezra includes evocative garden descriptions that refer to past memories, elevating the desperate nostalgia of the poem. The poet juxtaposes his long night of wandering with the felicitous memories of garden soirées.

The troops of a night of wandering, too tired to run, too weary to move across the sky,  
I thought them silver nails planted in the firmament, or narrow portals.<sup>51</sup>  
The moon sleepless like a lover while they (the stars) watch him like scouts.  
I imagine that their numbers are diminishing but no, they multiply at every moment.  
But on a night of companionship, they are immediately swept away, driven out by the  
stars of morn...  
A night whose end<sup>51</sup> is mixed with its beginning, its extremes gathered together.  
A night whose color is like the color of coal, the wind like a bellows and the lightning  
like sparks.  
There is no light except the light of goblets full of flowing golden waters...  
And the buds of the heavens disappeared for they were swept away by the waters of  
dawn's rivers.  
And the stars of the garden beds rose in it, there they were scorched by the sun's eye...<sup>52</sup>

The poet is forlorn as the long night of wandering refuses to pass; he waits for the stars to diminish but they multiply oppressively. The blurring of stars and buds, the symbols of wandering and companionship, creates an effect of heightened nostalgia. The poet, desperate in his state of separation, remembers the garden, drinking and companionship.

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49on Halevi's sojourn in Egypt, see the most updated discussion in Moshé Gil and Ezra Fleischer, *Yehudah ha-Levi u-venei hugo* (Jerusalem: Ha-iggud ha-olami le-mada'ei ha-yahadut, 2001), pp. 174-257 and citations therein.

50based on I Kings 6:4, where Rashi, following the Rabbis, understands the windows of the Temple to be wide on the outside of the building but narrow inside so that one might see out with only a minimal amount of light coming in. This would fit the context nicely.

51accepting Brody's emendation, reading *sof* instead of *suf*, honey. Brody's emendation is supported by the reading in a manuscript to which he did not have access: see the note by Pagis in volume three of the *Diwan*, p. 225.

The medieval scribe introduces this poem, which is a long panegyric, with the following superscription in Arabic, “And by him belonging to the art of description (*funūn al-awṣāf*) and he appended to it the praise of Abi al-Ḥasn al-Battāt; he said it while settled in Castile.” Modern scholars have done little to go beyond this medieval notion of reading, which imagines the art of writing to be solely interested in description while ignoring the poetics of nostalgia so essential to reading the poem. The poem is not so much about describing a garden as about evoking the garden as a nostalgic icon of past delight.

In the introduction to his well-known work on poetics, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara*,<sup>53</sup> Ibn Ezra apologizes to the addressee of his book (who had asked numerous questions concerning poetry) for his delayed response. Writing from Christian Spain toward the end of his life, Ibn Ezra dwells upon the subject of displacement and the loss of intellectual companions,

Your request of me met weakness, idleness, languor and difficulty due to two reasons: one was out of fear that the masses would designate me one of the empty minded people, for they [the masses] are the most severe in our generation in despising good culture.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, I saw that the most atrocious of things is forsaking the opinion of the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) when the masses dislike it. It is said, “he who advises the masses will afford them no benefit beyond the advice he has granted, but he who gives advice to the virtuous lords (*al-sāda al-akhyār*) and dear ones (*al-aḥibba*), the benefit will reach both classes.” The second reason is due to that which Time has hurled at me at the end of my life: long separation from my native country and the disappointment<sup>55</sup> attained in a distant land and a remote frontier. I am imprisoned in jail, nay buried in a tomb. It is true what is said, the intellectual is not more satisfied by that which gives him sustenance than he is by his homeland. It is written in the Qur’ān (4:66) of the Arabs “If we had ordered them to kill themselves or abandon their homes, only few would have done so.” “Killing oneself” and “leaving one’s home” are considered equivalent. It is also said, “estrangement is one of the two prisons.” It is also said, “the foreigner is one who has lost the social companions (*ijulasā*) whose company he enjoys and his allies upon whom he depends.” Another said, “the foreigner is like a plant whose land has been taken by night and has been deprived of drink: it is withered and does not bear fruit, it is faded and does not blossom.”<sup>56</sup>

The final image of the withered plant deprived of its soil is most significant as Ibn Ezra

52Brody, p. 185-86, poem 185 lines 1-9, 21, 23. This poem is discussed at greater length in chapter two.

53 Moshe Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara*, edited by A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem, 1975).

54Halkin translates “because of the enmity for culture that most of our contemporaries hold,” p. 3.

55reading *ikhtiyāb*, not *ikhtiyāb*.

56*Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara*..., pp. 2-4.

frequently refers to himself as a “withering plant” in his poetry.<sup>57</sup> The self-identification with the plant is grounded in the understanding of Andalusian culture as a flourishing garden.

Unlike Halevi, Ibn Ezra never found another garden in a new land, not even temporarily. This is not to say that he stopped imagining the garden or writing about it. In fact, the garden continued to occupy his literary imagination, persisting, perhaps, with even greater vigor. However, Ibn Ezra did find certain replacements for the garden in small groups of refined intellectuals and in writing. In another Judeo-Arabic work on poetics and exegesis, Ibn Ezra introduces himself as a “refugee from his homeland, a fugitive from his resting place, alone without his people or dwelling.” He invites his readers in the “frontiers” (*thughūr*),<sup>58</sup> the “remaining notables among the loved ones and vanquished, brothers who possess fine lineage and pure fugitives among the people of refined culture” to join him in “gardens of kinship and refined culture.”<sup>59</sup>

In Moses Ibn Ezra’s poetry, longing for friends is closely linked with the theme of the garden, the icon of the lost culture. The strongest memory of the garden is associated with scent, specifically with spices that are able to travel on gusts of wind from friends to the poet. Schippers<sup>60</sup> has already noted that Ibn Ezra uses this theme to express his nostalgia for Granada in the following verses,

Spiced winds pass through the evening twilight at Granada and blow over the mountains  
of the Sierra Nevada;  
Come, flutter gently<sup>61</sup> toward my brothers, and bring their spices to my nose.<sup>62</sup>

The redolent wind allows the spatial gap to narrow. Ibn Ezra is utilizing a theme already developed in Arabic poetry. In the following verses, Ibn Zaidūn writes nostalgically for

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<sup>57</sup>see below.

<sup>58</sup>i.e. the outposts and hinterlands distant from Muslim power centers, a term common in Arabic texts from the period of the *Reconquista*.

<sup>59</sup>MS Oxford 1430 folio 11a.

<sup>60</sup>Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*, p. 195.

<sup>61</sup>*Iraḥafu*, conflating the meanings of “to be soft” (Jer. 23:9) and “to blow.” Both share the basic meaning “to be fluttery.”



his Andalusian homeland.

A wind with embalmed gusts, which blow in the evening, has restored to health a sick person:  
Received with pleasure from an East Wind: this wind makes even the most odorous fragrances aromatic:  
Was it pieces of musk or was it Valencia, which was diffusing her delicious perfume?<sup>63</sup>

The theme of the East Wind, or *ṣabā*, has a history that precedes Andalusian poetry by centuries. This is a breeze that originates in Arabia, in Najd, and blows westward; it is already the subject of anecdotes and religious lore in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.<sup>64</sup> The mere evocation of the East Wind comes to signify nostalgia and longing for the spatially and temporally distant. The same device is used in Ibn Khafāja's poem discussed above, which remembers al-Andalus as a fragrant garden (likened to a bride). "And when the wind blows from the East, I shout: 'How I yearn for you, O Andalus!'"<sup>65</sup> For Ibn Ezra, the wind passes through Granada, the distant garden of his memory, bringing comfort to his loved ones even as it carries them to him.

Ibn Ezra's yearning for the past causes him to recreate "new gardens" throughout his poetry by projecting the garden onto other objects. Through this displacement of the iconic image, the culture represented by that icon is allowed to persist. In some panegyrics, Ibn Ezra refers to the *mamdūh*, the "one praised," as a garden. While this in itself is not uncommon, Ibn Ezra specifically identifies friends as replacements for something larger that has been lost.

Behold, *plantings of love* are watered by the waters of desire, their fruit is eternal and will not come to an end.  
The fruits of friendship will be gathered from them when the *garden of love has been laid waste*.<sup>66</sup>

The friends in the poem serve as the new garden, a replacement for the lost culture. Now that the garden of love has been laid waste, the poet seeks the enduring fruits of

62 Brody, p. 26, poem 20 lines 43–44 (I use my own translation instead of Schippers').

63 quoted in Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*... p. 195.

64 J. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*... pp. 123ff.

65 quoted in J. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*... p. 189.

friendship. Longing for friends, of course, is not unique to the Hebrew poetry following the Almoravid invasions. It is a highly conventional way of addressing patrons and friends in panegyrics. The separation of friends often provides the very occasion for composing poetry. However, in the poetry following the Almoravid invasion, the longing intensifies as it becomes inextricably linked with the sense that a way of life has been lost.

Poetry itself can also serve as the site of the replacement garden. In a *qaṣīda* written in response to a letter that arrived “like the descent of cold water upon a soul burnt by the flame of desire, that lifted to my nose the blowing spices of wind,”<sup>67</sup> Ibn Ezra describes poetry as “a garden bed of spices but plucked only with the hand of my wisdom’s thought.”<sup>68</sup> The image’s appearance in a poem written from Castile is significant, for it provides a clear contrast with the bleak landscape of the present,

I moan for my iniquity has set a trap for my feet amidst thrusting Edom.<sup>69</sup>  
 Where the face of my desires has grown darker than black while the plaits of my hair  
 have grown white.  
 My soul longs to see men of wisdom though with her eye she cannot see them.  
 But rather wild beasts who are very foolish, on account of whom the world is worthy of  
 reproach.  
 On my back they are like heavy sand and on my skin like a scab or eruption.  
 To such an extent that the soil of their *earth was like the dust of brimstone in my eyes,*  
*and the waters of their rivers pitch...*<sup>70</sup>

Over against this landscape, polluted and populated with wild beasts, the letter and poetry stand out as gardens. Ibn Ezra perceives the landscape of the Christian North through his prism of displacement, just as Washington Irving and Ibn Batūta depict landscapes according to preconceptions, cultural expectations and desired effects.

The associations of Andalusia with certain species of plants and trees belonging to a cultivated landscape may also lie at the root of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s cryptic comment on

<sup>66</sup>Brody, p. 125, poem 120 lines 59-60.

<sup>67</sup>Also, in a highly nostalgic *qaṣīda* written from Castile in response to a poem received from a friend in the “West.” Ibn Ezra begins, “Is it the myrtle of a letter’s greeting that brings me scent or the scent of spice gardens [itself]?” (Brody p. 134, poem 131 line 1).

<sup>68</sup>Brody, p. 193, poems 193, lines 3, 8.

<sup>69</sup>i.e. Christendom.

<sup>70</sup>Brody p. 193, poem 193 lines 26-31.

Leviticus 23:40, the verse from which the laws of *lulav* are derived for the festival of Sukkot (during which Jews commemorate their wandering through the desert between Egypt and the Land of Israel). "On the first day, you shall take the product of the citron"<sup>71</sup> trees, branches of the palm trees, boughs of the leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." Associating the Jews wandering in the wilderness with his own wandering and remembering the Andalusian garden with its citrus and palm, the willow by the brook, Ibn Ezra writes, "The wanderer from the land of *Qedar* (Islamdom) to the land of *Edom* (Christendom) knows the secret of this commandment if he has eyes." The *lulav* and *etrog* are portable representations of home, a lost place, that the wanderer can hold and remember.

More than the garden landscape stands for a specific place in the Andalusian Hebrew tradition, it functions as a cultural icon. Poets identify each other as social equals in a refined culture through their mutual sense of belonging to the garden landscape. They remember places of the past as idyllic gardens and express comfort in new environments by portraying them as similar and continuous. With this in mind, we turn to the contrasting landscapes of the Hebrew poetry of wandering.

## **DESERT**<sup>72</sup>

As observed in Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*, the desert stands out in the Western imagination as the seat of Arab culture. In Arabic literature, this landscape is the repository of many cultural meanings. In pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, desert is the ubiquitous backdrop of life's experiences and conveys sentiments ranging from loss, nostalgia and death to love, courageous striving and rebirth. The most famous

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<sup>71</sup>*Yes hadar*, "goodly trees," understood by Rabbinic tradition as the citron tree.

<sup>72</sup>in addition to comments here, see the discussion of pre-Islamic motifs in the *qaṣīda* section of chapter four and appendix A.

of poetic desert themes is *al-bukā' ʿala al-aṭlāl*, “weeping over the ruins.” The topos is well known: The poet, traveling through the desert, arrives at the remnants of an abandoned campsite. Remembering the tribe that once resided there, he weeps and bids his companions to join in the nostalgic musing. The poet especially remembers the departure of his lover, the *ḡāʾima* (from the root *ḡn*, “to wander, depart”). The sight of the ruins triggers a series of memories that whisk the reader back in time to the idyllic days of the tribe’s presence. The poet’s memories often include his erotic exploits.<sup>73</sup>

In the *muʿallaqa* of the pre-Islamic poet Labīd, the nostalgic theme of the ruined encampments is paired with images of new vitality and rebirth.

The dwelling-places are effaced, those for halting and those for permanent residence, at Minā whose low land and high land have been deserted.  
 And the water-courses of al-Rayyān have been laid bare, worn out, just as the stones preserve the writing inscribed on them.  
 Since the time when their inhabitants were here many years have been completed, their sacred months and non-sacred months.  
 The traces of the dwelling-places have been granted the spring rains of the stars; the outpouring of the thunder cloud, its torrents and its gentle rain have watered them.  
 Granted the rains of the night clouds, of the morning-clouds, and the evenings whose thunderings echo one another.  
 So the branches of the Ayhuqān grew high, and the deer and ostriches brought forth young on the slopes of the valley.  
 And the wild cows, having lately calved, gaze peacefully at their young herding in the open space...<sup>74</sup>

The desert is the backdrop for the nostalgic emotion; the effaced dwellings and bare water-courses indicate time’s passage and the demise of tribal life. At the same time, new rains have brought forth a verdant plant life while desert animals have given birth to young.<sup>75</sup> This rebirth serves the double purpose of creating hope while reinforcing the sense of time’s passage. Later in the poem, the desert serves as the setting for a scene in

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<sup>73</sup>The “erotic prelude” or *nasīb* will be dealt with at greater length in the following chapter and in appendix A.

<sup>74</sup>Translation by Kamal Abu-Deeb. “Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (1975): p. 153-54. The reading suggested here follows that of Abu Deeb. Abu Deeb is critiqued by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “Structuralist Interpretations of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Critique and New Directions.” *JNES* 42, no. 2 (1983): pp. 85-107. Further, see the review of scholarly literature in appendix A.

<sup>75</sup> The selection of non-carnivorous animals is significant as carnivorous animals do not signify rebirth

which a valiant oryx, bereft of her young, is hunted by human hunters.

The desert holds numerous functions in the 'Udhri love lyric,<sup>76</sup> a tradition marked by a love that is spiritual and chaste yet frustrated and unconsummated. The star-crossed lovers Jamīl and Buthaynah first develop affection for one another as children, herding camels in the pastoral landscape of a desert wadi. After Jamīl's marriage proposal is thwarted, the desert remains the site of the lovers' trysts, physically and symbolically beyond the confines of tribal convention. Ultimately expelled from the Hijāz, Jamīl wanders the desert and settles in Egypt where he dies. Similarly, the tragic lover Majnūn banishes himself to the desert after his love for Layla is frustrated.

During the 'Abbasid era, a period marked by urbanization, the desert becomes a landscape remembered, both for good and for ill. It emerges as a place of origin, the pristine idyll where life and language were pure, untainted by urban decadence or the linguistic distortions of non-native Arabic speakers. At the same time, the desert--along with its associated themes--is lampooned by poets, particularly those of Persian descent. These poets brandish their pedigrees as urban sophisticates by mocking the primitive and unsavory customs of the desert Arabs. The topos of weeping over the ruins is parodied by such poets as Abu Nuwās.

May a land be drenched other than al-'Alya and al-Sanad, and other than the remnants  
of the abode of Mayya in al-Jarad.  
O abundant cloud, if you were once generous towards al-Liwa, do not return.<sup>77</sup>

Abu Nuwās denigrates the pre-Islamic tradition by evoking the very place names usually associated with nostalgia and proclaiming them unworthy. Elsewhere, the poet similarly refuses to weep over effaced encampments but weeps for the drinking tavern instead, "For this (the tavern) I weep, and not for the dwelling in which Hind and Asmā' once alighted." As with the inversion of nostalgic place-names, Abu Nuwās evokes common names of the

but only further desolation.

<sup>76</sup> early Umayyad period. See A. F. L. Beeston et. al., eds. *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 162ff.

*ẓāīna*--the Bedouin woman who has departed with her tribe--in order to parody the pre-Islamic theme.

In the Andalusian Arabic tradition, the desert, particularly specific places of the Hijāz, retain the status of noble places remembered, less mocked than used to create a sense of nostalgia.<sup>78</sup> The memory of Najd, as shown above, even penetrates the Arabic writing of the Jewish author al-Ḥarīzi, who finds the elevated places of Damascus to be like those of Najd, a place he never visited. The desert is an archetypal landscape in which one expects a certain range of activities (such as wandering, weeping and decay) and emotions (such as loss, desperation and nostalgia).

In the Hebrew tradition, the use of the desert landscape is rare and generally conventional. The most common themes include the departure of tribes and weeping over the ruins. The earliest uses seem to be in the poetry of Samuel the Nagid. The Nagid's poem *Ohalei bat nasī ha-ḥarevīm* is not so much an "anti-*atlāl*-Dichtung" as Schippers suggests<sup>79</sup> but a nostalgic resignation toward the natural cycle of life, death, and life's rebirth,

The remnants of the Bedouin prince's daughter's tents are inundated with rain poured  
by the sons of clouds.  
While the fathers of thunder and lightning's sisters efface them (the remnants), and  
there grasses grow.  
There, where loved ones once poured for you golden waters in golden cups.  
So that you lacked the faculty to distinguish between the light of day and the darkness of  
evening.<sup>80</sup>

In this short poem, the poet nostalgically and conventionally recalls former days when companions drank together. The effacement of the ruins by storms reminds him of former days of revelry. The new grass is a sign of time's lamentable passage but also of life's rebirth and hence hope. In this sense, the poem is like the *mi'allaqa* of Labīd. The cycle

77Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*...., p. 157.

78J. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*...., chapter 3. See also chapter seven of this dissertation on al-Saraqustī.

79Spanish Hebrew Literature. . . p. 157.

80Jarden, p. 288 [141].

of life is reinforced by the concentrated infusion of family imagery; the parallel families (Bedouin father and daughter; storm father, brothers and sisters) remind the reader of one generation's demise and another's birth. It is difficult to imagine that this poem is written in response to an event in the poet's life. The verses are not strongly associated with emotions of self-pity or convincing longing.

The first instance in the Hebrew corpus of the departure of the tribe motif is also found in the poetry of the Nagid, in a poem dedicated to "wise men of the East."

Shall there still be copious rain in clouds when the earth thirsts for nobles?  
 Shall the fall of dew be lifted while the men of healing lie beneath clods of earth?  
 Shall the heads of clouds give drink to the clods when grasses have grown over the  
 heads of the people?  
 [They were] lion cubs who laughed yesterday to the voice of the swallow but today dogs  
 chide them!  
 Fine men whose names Time erased though their deeds were written on its (Time's)  
 brow.  
 Evening and morning passed judgment on the their names to wander (*lehiṣa'en*) like an  
 Arab tent...  
 What use is there in the wine of love and going to a wine feast after the departure of  
 loved ones?...<sup>81</sup>

The use of the word *lehiṣa'en* for "to wander" is particularly significant since it is a cognate of the Arabic root, *ḥṣ*, which is strongly associated with the departure of the tribe motif<sup>82</sup>. Another desert function inherited from pre-Islamic poetry is found in Joseph Ibn Ḥasdai's famous panegyric to the Nagid, the *shira yetoma*. Here the poet evokes the *rahīl* or "journey" motif of the *qaṣīda*, referring to the lover who, in search of the beloved, valiantly "wraps himself in a veil of darkness like a garment to pasture the stars of twilight and to wander the waste of the desert, a dwelling of terror and fear."<sup>83</sup> Also in a *qaṣīda*, Ibn Gabirol refers to the departure of his companions, "I saw them while they were on their camels; my heart turned, my strength faltered and my strength grew faint."<sup>84</sup> Thus, beyond the impulse of convention there is a strong and logical association between the

81ed. Jarden p. 216 [72], line 6ff.

82Although this example is not mentioned, see Nehemiah Allony, "ha-Ṣevi ve-ha-gamal..."

83ed. Schirmann, HHSP, I., p. 172 [54], lines 1-2.

84ed. Jarden, p. 45 [23] line 11.

desert and the themes of departure, wandering, distance and longing. In the generation of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi, there is a sharp increase in references to the desert and its associated motifs. Ibn Ezra in particular brings the desert to life through the expansion of conventional motifs, and by furnishing the landscape with various species of carnivorous animals and herbivores.

The conventional use of desert themes and their parallels in the Arabic corpus have been noted by scholars for many years. However, the poetic *function* of the desert landscape has received relatively little treatment in scholarship. In an article of 1966,<sup>85</sup> Israel Levin argues that the desert landscape is employed by Moses Ibn Ezra because the author “esteemed the later *badi’i* style,” i.e. in his emulation of the conventions of manneristic Arabic composition, the Hebrew poet displayed his dexterity in the classical genre of desert composition. While the theme of ruins might have had some basis in reality, since Ibn Ezra and other poets did see palaces abandoned, Levin finds the surfacing of desert themes surprising. Because the desert landscape appears only in limited cases before the generation of Ibn Ezra, Levin concludes that Ibn Ezra’s motivation in composing the poems is the imitation of Arabic norms. Ibn Ezra is able to excel in this area beyond his predecessors because of his greater “confidence.” Thus, for Levin, there is little association between the poet’s experience and the landscape presented in his poetry. A reading such as Levin’s is grounded in the notion that Jewish writing in this period is primarily an expression of an assimilation-positive cultural posture.<sup>86</sup> For Levin, the instinct to imitate and assimilate far outweighs the author’s desire to use poetry as a vehicle for personal expression.

More recently, scholars have suggested that Ibn Ezra’s predilection for desert motifs stems from his specific experience as one whose friends departed for Christian

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85 Israel Levin, "Ha-bekhi 'al ḥarvot ha-me'onot ve-ha-demut ha-lailit ha-meshoṭetet," *Tarbiš* 36 (1966): pp. 278-96.

86 see also Thomas Glick and Oriol Pi-Sunyer, "Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish



Spain, leaving him isolated, and later wandering to Christian Spain himself. Schippers writes, "In many of Moses ibn Ezra's poems we find the departure motif from the *nasīb* used to indicate his own feelings of being abandoned by his friends and family..."<sup>87</sup> Scheindlin notes that "The poems in which Ibn Ezra uses the *atlāl* motif are connected with a lament on his own isolation. It would seem that the nostalgia of the *atlāl* motif provided a suitable way of introducing the tone of self-pity that would become an important part of the poem..."<sup>88</sup> It is clear that the usage of desert motifs is conventional. This does not mean, however, that convention serves as the poet's foremost purpose or that the motifs do not carry associations essential for reading the poems. By referring to a camel, tribal tents, ruins, weeping, and wandering, the poet is utilizing the repertory of images and significances awarded him as a member of a literary and cultural group. While a certain amount of acculturation is a prerequisite for accessing this literary system, the intent of the author surely lies beyond identifying himself as a member of this group.

Central to Ibn Ezra's desert poetry is the contrast between the desert landscape and the landscape of the garden. In the following verses, Ibn Ezra effectively contrasts the palace garden and the desert and the species of animals appropriate to each setting,

The dwellings of my loved ones have become ruins, their palaces have become like deserts.  
 A place [once] designated for doe to tread and a trampling place for gazelles,  
 But today leopards crouch in their place and lion whelps growl within them [the dwellings].  
 And in gardens where the swift and crane had nested, buzzards and falcon gather to lament.<sup>89</sup>  
 I wander upon inclining walls and roam the thrust down fences.  
 Gently, I express longing<sup>90</sup> for their dust and hope that the stones will be revived from their ruined heap.<sup>91</sup>

History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11 (1969): pp. 136-54.

87 Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*,... p. 159.

88 Raymond Scheindlin, "The Hebrew Qasida in Spain," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Stephen Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 125-6.

89 The contrast between the actions of the birds is heightened through a paranomasia: the swift and crane nested (*qinenu*) while the buzzards and falcon gathered to lament (*le-qonen*).

90 reading *aḥonen* under the influence of the Arabic *ḥanīn*. Otherwise, "I feel compassion."

The sharp contrasts between palace and wasteland, non-carnivorous and carnivorous animals, is striking. The desert serves as an economically succinct image that immediately conjures up an array of nostalgic emotions. As an heir to the Arabic literary and cultural traditions, Ibn Ezra is able to draw on these images in order to alert his readers of the intended emotional tone of the poem. This is also accomplished by evoking the motif of weeping and the semantic depth of roots such as *ʕn*.

How long shall lovers call out for naught to the cars of ruined dwellings?  
 Like the deaf they listen, or like the dumb they are too weak to answer their cries.  
 They *halted, weeping*<sup>92</sup> for their inhabitants went out at the Head of the Exiles by Time's  
 command.  
 With their *tents they wandered (saʕanu)*, they hid in the shade of the ribs of the sons of  
 fraternity.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to the references mediated by the Arabic language, the Hebrew poet also has at his disposal the many associations of biblical phrases. The aristocratic identity of the wandering friends is implied in the reference to the “Head of Exiles,” (*rosh golim*) mentioned in Amos 6 7, where this group is identified as those who “lie on ivory beds, lolling on their couches, feeding on lambs from the flock and on calves from the stalls. They hum snatches of song to the tune of the lute. They account themselves musicians like David. They drink [straight] from the wine bowls and anoint themselves with the choicest oils.” Unlike the usage in Amos in which the group signifies decadence and indulgence, Ibn Ezra’s usage is laudatory and recalls a lost way of life. These exiles are aristocrats like himself who have been forced to give up their lifestyle and wander in culturally barren places.

Interestingly, Ibn Ezra occasionally defends the use of conventional themes such as weeping over the ruins. In a *qaṣīda* he writes,

[Once]the days of my life were satiated with the honeycomb of love, intoxicated only with the wine of youth.

91ed. Brody, p. 90, [91] lines 1-6.

92 a common motif of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*.

93ed. Brody p. 9, [7] lines 1-4. The obscure reference to “hiding in ribs” probably means that they found

In a land more pleasant than all other lands, its inhabitants created according to their will.

...

I left it for its people passed away:<sup>94</sup> they (the lands) are like prisons without them.

The people are dwellings' souls: when they (people) are lacking they (dwellings) search for ghosts in vain.

I yearn for inhabitants, not dwellings, for the people of good grace not chambers.

And for people of understanding, not bricks, for those who come, not entryways...<sup>95</sup>

This is not an anti-*atīlāl* motif but rather a defense of conventionality. The language suggests that Ibn Ezra may have been critiqued for holding confused priorities in utilizing the weeping over the ruins motif so liberally. Because he mentions dwellings so frequently, one might think that he had no feelings for people. In this verse, Ibn Ezra is not only clarifying his view but is defending the use of the conventional motif. He is stating that weeping over ruins *means* longing for friends and that evoking the motif is an efficient manner of expressing the precise emotion of yearning for lost relationships. In the same poem, Ibn Ezra goes on to exploit further the desert landscape as a vehicle for expressing nostalgia and displacement,

My Time has purged me from among them and appointed me to live in a *desert of wild beasts*:

[They are] beasts though they starve for a morsel of intellect, thirsting for waters of faith,

[They act like] knowledgeable men but they devise to destroy, [they act as though] they are guiltless but they sin against the pious.

They pretend to be wise but wise they are not, they prophesy but not with the visions of prophets.

The wind of their love is not a wind to winnow but is like *a dry wind that lays bare*.<sup>96</sup>

In migrating to the Christian North, the displaced poet encounters a landscape that is both familiar and foreign. He expresses the foreignness by projecting the desert landscape, a place familiar as a literary motif, onto the actual landscape of the Christian North. In wandering this "desert," the poet is always in search of "new gardens," remnants of and replacements for the lost culture of Andalusia. Continuing to the *madīh*, or panegyric section, of this poem, the poet praises his friend as a "shoot of spice,"

But there (in the desert) Time allowed me to meet a shoot of spice amidst a garden of weeds.

no shade or comfort except inwardly.

<sup>94</sup>i.e. departed.

<sup>95</sup>Brody, p. 18 [13], lines 16-22.

<sup>96</sup>ibid., lines 23-27. This "dry wind" is also a reference to the desert landscape, Jer. 4:11 "A dry wind of the hills in the wilderness..."

A rose amidst thorns and high weeds, a myrtle amidst forest trees and high grasses.<sup>97</sup>

The friend is identified with fixtures of the Andalusian garden (spice, rose, myrtle), found in a foreign environment (weeds, forest). The poet has almost unconsciously transformed the landscape depiction from a barren, desolate desert to an overgrown and unruly forest. This brings us to the landscape of the forest, which is associated with its own layers of cultural and literary meaning.

## FOREST

One landscape that has gone virtually unnoticed in the corpus of medieval Hebrew poetry is the forest, quite different from the desert but equally distant from the garden. The desolation and waste of the desert and the unruly wilderness of the forest both provide similar contrasts with the balanced *hortus conclusus* that the Andalusian poets recognize as their own. In the following verses, written by Moses Ibn Ezra from Christian Spain, the poet rebukes his former social peers for abandoning the manners of Islamic Spain. According to the poet, the Andalusians have assimilated into Christian culture;<sup>98</sup> this is not a fulmination against religious conversion but against adopting the social customs of the “barbaric” North,

I have come to the border of wickedness and the [Christian] people whom God scorns,  
whom all existence curses.  
Amongst wild beasts who love to deal corruptly and lie in wait for the blood of others.  
[Those I once knew] chose the ways of their new compatriots. They desired them and  
socialized with them.  
They mingled with them so that they were counted among them and were thought to be  
of them.  
In the days of youth they pastured in the *garden of righteousness* but in old age they  
gather wood in the *forest of treachery*.<sup>99</sup>

The garden and the forest are pitted against each other as opposite landscapes. The forest is clearly meant to be the Christian North while the garden, not surprisingly, represents

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<sup>97</sup>ibid., lines 28-29.

<sup>98</sup> or, alternatively, the culture of Jews of the Christian north.

<sup>99</sup>ed. Brody, p. 24 [20], lines 33-37.

Andalusia. Unlike the desert, a landscape known mainly from literature, the forest constitutes a real dimension of the Northern landscape. Thus, the employment of the image has some basis in the actual perception of a shifting landscape. This is not to say that there were no forests in the Muslim south. Rather, the forest in the south was less pervasive. It was perceived as a place distant from urban culture and carried a different range of connotations. As Thomas Glick has shown, above and beyond the differences in temperature and rainfall, there was a perception of different ecologies between Islamic and Christian Spain determined by culture more than climate.<sup>100</sup>

Andalusian culture shows ambivalent attitudes toward the forest. As urbanization expanded in Muslim Spain, trees were utilized for goods, agriculture and naval supplies. As was already the case in Roman Spain, deforestation was a natural stage of urbanization that was met with little resistance or lamentation. The low status of the forest as compared with other aspects of the landscape is reflected in the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*. Sultan Yusuf Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'min<sup>101</sup> explains that the Umayyad kings made Cordoba their capital because of "the many spacious dwellings, the broad streets, the magnificent, imposing structures, the flowing river, the temperate climate, the verdant environs, the wondrous soil, the *adequate* forest (*al-sharārā al-kāfiyya*)..."<sup>102</sup> Following this list of superlatives, the "adequacy" of the forest indicates that it was valued as a source of raw materials but not appreciated for beauty or pleasure.

The forest serves a utilitarian purpose but is not included in the aspects of landscape intrinsically associated with sophistication, delight and high culture. It appears as a place unowned, where the people go at appointed times of year to gather raw goods for industrial use, to manipulate them for use in urban culture. Forest trees such as the oak are known and valued for building, but they are not emphasized as beautiful species.

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<sup>100</sup>*Islamic and Christian Spain*.... p. 57.

<sup>101</sup>Second Almohad Caliph, mid-twelfth century.

<sup>102</sup>*Nafḥ al-ṭīb*.... I:154.

existing beyond the area of settlement. In one anecdote, the people would go out to the forest (*al-sha'arā*) in order to collect the kermes (*qirmiz*) insect from oak trees; a red dye would be extracted from the insects' bodies.<sup>103</sup> Also, a story is related about Abu Husayn 'Alī b al-Hamāra, a musician of Granada, who became famous for standing in the forest, tearing down a branch with his bare hands, and carving from it an 'ūd.<sup>104</sup> Here we find the ideal of taming nature for cultural, in this case musical, consumption. More than the trees of the forest, Andalusian culture identified with "tame" trees such as the olive and pomegranate. In some cases, Muslim settlement was even distinguished from Christian settlement by the border of dense olive growth.<sup>105</sup> While the olive tree was also known in the agriculture of the North, it was not emphasized as a primary and profitable crop. Following the Christian conquest of regions of the Muslim South, the conquerors often tried to learn Muslim farming techniques and sustain the system of agriculture. However, in many places the fields were abandoned for pasture, turning cities into herding centers.<sup>106</sup>

In the Christian North, the forest seems to have had a somewhat different value. In ordinances and charters, the forest appears as a pervasive and precious landscape. For example, in a Latin charter issued by Ramon Berenguer, count of Barcelona, the inhabitants of Siurana are granted the "houses and lands" given by the count's representative, the knight Bertrand of Castellet. The people of Siurana are also given "all pastures and springs and hunting rights and all improvements in the forest and mountains and wood and all things which are used by people, and free exits and access for all of them and all their cattle and animals."<sup>107</sup> Unlike the settlements of Islamic Spain, the towns of the Christian North commingle with the forest. This charter, expressly designed with urbanization in mind, reflects the pastoral lifestyle of the North where the forest appears as

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<sup>103</sup>ibid. p. 201.

<sup>104</sup>ibid., V:273 = Dozy ed. II p. 517.

<sup>105</sup>Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain...*, p. 78.

<sup>106</sup>ibid., p. 103.

<sup>107</sup>Translated by Thomas N. Bisson in Olivia Remie Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from*

valued grazing land. There is little interest in reshaping the natural ecology of the forest. As forest space began to grow scarce, lords and kings protected their resources. These early acts of conservation restricted the communal use of forests and timbering in the town forest. A pro-forest ideology is alluded to in one of the anti-deforestation statutes of Alfonso X in which the "great pleasure they [forests] afford men when they behold them" is cited among the policy's justifications.<sup>108</sup>

Whereas the forest emerges only occasionally in the Arabic literature of Muslim Spain,<sup>109</sup> it is the most prominent landscape in the emerging literatures of the Christian vernacular languages. It occupies a prominent role despite the common emphasis placed on the courtly world. The landscape has no singular meaning, representing (often simultaneously) idyll and exile, refuge and terror, love and violence. It is a place of refuge from social convention, the standard landscape of the quest, the primary context for displaying chivalry and valor, and sometimes a place of terror.<sup>110</sup> These various meanings are all found in the *Poem of My Cid*. Having been banished from the court of Alfonso VI, the Cid (Ruy Díaz) exits the city gate and crosses the river Arlanzón. He dismounts along a river beside the town of Burgos. The scene is described as follows, "The Cid Ruy Díaz, knighted in a fortunate hour, encamped on the river bank, since no one would give him lodging in his house; with his good band of followers around him he settled there as if *he were out in the woods*." Later in the poem, the Cid marries his daughters to the nefarious Infantes of Carrion who dishonor the Cid by abusing their wives. Following the marriage, the Infantes and the Cid's daughters enter the

oak forest of Corpes, where the branches of the lofty trees seemed to stretch up to the clouds, and the wild beasts roamed at large. They found a grassy clearing with a fresh

*Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 125-26.

<sup>108</sup>*Las Siete Partidas* (7.15.28), see Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*...., p. 74.

<sup>109</sup>usually in *tardīyyāt*, hunting poems. An example is the *ayk*, "thicket" mentioned in a hunting poem of Ibn Khafājah, see *Nafḥ al-tīb*, I: 683. See also Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The Hunt in the Arabic *Qasīdah*: The Antecedents of the *Tardīyyah*," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, edited by J. R. Smart (Surrey, UK: Curzon, 1996), pp. 102-18.

spring, and there the Infantes ordered a tent to be set up. On this spot they spent the night with all their company, and with their wives, to whom they showed signs of tender love.

In the morning, pleasure turns to terror as the Infantes “strip their wives to their shifts and beat them, hacking their flesh with straps and spurs, leaving them for dead in the oak forest of Corpes.”<sup>111</sup>

In his eleventh century Hebrew-Arabic dictionary, Ibn Janāḥ translates the Hebrew word *yā'ar* as *shā'arā*, meaning “forest, densely wooded area, etc.”<sup>112</sup> This is the same term used above in the numerous references to the forest in the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*. Identifying with the cultural perspective of the urban Arabs, Andalusian Hebrew poets consistently depict the forest as a foreign territory. It is a place associated with exile, estrangement and destruction, possessing none of the noble associations of refuge, beauty, love or chivalry found in the European tradition. Already in Moses Ibn Ezra’s poetry of estrangement written while the poet lingered alone in Andalusia, the landscape becomes overgrown with “foreign shoots.” Even Wandering itself is a tree.

The leaves of the tree of Wandering have not fallen for it has taken the water of my tears like a willow.  
My intimates have gone afar though their forms delight beside me and will not be displaced.  
In a dream, the spices of their perfumed oils are swabbed upon my wounds of wandering.  
Since they wandered with their tents, I dwell in the tents of love that are spread out.  
I complain against Time though it has no sin, but more [I complain] against the ruse of its corrupt men.  
*Saplings of foreign shoots flourished, even where they were not planted.*<sup>113</sup>

The poet’s very home becomes a foreign place, dotted with “foreign shoots,” transforming the familiar landscape into something strange and dreadful.

In one instance, Levin identifies the forest in a poem by Halevi as an image of exile. The poem is a *ge'ulah*, a poem of redemption, which opens without reference to

110Corinne Saunders. *The Forest of Medieval Romance...*

111*La Poema de Mio Cid (The Song of the Cid)*, translated by Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry. (London: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 163-65.

112see also Sa'adia Gaon's translation of Psalm 29:9.



any specific historical event.

Dove who was borne on eagles wings,  
Who nested in Your bosom amidst the chamber of chambers.  
Why have You forsaken her to wander in forests?  
Among those who set snares in every region?  
Strangers entice her with other gods.  
While she, in her hiding place, weeps for the husband of her youth.

Despite the ahistorical introduction of the poem, an allusion to the specific displacement of exile from Andalusia soon follows.

Pleasant girls, banished from cities,  
From fresh beds and secure rest spots,  
Dispersed among an unlearned folk,  
Amidst stammerers of speech and foreign tongues...<sup>114</sup>

The motif of “pleasant girls, banished from cities” evokes the urban culture of comfort of Islamic Spain. In this sense, the poem works on numerous levels.<sup>115</sup> Levin suggests that the image of the forest indicates that Israel was “surrounded by hunters spreading their nets from every side, their fate reflecting that of refugees of war in the forests of the border between warring camps, chased and pursued by the Muslim warriors of the desert from one side and the Christian knights of the sword from the other.”<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, it might be that the image of the forest refers to Christendom specifically given that the exile referred to is from Andalusia. This reading is supported by the reference to “stammerers of speech,” Moses Ibn Ezra’s common epithet for Christians and Romance-speaking Jews. In any case, the forest is clearly an image of exile’s abode and is perceived as an entangled, threatening environment.

In his poetry written from Christian Spain, Moses Ibn Ezra expresses his encounter with the foreign forest landscape, even less familiar than the desert. This encounter amplifies his feelings of loneliness and estrangement,

<sup>113</sup>ed. Brody, p. 74 [72], lines 48-51.

<sup>114</sup>ed. Brody vol. IV, p. 67-9, [24] lines 1-6, 20-24.

<sup>115</sup>There is an interesting parallel to be made with other instances of Halevi’s devotional verse in which the poem seems to refer to the Community of Israel and to the individual soul simultaneously.

<sup>116</sup> Israel Levin, “Ha-sevel be-mishbar ha-reqonqışta be-shirato shel Yehuda Halevi,” *Oşar yehudei*

Time and his sons have distanced my intimates from me: they (the intimates) were completely gathered up.  
 O how they (the sons of Time) brandish their swords at me, while I am a sword unsheathed in his (Time's) right hand.  
 He wraps me like a turban in order to boast, and violently tosses me like a ball to the bottom of a pit.  
 He has made me like *a bud withering in the forest*, like a rose picked among thorns.<sup>117</sup>

The image of the "bud withering in the forest" is consistent with Ibn Ezra's simile for estrangement in the introduction of his *Kitāb al-muḥādara wa-l-mudhākara*, "the foreigner is like a plant whose land has been taken by night and has been deprived of drink; it is withered and does not bear fruit, it is faded and does not blossom."<sup>118</sup> The poet is planted in a foreign soil, struggling for survival. Elsewhere, Ibn Ezra extends the simile even further. "In anger [The sons of Time] purged us from the palaces of pleasure and hastened to lead us to Christendom (*bat Edom*)... among them we are like *myrtles among the trees of the forest*, our leaves withering."<sup>119</sup> The myrtle (*hadās*) is a plant of the Andalusian garden often praised in Hebrew (and Arabic) verse. For Ibn Ezra, it symbolizes all that is urban, cultured and refined. This myrtle is uprooted from the "palaces of pleasure," now withering in the foreign landscape of Christendom's forest. In contrast with the balanced landscape of Andalusia, the untamed wilderness of the Christian forest signifies the lack of a sophisticated, literary culture that was so central to the poet's sense of home.

It is not difficult to observe new attitudes toward the forest landscape emerging in the Christian environment. Todros Abulafia (1247-d. after 1298), a Jewish court poet in urban Toledo, wrote a response to a poem by R. Meir Ben Shoshan, who had left the city for a sort of forest retreat. In praising the superiority of R. Meir's poem to his own,

*sefarad* 7 (1964): p. 52.

<sup>117</sup>Brody p. 175. [176] lines 4-8.

<sup>118</sup>quoted above, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup>ed. Brody p. 113-14 [112], lines 14, 31. In another poem, the poet indicates that he is resigned to drinking with companions who are not his customary companions and writes, "He who lacks the shade of myrtles will sit in the shade of willows." The myrtle expresses refined culture, the willow untamed wilderness. (Brody, p. 29 [24], line 5).

Todros attributes the quality to the clarity of thought that the retreat afforded his friend, free of urbane distractions.

In the land of honey and the village of forests,<sup>120</sup> you cut trees of knowledge in forests.  
While we in the cities cut dry wood, food for asses.  
You browse through henna in the villages while we consume straw like steer.  
You have fastened to yourself links of the necklace while we have bound pebbles in bundles.  
Before you poets stop their words and nobles hide themselves in holes.  
Can stones be compared to corals, can thistles be likened to pearls?  
You can magnify wisdom as long as men are fruitful and multiply like fruits.  
You became honored by virtue of your separation, you became exalted without beholding haughty brutes in cities....<sup>121</sup>

While Todros was never a “forest poet” and generally favored the urban garden landscape, this poem reflects an attitude toward the forest unknown in Islamic Spain. The forest does not appear as the foreign landscape of estrangement but rather as the landscape that affords “great pleasure when men behold it,” as Alfonso X had stated.

In conclusion, scholarship on medieval Hebrew literature has generally approached all poems dealing with natural phenomena as “nature poems” without considering “landscape” as a distinct literary category. This brief survey of landscape in medieval Hebrew poetry demonstrates that authors project meanings onto natural phenomena and express their senses of place and estrangement by evoking particular landscapes. References to gardens, be they of the real *hortus conclusus* or the figurative gardens that exist in poets’ hearts, convey a persistent memory of Andalusian culture. The garden has two counterpoints in the desert and forest, one the archetypal realm of displacement adopted from Arabic letters and the other based in the anxiety-ridden perception of Christian Spain’s ecology. For the Andalusian poets, the associations of landscape are consistent with the worldview of Arabic authors. The subject of landscape will be revisited in chapter seven of this dissertation.

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120 *qiryat ye'arim*, playing on a place name in the Bible, Joshua 9:17 and elsewhere.

121 *Gan ha-meshalim ve-ha-ḥidot...* vol. II, p. 66 [571].

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FORM: VARIETIES OF NOSTALGIA IN HISPANO-JEWISH POETRY

The three major Jewish poets who left Andalusia permanently between 1091 and 1142--Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra--all wrote poems about the decline of Andalusian Jewry. Moses Ibn Ezra composed several personal complaints concerning the abandonment of Granada by Jewish intellectuals after the Almoravid conquest and his own wandering to Castile and Navarre. Halevi composed at least three poems associated with the fall of specific Andalusian cities to the *Reconquista* and expressed nostalgia for Andalusia in some poems from his pilgrimage to Palestine. Having already left Andalusia, Abraham Ibn Ezra composed a famous lament over the collapse of Andalusian and Maghrebi communities during the Almohad persecutions.

Whereas the previous chapter of this dissertation treated authors' responses to cultural transition collectively, this chapter contrasts these three authors' poetic responses to the decline of Andalusian Jewry. By focusing on the significance of poetic form, we gain insight into how each author experienced displacement and how he wished his audience to perceive his expression and sentiment. In choosing a literary form, an author quickly indicates his poetic voice and identifies himself as a speaker within a given community. While Moses Ibn Ezra adopts the *qasīda* form, speaking with the voice of a nostalgic Arab author, Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra adopt quasi-liturgical forms, locating political events within the framework of exile and redemption specific to Jewish collective memory.

The three authors responded to unique events that had different effects on the Jewish community. The Almoravid attacks were not directed against Jews specifically and resulted in the displacement of only a small minority of Jews. The *Reconquista*, even if

not specifically anti-Jewish in character, had a broader effect on Jews and led to the physical destruction of some institutions of Jewish life. The Almohad attacks did involve a pronounced dimension of anti-Jewish persecution that largely decimated the Jewish communities of Andalusia (and the Maghreb). Still, it is useful to compare the compositions of Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra within the rubrics of cultural transition and the representation of calamity in Hebrew literature. The divergence in poetic expressions is shaped as much by the authors' individual styles and identities as the particulars of each event. By juxtaposing these poems, this chapter transcends a barrier that has been imposed by scholarship between "religious" and "secular verse." The discussion is sensitive to the diverse functions of poetic forms while highlighting the difficulties that arise when a strict division between "religious" and "secular" verse is insisted upon.

### MOSES IBN EZRA: THE *QASĪDA*

1. Will you seek my blood from the mouths of lions, will you seek my sleep from the hands of gazelles?<sup>1</sup>
2. Can the blood of a lover be avenged? Can sleep be sent to him when his pains interfere?<sup>2</sup>
3. As if his eyes were painted with burning flame<sup>1</sup> and painful thorns filled his pupil.
4. And his eyelids could not be closed,<sup>2</sup> as if they were suspended from their backs.
5. As if the night were thrust into a sea of darkness, silent, no rising waves.
6. In my eyes, its expanse<sup>3</sup> is broader than the sea, no shore and no passage for those arriving.
7. The moon on its course in glory is like a shepherd slowly leading his flock in a wide pasture.
8. Or the sun sent him to muster his battalions and designated him general over the troops.
9. And I know not whether it (the night) will be long or short, how can a diseased man understand?<sup>2</sup>
10. I would be ransom for a heart that concealed its love and rendered all people of this world enemies.
11. Yet my wrong is in my eyes, not in my heart, for the tear is truthful speech for those who see.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>rather than mascara.

<sup>2</sup>literally, "distant from joining together."

<sup>3</sup>literally, "its hand," i.e. its span.

12. As if my eyes were fashioned as clouds or pitchers to tilt<sup>5</sup> upon my cheeks.
13. Companions left me to wander; they are no more though they exist in my thoughts.
14. Their forms dealt treacherously with me to a point that they feared approaching me in my sleep.
15. Alas, for Time that plotted to separate my confidants and mounted up my heart's griefs.
16. (Once) the days of my life were satiated with the honeycomb of love, intoxicated with the wine of youth only.
17. In a land more pleasant than all other lands, its inhabitants created according to their will.
18. Slivers of my liver are in its tracts of land, scraps of my heart in its plots.
19. I left it for its people passed away;<sup>6</sup> they (the lands) are like prisons without them.
20. The people are dwellings' souls, when they (the people) are absent they (the dwellings) seek after ghosts in vain.
21. I yearn for inhabitants, not dwellings, for the people of good grace not living chambers.
22. And for people of understanding, not bricks, for those who come, not entryways.
23. My Time has purged me from among them and appointed me to live in a desert of wild beasts:
24. Beasts, though they starve for a morsel of intellect, thirsting for waters of faith.
25. (They act like) knowledgeable men but they devise to destroy, (they act) like guiltless ones though they sin against the pious.
26. They pretend to be wise but wise they are not, they prophesy but not with the visions of prophets.
27. The wind of their love is not a wind to winnow or to cleanse but is like a dry wind that lays bare.
28. But there Time allowed me to meet a shoot of spice among a garden of grasses.
29. A rose rising amidst thorns and high weeds, myrtles among forest-trees and grasses...<sup>7</sup>

For the reader not familiar with the conventions of classical Arabic poetry, Ibn Ezra's opening might seem strange for a poem about cultural decline. The poet's self-referential statements treat his insomnia, his affliction and his perception of the night sky. Only in line 13 does the poet explain the reason for his distress, the departure of friends. In line 19, the poet's circumstance becomes more clear. Completely abandoned, he too has departed his homeland, "a land more pleasant than all other lands" (17). Following line 23, the poet's predicament comes into even sharper focus. He is residing in Christian Spain, a "desert" of boorish "beasts" and false prophets. Through a gradual transition in the final lines of the excerpt, the poet changes subject to praise a *mamdūh* ("one praised"),

<sup>5</sup>i.e. the poet is chastising himself for not concealing his emotions.

<sup>6</sup>cf. Job 38:37.

<sup>7</sup>i.e. "departed," not "died."

Ibn Ezra's distant friend and cultural confidant.

The excerpt is the opening of a Hebrew *qasīda*, a multithematic form popularized in Andalusian Hebrew poetry through contact with Arabic models. More than merely emulating a literary model, Ibn Ezra contextualizes his response to cultural decay within the collective experience offered by the Arabic literary tradition. The following discussion introduces the Arabic and Hebrew *qasīdas* and ultimately returns to the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra and this poem in particular.<sup>8</sup> By properly contextualizing the form and motifs of Ibn Ezra's complaint, we can see that the poet experienced loss through the eyes of an Arab poet and directed reception among a readership with Arab tastes.

### **The Arabic *Qasīda***

The *qasīda* is a formal poetic structure originating in the pre-Islamic Arabic tradition that takes on various manifestations in subsequent periods of Arabic and non-Arabic letters.<sup>9</sup> On the level of prosody, Arabic and Hebrew *qasīdas* conform to the standard requirements of classical Arabic verse--monorhyme and quantitative meter. In most modern scholarly literature, the *qasīda* involves a further requirement of being multithematic, usually binary or ternary in structure, joining together disparate subjects by linking them in succession. Unlike the Hebrew *qasīda*, the Arabic *qasīda* has been the subject of much research in Western scholarship. Scholars have sought to unravel the mysteries of the form's origins,<sup>10</sup> to study its evolution throughout various historical periods and literary trends,<sup>11</sup> and to consider its formal organization and meaning from

<sup>7</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 18-19 [13].

<sup>8</sup>The following cursory account of the Arabic and Hebrew *qasīdas* is extracted from the lengthy discussion of this topic in appendix A. In the appendix, the reader will find the first systematic study of the Hebrew *qasīda* from the perspectives of formal construction and literary history.

<sup>9</sup>The broadest history of the *qasīda* in various languages is the collection of papers edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

<sup>10</sup>Renate Jacobi, "The Origins of the Qasida Form," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 21-34.

<sup>11</sup>The literature is quite extensive here. In general, see Renate Jacobi, "Qasīda," in *Encyclopedia of*

performative,<sup>12</sup> structuralist<sup>13</sup> and anthropological perspectives.<sup>14</sup> What emerges from this scholarship is a loose affiliation of poems dedicated to tribal values in one period, the power of Islamic kingship in the next and the triumph of urban glory in the next.

Thematic choice and organization vary considerably from period to period, from poet to poet, and from poem to poem. A poet might begin with the theme of wandering and end with a personal boast; he might begin with garden description or weeping over desert ruins and conclude with panegyric or invective. The idealized topos of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*'s *nasīb* (prelude), one that would be emulated and then satirized in later periods of Arabic literature, begins with the nomad poet wandering the desert with friends and happening upon an abandoned campsite, now ruins in decay. The poet charges his companions to halt and weep over the ruined encampment where his tribe, or perhaps his beloved, once resided. Weeping triggers a flashback to the past, now lost, through which the poet recalls tribal life and erotic encounters.

Because of its role as a vehicle for past memories, the *qaṣīda* became Arabic literature's nostalgic form *par excellence*. The relationship between the *qaṣīda* and nostalgia has been treated in a number of recent works including Fātima Tahtaḥ's work on estrangement and longing in Andalusian poetry, Muḥammad al-Zayāt's study of Andalusian city-laments (*rithā' al-mudun*), and Jaroslav Stetkevych's study of nostalgic

*Arabic Literature*, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 630-33 Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974). A select bibliography by period - Pre-Islamic: Renate Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qasīde* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1971); James E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qasīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997); Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Early Islamic: Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989); 'Abbāsīd: Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991); Andalusian: Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd...*; Beatrice Gruendler, "The Qasida," in *The Literature of al-Andalus*, eds Maria Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 211-31.

<sup>12</sup> James Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1972): pp. 1-53; M. Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> see Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry...* and appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Structuralist Interpretations of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Critique and New



elements in the prelude section (the *nasīb*) of the classical *qaṣīda*.<sup>15</sup> All of these studies have shown that Arabic literature possesses a distinct nostalgic mode--a set of forms, motifs and semantic uses that resonates within a deep matrix of longing and loss specific to Arab culture. By merely evoking *qaṣīda* form and hinting at its pre-Islamic themes--weeping over ruins, the departure of tribes, wandering deserts, pasturing stars, insomnia--the poet is able to create an emotional backdrop that charges the poem and molds the listener's response.

J. Stetkevych unearths layers of symbolic reference in the *qaṣīda* that hark back to an originary nostalgic core. According to Stetkevych, the *nasīb*, throughout its development, evokes emotions of mournful longing harmonized with the literary and performative expectations of an Arab audience.<sup>16</sup> The motifs of pre-Islamic poetry that make up the *nasīb*--weeping over ruins, pasturing stars, the long night, the departure of tribes, etc.--would remain Arabic writing's language of nostalgia and elegy. As an example, Stetkevych refers to the introduction by Usāmah Ibn Munqidh (d. 1188) to his *al-Manāzil wa al-diyār* (campsites and abodes), an anthology of Bedouin laments over effaced dwellings compiled after an earthquake that struck Syria in 1157 CE,

What moved me to compile the present book was the ruin which had visited my country and my home. Time, in all its arrogance, seemed to have made it its design to efface them by every means. Everything came to be as if it had never existed. Those courtyards, formerly so full of life, were now turned desolate. When I reached home, the fury of the earthquake had already passed. Thus I saw the extent of what happened to that earth which was the first thing to touch me in life. I did not recognize my own house, nor my father's or my brother's houses... My only solace I found in the contemplation of this collection, as I made it from my tears over my home and over those I loved. I know that it is too late for help or benefit now, but all the same, in it

Directions," *JNES* 42, no. 2 (1983): pp. 85-107.

<sup>15</sup> Fātima Taḥṭāḥ, *al-Ghurba wa 'l-hanīn fi 'l-shi'r al-andalusī* (Casablanca, 1993); 'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Zayyāt, *Rithā' al-mudun fi al-shi'r al-'arabi* (Bengasi, Libya, 1990); J. Stetkevych, op. cit.; see also Patricia Crone and Shmuel Moreh, trans., *The Book of Strangers: Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000); Teresa Garulo, "La Nostalgia de al-Andalus: Génesis de un Tema Literario," *Qurtuba* 3 (1998): pp. 47-63; Franz Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," *Arabica* 44 (1997): pp. 35-75; William Granara, "Remaking Muslim Sicily: Ibn Ḥamdīs and the Poetics of Exile," *Edebiyat* 9 (1998): pp. 167-98.

<sup>16</sup>One critique that may be leveled against Stetkevych is that he overstates the consistency of nostalgic

goes all that I have.<sup>17</sup>

The work is a reaction to a deep personal experience based in the persistent and current resonances of the pre-Islamic ode; when a twelfth-century Syrian Arab sought to express relentless sorrow, loss and lamentation, he reached into the storehouse of themes that expressed these ideas. Anthologizing pre-Islamic odes is a form of memorialization and consolation, allowing the compiler (and the reader) to experience the pain of loss within the context of a broad community limited neither by space nor time.

Stetkevych also addresses the "pastoral" motif of Arabic literature, specifically the theme of "pasturing stars" as a form of nostalgic expression. The motif has been identified by Western scholarship at least since 1902, when Goldziher understood it as reflective of "the circumstances of Arabic Bedouinity," for "the watching of stars" is perceived as watching herds and "is connected with the fact that the ancient Arabs had viewed the stars from the perspective of herdsmen."<sup>18</sup> Stetkevych moves beyond such a panoramic view and considers the motif an expression of the poet's loneliness and longing.

The nightly sky of his loneliness is his pasture, the scattered constellations his herds. He will remain the restless, watchful herdsman, or he will delegate this role to the companions of his journey, his beloved, or to the planets in the firmament, who will then share his loneliness... The Arabic pastoral mood is therefore permanently elegiac and for the most part tied to the emotive matrix of the *nasīb*.<sup>19</sup>

Typically, the poet announces his despondency by describing the limitless expanse of the darkness (e.g. a sky like a sea with no shore) and the endless duration of the night (e.g. Imru' al-Qays' famous description of the night moving as slowly as the stubborn and sluggish movement of a camel rising from the ground). Finally, Stetkevych deals with the *nasīb*'s memory of idyllic places--a topic already discussed extensively in chapter three of this dissertation--and with the garden as a nostalgic site in particular.

motifs in Arabic *qasīdas*. As with the Hebrew *qasīda*, nostalgic motifs do not characterize every example.<sup>17</sup> quoted in Stetkevych, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

<sup>18</sup> I. Goldziher, "Bemerkungen zur neuhebräischen Poesie," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 14 (1902): pp. 734-36; discussed in Stetkevych, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>19</sup> *The Zephyrs of Najd*..., pp. 147, 151.

Tahtah's study of estrangement (*ghurba*) and longing (*ḥanīn*<sup>20</sup>) in Andalusian poetry traces the evolution of these expressions throughout successive waves of political upheaval--the siege of Cordoba in 1013 with the disruption of the 'Umayyad caliphate, the Almoravid invasion of 1086 and the Almohad invasion of 1144. The author recognizes the same nostalgia-laden motifs inherited from pre-Islamic poetry studied by J. Stetkevych and also delineates personal modes of expression of individual authors including Ibn Shuhaid, Ibn Zaidūn, Ibn Darrāj, al-'A'ma al-Tutayfī, Ibn Hamdīs,<sup>21</sup> al-Mu'atamid Ibn 'Abbād, Ibn Khafāja and others.<sup>22</sup> Al-Zayāt's work on Andalusian city-laments anthologizes and analyzes elegies composed following the destruction of cities during the same political periods treated in Tahtah's book. The most common form for the city-lament is shown to be the *qaṣīda*, exploiting the fixed solemnity of the formal ode, although other forms (*muwashshah*, *zajal*) are also used.

The first Andalusian Arabic poem to address a fallen city is the lament over Cordoba (destroyed 1013) by Ibn Shuhaid, a contemporary of Ibn Zaidūn, Ibn Darrāj and the Hebrew poet Samuel ha-Nagid. The *rithā' al-mudun* (city lament) genre would be evoked in later generations following the destruction of other Andalusian cities--including Toledo, Medinat al-Zaharā', Valencia, Elvira and Seville--during the Berber and Christian conquests. Remembering Cordoba, Ibn Shuhaid laments the fallen ruins, petitions Time to restore the city's courtyards and remembers the city as a verdant, fragrant garden.

There is none among the ruins to inform us about loved ones; whom shall we ask about their circumstance?

Ask none but separation for it keeps you far from them when they travel in the highland or the lowland.

Time persecuted them and they dispersed in every direction, most of them perishing. Misfortune fell upon their dwellings and upon them so that they all changed for the worse.

So invoke Time to create in their courtyards a light (so bright) that hearts are nearly illuminated by it.

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<sup>20</sup>*ḥanīn* is a short form of *al-ḥanīn ila-'l-waṭan*, "longing for the homeland" (the title of a treatise by al-Jāhiz) and is the Arabic word closest to the English "nostalgia."

<sup>21</sup>who lamented the fall of Sicily; see also William Granara, "Remaking Muslim Sicily..."

For the weeping of one who weeps with gushing tears is insufficient for a city such as Cordoba...  
 I was well acquainted with it, its state of affairs brought together its people, life in it was verdant.  
 The scent of its flowers appeared to them with winds, exposing the sleeping quarters.  
 Perfection set up its quarters in its dwelling while want could not make itself known.  
 The people dwelt secure in the variation of its handsomeness, they wrapped themselves in its beauty.  
 How good they were in its palaces and women's quarters, in its palaces full moons came to rest...  
 O dwelling place upon which and upon whose people the bird of separation has alighted so that they changed and became unknown,  
 Tigris and Euphrates, Nile and Kauthar, all overflowed between your shores.  
 While you were suckled by a cloud with the water of life, reviving your gardens and causing them to blossom.  
 My grief is for a dwelling whose spring encampments I knew well and whose gazelles would strut through its open courtyards...<sup>23</sup>

Ibn Shuhaid preserves the themes and organization of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, beginning with the lament over silent ruins and weeping, leading to a recollection of Cordoba. The poet wishes for the city's restoration and then returns nostalgically to the idyllic memory of a past state and time. He remembers gatherings, dwellings and palaces, waters, and clouds suckling gardens. The poem braids together classical desert motifs and courtly motifs in a pattern of contrast, creating a separation between present and past that is central to nostalgic expression. Of all of the elements of the classical *qaṣīda*, it is perhaps this temporal pattern that is the most persistent, beginning in a lamentable present and returning to a distant past, a lost idyllic epoch. In this way, the *qaṣīda* form is able to enframe one period within another, to call one period present and another past, and to convey a solemn memorialization.

### **The Hebrew *Qaṣīda***

The oldest Hebrew poem to be considered a *qaṣīda* is Dunash Ben Labraṭ's *Dē'eh*

<sup>22</sup>Taḥṭaḥ also includes authors of the Naṣrid kingdom of Granada and a section on religious yearning.

<sup>23</sup>Arabic text, al-Zayyāt, *Rithā' al-mudun*.... pp. 657ff. Part of this poem is discussed above in chapter three.

*libi hokmah*,<sup>24</sup> which combines inward ethical exhortation with panegyric: nostalgia is not among the poem's themes. Isaac Ibn Khalfūn's *Holi libi ve-gam marbīt yegonav* opens with a love poem describing a beautiful "gazelle" and makes a transition to panegyric.<sup>25</sup> The use of the Hebrew *qaṣīda* to commemorate cultural loss begins in the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid, a contemporary of Ibn Shuhaid's. The Nagid fled Cordoba following the city's destruction in 1013, wandering for a time before ultimately settling in Granada. The scribe of the Nagid's *divān* occasionally identifies "estrangement" (*ghurba* or *ightirāb*)<sup>26</sup> as the dominant subject of several poems composed following the Nagid's flight from Cordoba. The *qaṣīda* excerpt below<sup>27</sup> is introduced following the poet's petition to his soul to weep on the occasion of departure.

*By him on the occasion of his departure from Cordoba in his youth wherein he mentions estrangement*

7. One who asks about the location of wandering's flame, I answer, "It is lit in my heart!"
8. When the heart-blood boils up to my head, it descends from my eyes.
9. How can a denier counter what I say when my tears testify!
10. Just as the Pleiades can testify for my tears<sup>28</sup> since she was teaching her children until morn.<sup>29</sup>
11. Through my wandering my eyes have wasted away and my bones have shrivelled as grains have shrivelled.<sup>30</sup>
12. I measure the face of the earth with my legs as if they were two measuring chords.
13. The blood of my eyes was [the only] bread in my house and [the only] provision on the journey.
14. Were it not for the letter my friend sent with a favorable word for my trembling soul,
15. And with news of his well-being, the awaiting death would have come to my soul prematurely.
16. The words were like shade to the laborer, a redeemer to people in a city under siege,
17. Like rain for a thirsting land, like peace for a frightened soul.
18. I read it, calling aloud, "Liberty is proclaimed for my downtrodden soul!
19. My distress and punishment are over! Peace has come and horror departed!
20. My friend remembered me with a letter, my soul is appointed among the redeemed.
21. Comfort has come to my troubled hand, freedom to my shackled leg.

<sup>24</sup>Schirmann, HHSP, vol. 1, p. 35-40 [5], translated and discussed in appendix A.

<sup>25</sup>*holi libi ve-gam marbīt yegonav*, ed. Mirsky, p. 92 [20], translated and discussed in appendix A.

<sup>26</sup>e.g. ed. Jarden, p. 155 [48], p. 206 [66].

<sup>27</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 206-208 [66], lines 7-26.

<sup>28</sup>literally, "the daughters of my eyes."

<sup>29</sup>i.e., the Pleiades, which was awake all night teaching her young, can testify to the poet's weeping and insomnia.

22. I am caught in the hand of foreigners as if I were an accomplice to the husband of Sillah.<sup>31</sup>
23. I wander in a net of wandering. My friends, are you too weak to break open the net?
24. He who can free his friend but ignores him is like one who makes sacrifices to a demon!
25. Friends, I am enslaved to a member [of an alien family]<sup>32</sup>! You are my kin, free me from slavery!
26. Like Benjamin I am stolen from among my brothers: may you be like Judah!<sup>33</sup>...

The poet expresses estrangement through common motifs of wandering: tortured weeping (8-10, 13) witnessed by the stars throughout a long night (10), the poet's measuring the earth with his legs (12). The poem suggests affinities between the circumstance of the author and the predicament of the *ṣur'lūk*, or brigand poet, of pre-Islamic poetry;<sup>34</sup> the poet is wandering, his feet his only riding steed, starving along the journey with his tears as his only provisions (13). Like the brigand poet, he is a social outcast accused of violating the taboos of society's code; he identifies with Lamekh (22), a murderer in Genesis 4:23. Although the poem contains praise for the reception of a letter from a friend (14-21), the poet is also severed from society, caught in a net of wandering from which his friends refuse to free him (25). Unlike Ibn Shuhaid's poem, however, this poem contains no direct expression of nostalgia for a lost time or place; it is concerned with estrangement and present distress more than nostalgia per se. Many of the same themes of estrangement surface in the following poem,<sup>35</sup> now with the added dimension of distinguishing present from past.

*By him, mentioning brothers and estrangement*

1. Must I journey and encamp every day like a vulture dwelling in darkness by night.
2. When every morning wandering mocks my household and at evening my eyes weep

<sup>30</sup>as grains have shrivelled, based on Job 1:17.

<sup>31</sup>i.e. Lamekh, a murderer in Genesis 4:23.

<sup>32</sup>based on Leviticus 25:47: "If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your kinsman being in straits, comes under his authority and gives himself over to the resident alien among you, or to a *member of an alien's family*, he shall have the right of redemption..."

<sup>33</sup>When Benjamin, accused of stealing a goblet from Joseph's house, is taken as a slave by Joseph, Judah petitions Joseph for Benjamin's freedom and offers himself as a slave in Benjamin's place (Genesis 44).

<sup>34</sup>on the *ṣur'lūk*, see appendix A and also Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "The *Ṣur'lūk* and His Poem: A Paradigm of Passage Manqué," *JOAS* 104, no. 4 (1984): pp. 661-78.

from wandering?

3. My Time hurls me from one place to another, like a spear, dart and lance!
4. One day I am a friend to the fawn, but the next, I neighbor the kite.
5. I do not stay two days in a house, nor rest two nights in a structure.
6. As if my legs were obligated to wander through every city and village!
7. I am the man who rushed through wastelands with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.
8. But in my city I had two companions, Yehoshu'a and Yahya ben Ahiyya.
9. In friendship they seemed to us like the sons of the Pleiades and drinkers gathered in a palace.
10. But Time put one in prison and the other in captivity.
11. This separation set scorching in my heart--it is a raw wound!
12. I mentioned him when I was naked and bare--the desert my [only] dress and the Pleiades upon my head.<sup>36</sup>
13. Orion taught its sons the path of the heavens, but me it taught the paths of ruin.
14. He who forgets a brother in good time or bad is like one who is deceitful in performing the work of God.
15. Who gave me as a portion wasteland and wilderness, a parched place, desolate and barren.
16. And gave my friends a furnace, hot pokers, the house of the grave, bitterness and sorrow.
17. Will they return from separation, or will they rise from their descent?
18. Will we sit to expound Torah, and [drink] new wine<sup>37</sup> as we did before?

A number of themes work in concert to create the mood of estrangement: the relentless cycle of journeying and encamping (1), the lengthy desert journey accomplished without a riding animal (6-7), the poet's vulnerability and exposure beneath the constellations of night (12-13), weeping (2), and the hammering effect of densely packed terms for desert, nearly exhausting the biblical lexicon (15).<sup>38</sup> Estrangement borders on nostalgia in line 4 with the poet's transformation from being companion to the fawn, an animal associated with courtly culture (and similar to Ibn Shuhaid's memory of strutting gazelles), to being neighbor of the kite, a scavenger bird especially associated with frequenting ruins.<sup>39</sup> With

<sup>35</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 155-6 [48].

<sup>36</sup>contra Jarden, who comments that it is the Pleiades, and not the poet, that is naked and bare. The nakedness of the poet wandering through the desert is more in line with Arabic poetry, particularly the *ṣa'alik*, or brigand poets.

<sup>37</sup>new wine might also suggest "non-traditional intellectual pursuits" (in contrast with Torah), playing on the associations of "old wine" and "new wine" in *Pirqei 'avot*, 4:20 "Do not look at a flask but rather at what is in it; there may be a new flask [i.e. a young teacher] that is full of old wine [traditional knowledge] and an old flask [an older teacher] that does not even have new wine in it [that does not even possess recent knowledge, which is inferior to traditional knowledge]." If so, the Nagid's verse shows greater respect for "new wine" than the Mishnaic text does.

<sup>38</sup>*yeshimon, shamot, masha'on, sima'on, siyya.*

respect to the poem's temporal organization, it is largely grounded in the distress of the present though it also reaches into the past (4, 8-9, and 18) to recount former days of companionship and Jewish courtly culture (Torah and new wine). Concluding the poem with questions that are simultaneously hopeful and desperate, nostalgically yearning for former days, befits the poem's mood of longing. Unlike Ibn Shuhaid's city-lament, there is no mention in the Nagid's poetry of the city Cordoba, though his nostalgia for life there seems evident. Nostalgia and longing seem more associated with culture, people, and a generalized sense of place than in the Arabic corpus. Still, with the exception of omitting actual city names, many Hebrew *qaṣīdas* closely adhere to the form and style of the Andalusian Arabic city-lament.

The nostalgic themes introduced by the Nagid--insomnia, wandering, pasturing stars--all become extremely prevalent in the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra.<sup>40</sup> Ibn Ezra dedicates a vast amount of verse to the misery of his prolonged wandering, including a dimension of nostalgia for people, gatherings, and Islamic Spain in general. The poet begins to utilize the *qaṣīda* form for nostalgic expression even before his departure from Andalusia. The first stage of Ibn Ezra's estrangement occurred not with his own wandering but with his abandonment when members of his social circle left Granada to resettle in Christian Spain. The poet's familiar surroundings are transformed into a wasteland, at least in a literary sense,

*To one of his friends praising him and complaining about separation*<sup>41</sup>

1. The dwellings of my loved ones have become ruins, their palaces have become like deserts.
2. A place designated for doe to tread and a trampling place for gazelles.
3. But today leopards crouch in their place and lion cubs growl within them.
4. And in gardens where the swift and crane had nested, buzzards and falcon gather to

<sup>39</sup>as in Isaiah 34:15.

<sup>40</sup>Between these Samuel ha-Nagid and Moses Ibn Ezra, nostalgic themes are also expanded upon by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. This poet does not use the themes to commemorate political upheaval but rather to express his loneliness and social isolation. see, for example, ed. Jarden, pp. 45-47 [23]. See also Israel Levin, "ha-Bekhi 'al harvot..." and further discussion in appendix A.



lament.<sup>42</sup>

5. I wander over collapsing walls and roam the thrust down fences.

6. Gently, I yearn<sup>43</sup> for their dust and hope that the stones will be revived from their ruined heap.

7. From the blood of my eyes I pour fourth rivers that a sailor could not traverse by ship.

8. I address them [the ruins] but there is none to pay attention or respond, only jackals mourning.

9. Time, with its mighty hand and outstretched arms cast out their inhabitants.

10. Our joys went after<sup>44</sup> them, our souls captive in their hands.

11. How can we live without them, when they were like spirits in our bodies?

12. Do I weep for my companions or for the departure of brothers and the appointed place of sisters?

13. Or do I grieve for separation from Shelomo whose love was like honeycomb to mouths?...

Expressing his extreme loss, the poet transforms the theater of his experience into the desert,<sup>45</sup> a place strange yet oddly familiar, known intimately through centuries of literary reference. Finding himself among ruins, the poet weeps, selecting the proper response for a member of Arab culture. In this sense, Moses Ibn Ezra exhibits the atavistic yearnings of another people's ancestors. Still, the theme of ruins and weeping in this example is not identical with its pre-Islamic archetype. Traveling through the desert, the pre-Islamic poet happens upon an abandoned campsite, which evokes memories of the past and leads him to weep. In contrast, Ibn Ezra is a stationary witness to the dwellings' transformation and decay. As much as the expression contained in this poem is dependent upon convention, the adaptation befits the poet's circumstance of being left alone following the departure of friends and betrays his feelings of abandonment. Furthermore, the poet evokes nostalgia by recognizing a sharp contrast between the present (desert, ruins, home to leopards, jackals and buzzards) and the past (palaces, treading ground of fawns and gazelles). However, the progression is not identical with the temporal archetype found in Arabic poetry: ranging from pre-Islamic odes to Ibn Shuhaid's city lament: weeping leading to a flashback, reviving a former epoch and way of life.

<sup>41</sup>ed. Brody, pp. 90-91 [91].

<sup>42</sup>the contrast is emphasized with a *tajnīs* between "nested" (*qonenu*) and "to lament" (*le-qonen*).

<sup>43</sup>reading according to the Arabic cognate. *hnn*. Otherwise, "feel compassion."

<sup>44</sup>literally "at their feet," as in Judges 4:10.

The temporal pattern of the lamentable present leading to a memory of an idyllic past is observed in the following example by Ibn Ezra,

1. How long shall lovers call out for naught to the cars of ruined dwellings?<sup>46</sup>
2. Like the deaf they listen or, like the dumb, they fail to answer their cries.
3. They [the lovers] halted,<sup>47</sup> weeping because their inhabitants departed at the Head of the Exiles<sup>48</sup> by Time's command.
4. With their tents they wandered,<sup>49</sup> the sons of fraternity hid in the shade of organs.
5. The stars of light rose on the circuit of the land, even at noon they came.<sup>50</sup>
6. I know not whether they [the friends] loathed the lands or whether the lands vomited up its inhabitants.
7. They departed and soon their dwellings inherited [new inhabitants] for they were expelled from within and did not leave [willingly].
8. Jackals spread throughout their landing places and crumbling abodes,<sup>51</sup> and wailed.
9. Their mouths' laments are heard from the corner of their ruined dwellings though they are not seen.
10. I lament such and so more than they until they take notice of me and are amazed.
11. I set my grievance<sup>52</sup> upon tears that drip such that they destroy them [the dwellings].<sup>53</sup>
12. Woe for the gazelles who cried shrilly [with joy] in them [the dwellings] and in their places ostriches gathered as a host to lament.<sup>54</sup>
13. Alas for the days when my locks were drenched with the dew of youth, the days of black hairs on head and beard.
14. And the plaits of hair on my head where the ravens of youth gathered together, but now they dart away!
15. During the days of youth, the hems of joy were dragged on high and the wine of love was imbibed.
16. [I wonder] if they were fashioned from flowing myrrh or if they were created solely from the spices of deeds of Joseph's son?...

Like the pre-Islamic poet presenting the departure of tribes, Ibn Ezra is the stationary witness to the departure of contemporaries. In fact, he does not even seem to understand

<sup>46</sup>further on the significance of the desert, see chapter three of this dissertation.

<sup>46</sup>ed. Brody, p. 9 [7].

<sup>47</sup>*amdu* - used like the Arabic *waf*.

<sup>48</sup>*rosh golim*, Amos 6:7; the significance of this sobriquet as a signifier of aristocratic culture is discussed in chapter three.

<sup>49</sup>*ṣaranu* - evoking the Arabic cognate *ṣan*, the root associated with the departure of tribes motif in pre-Islamic poetry.

<sup>50</sup>Brody points out that such impossibilities are designated in Arabic *mazj al-shakk wa'l-yaqīn*, a blending of doubt and certainty, or *tajāhul al-ʿārif*, the ignoring of what is known. The impossibility is a kind of hyperbole used to emphasize the stars' role as agents of distress and estrangement.

<sup>51</sup>*beq'eiḥem* - literally, "fissures" (of houses).

<sup>52</sup>*ḥamasi* - literally, "the wrong done to me" as in Genesis 16:5.

<sup>53</sup>the relationship between the drip of tears and the destruction of dwellings is emphasized by a full *tajnīs* between "drip", *araf*, and "destroy," *araf*.

<sup>54</sup>the contrast also contains an effective *tajnīs* between "gazelles," *ṣeva'im* and ostriches' "gathering as a

the motivation for their departure (6). The poet halts and weeps over ruined dwellings for the dwelling's inhabitants have departed with their tents (1-4). Clearly, we are in the world of pre-Islamic poetry. The poet's tears grow so intense that they drive the ruins into further stages of disrepair (11). The poet's sense of estrangement is so powerful that the stars of night, those symbols of loneliness and yearning, shine and haunt him even in the day! (5) The singing of gazelles has turned to the lament of ostriches (12) and wailing jackals have spread throughout the abodes (8). Most significantly, the time sequence is similar to that of many Arabic *qaṣīdas*, opening with the lamentable present and leading to a nostalgic reminiscence over former days. The poem draws a sharp contrast between a lost past and a lachrymose present. From this point in the irretrievable past, the poet returns to the present and makes a transition to the *mamdūh*, here made the very source of the past's mirth.

The conventional time sequence is also observed in the following *qaṣīda*,<sup>55</sup> which seems to have been written before Ibn Ezra's departure from Granada,

1. The day they hitched the chariots of separation for journey, they did to my soul what they did not intend.
2. They placed my heart in captivity; I know not whether they chastised it in fury or if they had compassion for it.
3. With the tongue of my tears I ask them to deal gently with me for my groans have fallen silent.
4. They turned their backs so not to see my face, they blocked up their eyes so not see.
5. Had they known what they did the day they departed, they would have waited a while and not meted out evil.
6. My innards were consumed in the fire of love like straw; like clouds my eyes streamed with the waters of separation.
7. They draw up the blood of my liver for I behold their rivers turbulent when they roar<sup>56</sup>.
8. Woe for dwellings whose inhabitants have departed,<sup>57</sup> destroyed and ruined by tears.
9. I would be ransom for them, for my days with them were short and pleasant like the days of youth.
10. [I would be] ransom for the nights that gleamed with them, for behold, without

host," *niṣba 'u*.

<sup>55</sup>ed. Brody, p. 123 [120].

<sup>56</sup>Psalm 46:4. *yehmeru*, a verb, translated here as "turbulent", might be influenced in this instance by the Arabic cognate *hmr*, meaning "red." This would better explain the image, i.e. upon seeing the redness of the river, the poet realizes that its waters are drawn from the blood of his liver.

- them, even the stars of day are blocked from my eyes.
11. Days that passed like a shadow and seem to my thoughts but dreams dreamt.
  12. Were it not for the sons of the vine vanquishing the sons of Time that have become strong, treating me with animosity.
  13. My limbs would be consumed in a cauldron of death and the chords of Sheol would wrap my body in dust.<sup>58</sup>
  14. They (sons of vine) spoke to me kindly and so my heart grew tranquil and its chambers rested.
  15. They hotly pursued the many distresses until the head of distress was bowed prostrate - they struck without a hand!
  16. In the beryl cup they seemed to be sunlight during the day, redder than the color of rubies.
  17. The sick of heart are restored to health after abhorring all food and finding bread loathsome.
  18. They extinguish flames that rivers of tears could not extinguish yet in them burn red-hot coals!
  19. They went out unarmed to summon stresses to battle and presented the bread of joy to a wanderer.
  20. Does their sweetness derive from milk and honey or from the pleasant love of the sons of Jacob to the mouths of the tasters?...<sup>59</sup>

The *qasīda* opens with the departure of loved ones in the recent past (1-5), leading to the poet's weeping (6-7) and reminiscence over the irretrievable past (7-11), and then returns to the lamentable present (12ff.).<sup>60</sup> Although the style of wine description is quite conventional (wine is more powerful than Time, it alleviates pain, the cup is like beryl and the wine like burning coal), the wine is notably divorced from its usual context, drunk in the company of drinking companions in a pleasure garden. The wine is a numbing consolation for the pain expressed in the first part of the poem, exacerbated by the poet's bittersweet memory of the way things were.

Returning to the *qasīda* by Moses Ibn Ezra quoted at the beginning of this section, we can see that many of the standard *qasīda* themes are present. The poet is a wretched insomniac, forced to gaze at the limitless, expansive darkness (2-6). He appoints the moon the pasturer of stars, which are both a flock and a battalion (7-8). In his

<sup>57</sup>*ṣā'ānu*, see above, note 46.

<sup>58</sup>i.e. drinking wine is the only consolation.

<sup>59</sup>Brody reads "They are sweeter than milk and honey, or even sweeter than the pleasant love of the sons of Jacob...".

<sup>60</sup>This time sequence is also observed in *gedudet leil nedod*, translated and analyzed at the end of chapter two of this dissertation.

desperation, the poet weeps (12), recalling his departed companions and “a land more pleasant than all other lands,” a land that became like a prison once the poet’s companions left (13ff). As discussed in chapter three, Hebrew poets rarely make reference to specific cities in their poetry.<sup>61</sup> However, the identification of this “land” with Andalusia or Granada is unmistakable. Islamic Spain and its culture evoke a powerful and bittersweet memory for Ibn Ezra. The poem follows the common time sequence of the *qaṣīda*, beginning in a lamentable present and returning to a lost, idyllic past. From the past, the poet returns to the present, to his own wandering and the treachery of his contemporaries, until he finally reaches the *mamdūh*, a rose among thorns. With the exception of omitting an actual city name, there is little to distinguish this poem from contemporary Arabic city-laments. Exploiting the time sequence of the classical *qaṣīda* and enframing the past as a lost, idyllic time over against a tormenting present, the poem is a type of cultural memorialization.

Moses Ibn Ezra laments Andalusian decline with the voice of an Arab poet. Although writing in Hebrew, he reaches into the storehouse of forms and images available to the Arabic author to present his feelings of displacement and nostalgia. In doing so, he identifies strongly as a member of Arab culture speaking to an audience of Arabized Jews. The poet does not write for a general Jewish audience but rather for an elite that shares his tastes and values Arab culture. By adopting *qaṣīda* form, the poet boldly pronounces his cultural affiliation as an Andalusian. Throughout his poetry, Ibn Ezra denigrates the non-Arabized Jews of Christian Spain as Philistine ignoramuses, calling them everything from fools, to wild asses, stammerers, and even murderers. In Christian Spain, Ibn Ezra does his best to retain a social circle of intellectuals while pining for former days in Andalusia. His writings show a particular concern for preserving contacts with men of fine “lineage,” a category that transcends both religion and nationality.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Aviva Doron, “Arim ba-shirah ha-ivrit...”

It was perhaps because of the personal nature of his experience that Ibn Ezra did not write liturgical poems on displacement and exile from Andalusia. The poet composed a sizable corpus of devotional verse but did not address his displacement after the Almoravid attacks or the effects of the *Reconquista* in the liturgical mode. Since the Almoravid attacks did not affect Israel as a whole, a poem in the voice of Israel's collective memory might seem unfitting. This does not explain, however, why the poet was so reticent about the *Reconquista* in general since he was a contemporary of the events. Ultimately, Ibn Ezra chose to privilege his own experience of displacement over the broader experience of his fellow Jews. The *qasīda* form thus served a dual purpose for Ibn Ezra. First, it proved an efficient vehicle of nostalgic expression for an author who interpreted the world through the lens of Arab culture. Second, it served as a bonding mechanism between the poet and his distant companions seeking to maintain Arabic cultural values in the post-Andalusian environment. Absent from Ibn Ezra's *qasīdas* is a sense of Israel's collective consciousness or reflection upon the Jewish people's predicament of exile and hope for redemption. These sentiments characterize the poetry of Judah Halevi.

### JUDAH HALEVI - THE *PETIḤA*

1. You who wait for deliverance, do not be downhearted at the rumor heard in the land!
2. Ask those who flee and escape, the remnant and refugees about crimes against men and wrongs against lands!
3. The refugee<sup>53</sup> was tranquil and quiet in the cities of Spain since the exile from the Land.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup>He addresses his exegetical treatise *Maqālat al-ḥaḍīqa fī mā'ana al-majāz wa'l-ḥaqīqa* to "remaining notables from among the loved ones and vanquished (*fulūl* - scattered remnants of an army)...pure fugitives among the people of refined culture," inviting them to participate in a "council of learned people of the distant frontiers (*al-thughūr al-nā'iya*) and refined people of these remote parts" who can demonstrate their "fine lineage (*ḥasab*)" and "culture (*adab*)." See MS Oxford 1430 folio 11a. Ibn Ezra even dedicated a treatise (now lost) specifically to the subject of lineage, *Maqāla fī fadā'il ahl al-adāb wa'l-aḥsāb* (Treatise on the Excellence of the Men of Culture and Lineage), undoubtedly treating the superiority of Jews of Andalusian stock over their coreligionists in Christian Spain. See also Dan Pagis, *Shirat ha-hol ve-torat ha-shir*.... p. 16, note 8.

4. Until iniquities became mighty and my glory and scent disappeared, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land.
5. The Lord brought it about to awaken the heart of a multitude, the earth rocked and quaked.
6. As dawn broke, the angels of destruction rose and the land grew dark.
7. The day the fierce and impetuous nation that crosses the earth's broad spaces<sup>65</sup> rushed at me like an arrow.
8. O Lord, my foes were so many, (I was) a nation surrounded by copious waters, a unique nation on earth.
9. They ruined my house and my land, destroyed my holy synagogues, all God's tabernacles in the land.
10. All that was desirable in me was lost at morning, and with my departure<sup>66</sup> (went Israel), the praise of every land.
11. The comely girl<sup>67</sup> became despised, a terror, contemptible to all kingdoms of the world.
12. She could not find peace when the curse went out over the whole land.
13. The songs of His<sup>68</sup> mansion fell silent, my palaces became desolate, deserted sites became many in the land.
14. They divided up my clothing and there was none to gather my wandering from the four corners of the earth.
15. We were hiding in inner rooms, fearing terror lest the earth would swallow us.
16. He turned the hearts of their enemies to hate them for their sin,<sup>69</sup> and the land could not support them.
17. How my treasures were ransacked: those seeking my stores came to search out the country.
18. From morning my dawn was gloom: the enemy rejoiced because a bird<sup>70</sup> fell into a trap on the land.
19. I was cut off from my house of delight. After glory (was gone) I remained a wandering vagabond in the land.
20. The earth did not rise up until it made my house desolate, all the earth was still and quiet.
21. Men of no name plundered my glory while men of reputation were glad at my distress with no one to molest them.
22. Is God's hand still stretched out, his sword unsheathed and brandished, his spear stuck in the ground?
23. If He will not look at the covenant, the remnant will be lost<sup>71</sup> and effaced from the earth.
24. Though he slay me, I have trust in him, for he is a wall and rampart for us when he rises up to instill the earth with awe.
25. God of vengeance, arouse your wrath like a man of war to seize the ends of the earth!

<sup>63</sup> i.e. Israel, a refugee from the Land of Israel.

<sup>64</sup> the Land of Israel.

<sup>65</sup> Habakuk 1:6, where the nation is the Chaldean nation.

<sup>66</sup> *periddati*, Fleischer suggests "at evening."

<sup>67</sup> i.e. Israel.

<sup>68</sup> as Fleischer suggests, this might be "my," although the line might contain a double reference to holy culture (His, i.e. God's, mansion) and secular culture (my, i.e. the poet's, palaces).

<sup>69</sup> i.e. The Lord turned the Christians' hearts to hate Israel for Israel's sin.

<sup>70</sup> i.e. Israel.

<sup>71</sup> following Fleischer's emendation.

26. Shake out the wicked from it! Lest the seed<sup>72</sup> of the wicked will say, "God has abandoned the earth!"
27. Serve a cup of the four punishments<sup>73</sup> to make the whole earth drunk!
28. Your servant is bound up, when one shakes [sand] in a sieve, not a pebble falls to the ground.<sup>74</sup>
29. North and South will know that in the heavens we have a God who judges the earth.
30. (You are) refuge for the lowly and poor, a signet-ring of might, therefore we are not afraid though the earth reels.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the lack of detail identifying the foreign nation or even the location of the lost community, this poem is somewhat historical. The poem was probably written as a literary response to the *Reconquista's* attack on the Jewish community of Toledo.<sup>76</sup> The themes of Halevi's poem may be divided as follows: address to listeners (1-2); account of events (3-21); plea to God (22-30). Unlike Ibn Ezra's responses to the fall of Granada, Halevi's poem dwells on the theological implications of the *Reconquista* and its destructive effect on the Jewish community. The theological problem that underscores the poem also occupies Hebrew writing from the book of Lamentations, the *piyyut* of Roman Palestine,<sup>77</sup> the laments written following the first Crusade (1096)<sup>78</sup> and beyond<sup>79</sup>: How can an omnipotent God allow destruction to befall His chosen people? Halevi's response is conventional; God punishes Israel for her iniquities but will redeem her from oppression in the future. The people of Israel should not lose faith, for God will remember the covenant and pour out his wrath against Israel's enemies.

<sup>72</sup> following Fleischer's emendation.

<sup>73</sup> based on Ezekiel 4:21. The four punishments are sword, famine, wild beasts and pestilence.

<sup>74</sup> i.e. when God will arouse his wrath and shake out the earth, the righteous (the pebbles) will not be destroyed along with the wicked.

<sup>75</sup> Ezra Fleischer, "Homerim ve-iyyunim li-qerat mahadurah 'atidit shel shirei rabbi Yehudah Halevi," *Asufot* 5 (1991): pp. 122-24.

<sup>76</sup> Although the event is not discussed in sufficient detail, another poem, discussed below, is clearly linked with the fall of Toledo.

<sup>77</sup> Gerson D. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, edited by Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 19-48; reprinted in Gerson D. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia, New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), pp. 243-269.

<sup>78</sup> see examples in A. M. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot 'ashkenaz ve-sarfat* (Jerusalem: Ofir, 1971), pp. 61-71.

<sup>79</sup> Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).



God's active role in the tragedy is made explicit in the poem. Line 5 begins "the Lord brought it about" and line 16 begins "He turned the heart of their (i.e. Israel's) enemies." Lines 5-7 highlight the coordinated nature of the attack against Israel by worldly and celestial beings including God, the "angels of destruction" and the "fierce and impetuous nation." Following traditional theological formulations, the cause of the destruction is identified as Israel's sin. In line 4, the fall from tranquility is attributed to iniquities and in line 16, God turns the hearts of Israel's enemies to despise Israel for its sin. The concluding plea to God is also conventional, reminding the reader of the earlier *piyyut* tradition. The poet implores God to rise up against Israel's enemies as a mighty warrior (25), to remember His covenant with Israel and spare the holy remnant (28). Despite recent tragedies, the poet retains his faith in God as Israel's protector (24).

A few details overlap with themes of Moses Ibn Ezra's poems of wandering: the poet remembers a former time when Israel dwelled tranquil in Spain (3), nostalgically recalls a "house of delight" (19) and laments the rise of men of low reputation (21) while palaces are transformed into deserted sites (13).<sup>80</sup> Still, the theological preoccupation and the form of this poem make it quite distinct from Ibn Ezra's *qaṣīdas*. Absent are the motifs adopted from the pre-Islamic tradition and the time sequence of the classical *qaṣīda*. Although Halevi was a master of the *qaṣīda* form and composed *qaṣīdas* over

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<sup>80</sup> Nostalgia for the Andalusian past is also expressed in one of Halevi's poems composed during his pilgrimage to the Land of Israel. The poem *heṣiqatni teshuqati le-'el hai* (ed. Brody, II, pp. 172-4=Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 501-2 [214a]) is introduced with the Arabic superscription, "He said concerning longing for his family and homeland."

1. My desire for the living God pressed me to seek the place of the anointed's throne at morn.
2. So much so that it did not even let me kiss my children, friends and brethren [goodbye].
3. I did not weep for the orchard I planted and watered so that my plants blossomed.
4. And I did not mention Judah and 'Azra'el, two precious flowers, the choice ones of my flowers.
5. And Isaac, whom I considered like a son, the yield of my sun, the fine crop of my moon.
6. I nearly forgot the synagogue in whose study house was my rest.
7. And forgot the pleasures of my Sabbaths, the glory of my festivals, the honor of my

separation from friends in a nostalgic mode,<sup>81</sup> the poet does not utilize the form to commemorate the fall of Andalusian communities.

From the perspective of prosody and form, this poem does not adhere to the Arabic inspired innovations of the Andalusian school. Each line consists of three stichs, with stichs one and two ending with the same rhyme syllable and stich three ending with the word "ha'ares." The final stich is always a quotation from a biblical verse. The rhyme scheme may be represented as follows:

1. a/a/ha'ares
2. b/b/ha'ares
3. c/c/ha'ares etc.

The meter is syllabic (not the quantitative system adapted from Arabic), with each stich consisting of seven long syllables (excluding the biblical verses).<sup>82</sup> An almost identical form is utilized in the following poem, unfortunately only partially preserved, which is associated by scribal tradition with the fall of Toledo,<sup>83</sup>

Arabic superscription: *By him, a petiḥa concerning the fall of Toledo*

1. May it never befall you<sup>84</sup> hearers of my words who mourn my affliction, who are all alive today!
2. Ask if you have not heard! I will tell you if you do not know. Take [it] to heart from this day!
3. Let us pursue how the misfortune occurred and how this guilt was incurred today.
4. Announce to the exile of Ariel that a tribe of Israel was cut off today!
5. I was a mistress, content among the daughters of exile, before the coming of day.
6. Since the day I discovered that I dwelled with Se'ir<sup>85</sup> I did not lack God's kindness all

Passover...

<sup>81</sup> see for example *dem'a 'asher hayta ke-tal hermon* (Brody, II, pp. 278-80 [55]) and *'ayin 'asher tashut ke-soheret* (Brody, I, pp. 137-41 [94]=Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 449-454 [182]). Both poems are translated and discussed in the appendix A.

<sup>82</sup>according to the rules of much Andalusian devotional poetry. For this system, see Ezra Fleischer, *Shirat ha-qodesh ha-'ivrit bi-yemei ha-beinayim* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), pp. 349 ff.

<sup>83</sup>In addition to these poems, *gerushim mi-beit ta'anugim* is associated with the fall of Majorca (in MS Firkovitch, II, 208, l. p. 9a); further see the note by Fleischer in Schirmann, op. cit., p. 447, note 119. The poem was originally published in HHSP, ascribed to Isaac Ibn Ghiyāt, vol. 1, p. 135. The attribution to Halevi is discussed by Jefim Schirmann, *Shirim ḥadashim min ha-genizah* (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 235, 244. For other Halevi poems from the time of the *Reconquista*, see Israel Levin, "ha-Sevel be-mishbar ha-reqonqista..."

<sup>84</sup>Lamentations 1:12. This reference is most effective, "May it never befall you, all who pass along the road. Look about and see: Is there any agony like mine which was dealt out to me when the Lord afflicted

the day.

7. My sons were his generals' advisers. my people dwelled between his<sup>86</sup> shoulders. he protected them each day.

8. I was honored with the glory of elders. with my teaching I appointed watchmen all the day.

9. A company of wise men and students would recite learned teaching as I would fulfill my vows each day.

10. An adviser of the king who feared God and kept brightening until noon<sup>87</sup> favored me.<sup>88</sup>

11. Esau's power was with me but in his heart he was scheming for my blood. only evil all the day.

12. He seized my community with his chords and [pronounced] a decree stating. "You know not what will happen today."

13. They fashioned plots against me and on the Sabbath: it [the city] was forsaken. and they were ready for the day.

14. It was the day on which we were judged<sup>89</sup> and they said. "Alas for us. for the day is declining!"<sup>90</sup>

15. Leave the slaughtering for tomorrow. do not tarry in the morning. no man shall be put to death today."

[...]<sup>91</sup>

As in the previous poem, meter is syllabic, with each stich (excluding the biblical verses) consisting of seven syllables. Again, each line consists of three stichs, with stichs one and two rhyming and stich three ending with a repeating word, in this case "yom." Again, the third stich of every line contains a quotation from a biblical verse. The rhyme scheme may be represented as follows:

1. a/a/yom
2. b/b/yom
3. c/c/yom, etc.

This poem is more explicit than the previous with respect to the actual historical event.

The nation that attacked Israel is clearly identified as Se'ir and Esau (6, 11), both

me on His day of wrath?" (Translation, JPS)

<sup>85</sup>My sons were his generals' advisers.

<sup>86</sup>although the biblical source (Deuteronomy 33:12) refers to resting between God's shoulders, the reference here seems to be to Se'ir.

<sup>87</sup>based on Proverbs 4:18.

<sup>88</sup>literally, "was with me."

<sup>89</sup>literally, "measured," as in I Samuel 2:3, "For the Lord is an all-knowing God, by him actions are measured."

<sup>90</sup>Lamentations 5:16.

<sup>91</sup>lo 'aleikhem shom'ei shim'i, ed. Jarden, *Shirat ha-hol*... p. 893-4 [395]. The poem is mentioned in passing in Ezra Fleischer, "Homerim ve-'iyyunim...", p. 121. It is worth noting that this poem and the previous poem begin with the same two words.

indicating Christendom. Halevi remembers dwelling in Christendom fondly, focusing on the high station of Jews in government and the success of learning academies (6-10). The sweet memories of the past flow into the poet's surprise at Christian perfidy and duplicity. Halevi does not even mention the fall of Toledo as a transfer of territory from Muslim to Christian rule. The event undoubtedly affected Muslims at least as much as Jews, but this is of little interest to the poet. The poem is about a shift of Jewish status within Christendom itself, from a situation in which Jews dwelled secure to one in which they were vulnerable.

The poem places the events within the framework of Israel's collective memory. The opening quotation from Lamentations immediately evokes Israel's mourning tradition, recalling agony at the destruction of Jerusalem. The poet stands as prophet, the announcer of bad news before a broad community. "Ask if you have not heard! I will tell you if you do not know...Announce to the exile of Ariel that a tribe of Israel was cut off today!"<sup>92</sup> (2,4). In line 3, the theological cause of the destruction is pursued, using the traditional formulation of destruction as punishment for sin. Although the end of the poem has not come down to us, it is likely that it concluded with formulations of consolation similar to those in the previous poem.

The scribe identifies the events described with the fall of Toledo and designates the poem a *petiḥa*, a term generally reserved for poems eulogizing deceased individuals.<sup>93</sup> Here, the term is extended to eulogize the fall of an entire community. There is at least one other poem by Halevi treating the fall of a community in this form, also identified by a scribe as a *petiḥa*.<sup>94</sup> Modern scholars have designated the *petiḥas* dedicated to

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<sup>92</sup>based on several verses from the prophetic books of the Bible; see Jarden's notes for exact references.

<sup>93</sup> see Ezra Fleischer, *Shirat ha-qodesh ha-ivrit...*, p. 412.

<sup>94</sup> *aqonen 'al mar tela'otai*, ed. Brody, vol. 4, p. 131 [55]. There are three stichs per line, seven syllables per stich, with stichs one and two rhyming and stich three (a biblical verse) ending with the word "yisra'el": a/a/yisra'el, b/b/yisra'el etc.. It is unknown which community this poem addresses. However, Halevi refers specifically to being caught between the troops of Se'ir and Qedar (Christendom and Islamdom), making Toledo a likely candidate.

communities “religious” verse while those dedicated to individuals have been designated “secular.”<sup>95</sup> In reality, there is little that separates these poems. They all share the same prosodic and formal qualities and are identified by medieval scribes as part of the same genre.<sup>96</sup> In the community *petiḥas*, the poet laments in the tradition of Israel’s collective mourning and ponders the theological implications of communal loss. The eulogies over individuals are also concerned with theology; the poet questions the justice of the individual’s death but ultimately proclaims faith in God’s judgment.<sup>97</sup> Thus, when Halevi wished to commemorate the loss of a Jewish community, he adopted the voice of a public mourner, using the eulogy over the individual as a model.<sup>98</sup> The eulogizing voice speaks before the community of Israel, reflecting upon historical events within the framework of traditional theology and Israel’s collective memory.

The different reactions of Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra to similar political events is striking. In lamenting the destruction of Jewish communities in the *petiḥa* form, Halevi does not adopt the personal voice of an Arab poet but rather the voice of a public mourner before the Jewish community. Despite Halevi’s lingering attachment to Andalusia, it

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<sup>95</sup>Brody considers *‘aqonen ‘al mar tela’otai* to be among Halevi’s “religious” poems. Similarly, Jarden identifies *lo ‘aleikhem shon’ei shimi’t* (above) as “religious” verse. Halevi’s *petiḥas* on individuals are all included in volume two of Brody, on secular verse. The sharp division between religious and secular verse (*shirat qodesh* and *shirat ḥol*) made during the modern period is only useful as a prelude to its qualification. While a *voṣer* might be called “religious” with some certainty and a wine poem might be “secular,” the border between sacred and profane becomes hazy around quasi-historical poems cast in theological frameworks such as Halevi’s *petiḥas*. See also the discussion of Abraham Ibn Ezra below.

<sup>96</sup> see Brody, vol. 2, pp. 69-92 [poems 1-10]. All of these examples use syllabic meter (usually six or seven syllables), the final stich of each line being a biblical verse concluding with a constant word. Some of the poems contain four stichs instead of three. Several of the poems are introduced as *petiḥas*. The form is also used by Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq; ed. Jonah David, p. 76-78 [30]. In addition, other liturgical poems by Halevi follow a very similar form, such as some *mi kamokha* poems for the Yom Kippur liturgy; see ed. Jarden, pp. 85-102. Each line consists of four (rather than three) stichs wherein the first three stichs share a rhyme and the final stich is a biblical quotation, ending in the word “*yom*.”

<sup>97</sup> e.g. Brody, vol. 2 p. 69 [1], lines 1-6; p. 75 [3], line 6. Occasionally the same imagery surfaces in the individual and community poems, e.g. Brody vol. 2, p. 73 [2], line 36 “He (the deceased) fell like a bird into a trap on the land” = *lo ‘aleikhem ḥokhei teshu’a* line 18, “the enemy rejoiced because she (Israel) fell like a bird into a trap on the land.”

<sup>98</sup> Although Halevi does write a few poems on the effects of the *Reconquista* in other forms (particularly strophic, e.g., Jefim Schirmann, *Shirim ḥadashim min ha-genizah* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 244 [109]; p. 245 [110]; p. 247 [111]), the majority are these *petiḥas*.

seems that the poet was never as distressed by displacement as Moses Ibn Ezra was.<sup>99</sup> By selecting the *petiḥa* form over the *qaṣīda*, Halevi causes the reader to situate the poems within a tradition of loss and mourning specific to Jewish culture. The poems show that Halevi interpreted events of the *Reconquista* through the lens of Israel's prolonged exile and urged his audience, a broad community of Jews, to do the same.

### ABRAHAM IBN EZRA - STROPHIC FORM

1. Woe, for calamity has descended upon Sefarad from the heavens!
2. My eyes, my eyes flow with water.<sup>100</sup>
  
3. The weeping of my eye is like an ostrich's<sup>101</sup> for the city of Lucena!
4. Without guilt, the exile dwelled there untroubled.
5. Unchanged for one thousand and seventy years.
6. When her day arrived and her people wandered, she was like a widow.
7. Without Pentateuch or Bible, the Mishnah hidden.
8. The Talmud was like desolation<sup>102</sup> for all of its glory had passed away.
9. There were murderers and others seeking<sup>103</sup> everywhere for a place (to hide).
10. A place of prayer and praise was renamed a house of moral unseemliness.<sup>104</sup>
11. For this I weep and strike my hand,<sup>105</sup> lamentation constantly in my mouth.
12. I cannot be silent and say, "Would that my head were water!"<sup>106</sup>
  
13. I shave<sup>107</sup> my head and shout bitterness over the exile of Seville.
14. Over noble ones, now fallen ones, their sons in captivity.
15. Over refined girls passed over to the strange faith.
16. How the city of Cordoba was abandoned! Can it (really) be ruin like the sea?
17. There were sages and mighty ones who died in famine and drought.
18. There is neither Jew nor friend in Jaen or Almeria.

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\*One can intuit several reasons for which he would not be. Halevi was young at the time of the Almoravid invasion and hence probably did not experience the contrast with the Tā'ifa period to the same degree that Ibn Ezra did; in fact, Halevi generally found Almoravid Andalusia a viable location for fulfilling his intellectual and professional pursuits. Halevi was born in Christian Spain and remained active in its courts throughout much of his career and was never "displaced" as such; Christian Spain never seemed as foreign to him as it would to Ibn Ezra. Finally, when the poet ultimately left Spain for Palestine in 1140, he did so with a sense of purpose that would (theoretically) preclude nostalgia. Although nostalgia for Spain is indicated in some poems (e.g. *Ḥeṣiqatni teshuqati*, quoted above in note 80), the degree of loss does not seem as severe as in Moses Ibn Ezra's poems.

<sup>100</sup> i.e. tears. Lamentations 1:16.

<sup>101</sup> the desert ostrich is a symbol of lament in Lamentations 4:3.

<sup>102</sup> Job 3:7, and see Abraham Ibn Ezra's comment on this verse.

<sup>103</sup> literally, "yearning."

<sup>104</sup> i.e. a mosque.

<sup>105</sup> a sign of distress. Ezekiel 21:19.

<sup>106</sup> Jeremiah 8:23, i.e. so that I could weep sufficiently.

19. In Majorca and the city of Malaga there remains no sustenance.
20. The remnant of Jews was given a fresh wound.
21. For this I wail and teach bitterness, still I utter a bitter lament.
22. I groan in my distress, "They have vanished like water!"
23. Woe! I call like a woman in travail<sup>108</sup> over the communities of Sijilmasa.
24. A city of intellectuals and sages whose light covered darkness.
25. The pillar of Talmud was brought low, wisdom ruined.
26. The Mishnah was taunted, trampled underfoot.
27. The enemy's eye did not show mercy toward fine men pierced through, wounded.<sup>109</sup>
28. The whole community of Fez became naught when they were given to plunder.
29. Where is the treasure of the community of Tlemsan? Its greatness has melted away.
30. I raise my voice with bitterness over Ceuta and Meknes.
31. I tear my robe over Dari, which had been captured.
32. On the Sabbath sons' and daughters' blood was shed like water.
33. What can I say when this was my sin?
34. From my Lord, the Rock of my strength, harm was executed against me.<sup>110</sup>
35. For whom can I hope? What can I say? My hand did it all!
36. My heart is hot within me, because of my soul that has sinned.
37. And been exiled from her land, the haven of her desire, to a defiled land.
38. Humiliated and dumbfounded, too weary to speak of her weariness.
39. Yet, with pain in her heart, she hopes for the kindness of her Rock.
40. That He will command freedom from slavery and she may take shelter in His wings' shade.
41. Imprisoned at every moment, if she remembers his name she is allowed to live.
42. Only her tear upon her cheek, in the hand of a maid servant<sup>111</sup> whose bow
43. Will shoot harshly until God will look down from the Heavens.<sup>112</sup>

The form of this poem is distinct from the poems by Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi. The poem is strophic, consisting of four strophes of eleven lines each. The first ten lines of each strophe share a common rhyme, which changes from strophe to strophe, while the last line of each strophe ends with a common rhyme. The rhyme of the final line of each strophe is established in the first two lines of the poem preceding the strophes (the *matla'*) with the words *shamayim* (heavens) and *mayim* (water). *Mayim* then becomes the final word of strophes one, two and three, while strophe four ends with the word *shamayim*, recalling the opening line. Each line of the poem (excluding line 2) consists of

<sup>107</sup> literally, "make bald."

<sup>108</sup> i.e., in labor.

<sup>109</sup> mortally wounded, as in Jeremiah 51:4.

<sup>110</sup> I Samuel 25:17.

<sup>111</sup> i.e. Hagar, an epithet for Islam.

three stichs that follow syllabic meter (3/3/6) according to the rules of Hispano-Jewish devotional verse.<sup>113</sup> The poet's first name, *Avraham*, appears in the acrostic.

If one is to maintain a sharp division between secular and religious verse, this poem fits the religious model better from the perspective of form. Despite the "secular" content of the poem, recalling the destruction of Jewish communities during the Almohad period, the poem is also devotional, contemplating the theological dimension of destruction and exile. Still, the poem has usually been counted among Ibn Ezra's secular poems in modern scholarship.<sup>114</sup> The poem is truly unique in terms of both its form and content.<sup>115</sup>

Although we do not know exactly where Ibn Ezra was when he composed this poem, it is clear that he was not an eyewitness to the events, having left Andalusia for Europe several years before the Almohad persecutions. Unlike Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra, the poet stands apart from the scene of destruction, lamenting from afar and taking a bird's eye view. This is the first Hebrew poem to name cities of Andalusia (and the Maghreb) explicitly, simply transliterating their names as faithfully as possible. In Halevi's poems on Toledo, the city is not mentioned at all; in rare instances when Moses Ibn Ezra mentions Granada, the city name is always in its Hebrew formulation, *beit rimon*, "house of the pomegranate." It is worth considering what inspired Abraham Ibn Ezra to alter this practice of the Hebrew Andalusian school. Schirmann suggests that Ibn Ezra followed the model of Ashkenazic post-Crusade laments, which often detail historical events including

<sup>112</sup> Israel Levin, *Yalqut Avraham Ibn Ezra* (Haifa, 1985), pp. 101-03.

<sup>113</sup> see note 82 above.

<sup>114</sup> e.g. Levin's *Yalqut Avraham Ibn Ezra*.... where the poem is included in the section on secular verse. This point has been observed by Ross Brann, "Tavniyot shel galut be-qinot 'ivriyot ve-'araviyot be-sefarad," in *Sefer Yisrael Levin* (1994), p. 51, note 28. See note 95 above regarding the difficulties of the division between "religious" and "secular" verse.

<sup>115</sup> Although Ibn Ezra frequently used strophic form, no poem seems to fit this structure precisely. Schirmann published one other poem from the time of the Almohad persecutions that bears some similarities in form and content, most notably the naming of cities. The poem has been attributed incorrectly to Abraham Ibn Ezra. See J. Schirmann, "Qinot 'al ha-gezerot be-eres yisra'el, 'afriqah, sefarad, 'ashkenaz ve-'sarfat," *Koveš 'al yad* 3 (13) (1939): p. 34; see also the poem by Joseph Ibn Abitur



town names.<sup>116</sup> It is also possible that Ibn Ezra was following the Arabic city laments (*rithā' al-mudun*), which also utilize historical details and place names.<sup>117</sup> In either case, commemorating Andalusian and Maghrebi cities with their actual names became important for the poet as he grew distant from them in space and time.

The first strophe of *'aha yarad 'al sefarad* is dedicated to a single city, Lucena, well known for its learning academy and activity in the study of the Hebrew language. In the second strophe, other cities of Andalusia are remembered in rapid succession: Seville, Cordoba, Almeria, Jaen, and Malaga. In the third strophe, the poet recalls destroyed communities of the Maghreb.<sup>118</sup> Throughout these strophes, the reader is aware of a first person speaker who expresses mourning through biblical phrases of distress and lamentation.<sup>119</sup> Like Halevi, Ibn Ezra focuses on the long standing security of Israel in Spain (5) and the subsequent loss of synagogues and academies of religious learning.

Following three strophes whose meanings are extremely transparent, the fourth strophe is strikingly ambiguous. Although first person is sustained throughout the poem, the identity of the speaker in the final strophe is more difficult to identify. If the "poetic I" is the author, then why does he single out his own sin as the cause of the calamity that descended from the heavens? If it is the generation of Andalusian and Maghrebi Jews that witnessed the destruction,<sup>120</sup> then how can this be reconciled with line 4 where Lucena is called "blameless"? If the speaker is the broad community of Israel, then why not signify the shift more clearly? In his analysis of this poem, Ross Brann concludes that the speaker is both the Andalusian community, exiled from Spain and the Maghreb, and the

on Jerusalem, *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>116</sup>Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah ha-ivrit...sarfat*, p 20 . For such an example, see *Mi yiten ro'shi mayim* in A. M. Habermann, *Sefer gezerot ashkenaz...*, pp. 66ff..

<sup>117</sup>see discussion above.

<sup>118</sup> During this period, the Maghreb and al-Andalus constituted a single political unit. The poet is known to have visited the Maghreb.

<sup>119</sup>line 2, Lamentations, 1:16; line 3, Lamentations 4:3; line 11, Ezekiel, 21:19; line 12, Jeremiah 8:23; etc.

<sup>120</sup> as Leon Weinberger suggests, *Twilight of a Golden Age...*, p. 100.

community of Israel, exiled from the Land of Israel.<sup>121</sup> The meaning of the strophe is further complicated because lines 36-41 read more like a free-standing poem on the Neoplatonic exile of the soul<sup>122</sup> than a poem of national exile. If it is truly the people of Israel that has been exiled, then why does the speaker refer to it as his “soul” (36-37)? Ibn Ezra is likely superimposing these three levels of meaning intentionally.

In the fourth strophe, the poet addresses the theological significance of the catastrophe, locating it within the traditional rubric of exile as punishment for sin (33, 35). As in Halevi’s poems, punishment is meted out by God and Israel waits for God’s redemption. However, in comparison with Halevi’s poems, the theological formulation is more ambivalent. In line 34, the poet is almost shocked at the harm that was perpetrated by God, the Rock of his strength. This fits the disbelief of line 1, “calamity has descended upon Sefarad from the heavens!” This statement inverts the well-known Rabbinic dictum, “Nothing evil descends from above” (Genesis Rabba 51.3),<sup>123</sup> compounding the sense of incredulity as if a promise had been violated. Line 35 begins, “For whom can I hope?” Because we might assume that the speaker can always hope for God, the question suggests that there might be none for whom he can hope when even God has turned against him. There is also less certainty in the future redemption. Halevi calls upon God to initiate the redemption with wrath and fury, “God of vengeance, arouse your wrath!... Shake out the wicked (from the earth)!, etc.” In *’aha yarad*, there is only meek hope, “with pain in her heart, she hopes for the kindness of her Rock.” Although the poem is probably not meant to be irreverent, it does reveal ambivalence toward the stance of traditional theology in explaining the catastrophe.

In addition to the ambivalence with which Ibn Ezra presents theological material,

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<sup>121</sup>“Tavniyot shel galut...” p. 53.

<sup>122</sup> displaced from her source, now residing in the “defiled land” of the body. It is not uncommon for a poem to signify Israel’s exile in foreign lands and the soul’s “exile” in the body simultaneously. See Raymond Scheindlin, *The Gazelle...* pp. 42ff.

<sup>123</sup> see Leon Weinberger, *Twilight of a Golden Age...*, p. 100.

this material also occupies less space than in Halevi's poems. In fact, it is easiest for the reader of Ibn Ezra's poem to gloss over the theological aspect altogether since it is introduced in the final strophe only and there with some ambivalence. Despite its liturgical form, the poem downplays the presentation of traditional theology. This effect is created through the use of the strophic form wherein each strophe treats its own subject. The weight of *'aha yarad* clearly falls on the poet's personal lamentation over the destroyed communities of his memory.

In choosing literary forms, the Andalusian Jewish poets drew upon the collective memories conveyed in two literary traditions, Arabic and Hebrew. Moses Ibn Ezra gave precedence to his cultural identity as an Arabized Jew, locating his experience of displacement and wandering within the resonant tradition of Arabic mourning and nostalgia. For Moses Ibn Ezra, the *qaṣīda* form provided a succinct vehicle of nostalgic expression that continued to represent his cultural ideals in the post-Andalusian environment. Judah Halevi interpreted the fall of communities during the *Reconquista* through the voice of a public mourner before the community of Israel, stressing the theological significance of events and the hope for future redemption. Abraham Ibn Ezra offered the most ambiguous response, choosing a liturgical form yet downplaying theological content. His traditional pronouncement of the interplay of sin and punishment is understated and not entirely convincing. Instead, the thrust of the poem reverts to the opening strophes memorializing the lost communities.

Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra all ascribed different weights to personal, historical and theological aspects of their experiences. Still, it would be an error to segregate the poems according to the categories of "secular" and "religious" verse. All of the poets treat personal experience. Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra both blend the historical with the theological to such an extent that it would be erroneous to

label one's poetry "secular" and the other's "religious." More is to be gained by piercing the synthetic barrier between the two types of verse than by segregating poems according to a preconceived division of genres that is more modern than medieval. It is better to let genre classifications emerge from the poems themselves and allow our conception of genre to change with the addition of more and more data. By reading the poems treated in this chapter together, the variety of responses to cultural transition comes into sharper focus.

## **PART TWO**

### **PROSE**

## CHAPTER FIVE INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

### BETWEEN *MAQĀMA* AND ROMANCE: IMAGINING CONTEXTS OF HEBREW RHYMED PROSE FICTION

The opening scene of the French film *Ridicule*<sup>1</sup> is set six years before the French Revolution, "when Louis XVI still ruled... but *wit* was king." *Wit*--the practice of acerbic raillery grounded in learning and word play--was the key to opening all doors in government. With wit, one could display intellectual prowess before court and king and publicly ridicule one's enemies. Every courtier lived in fear of ridicule, that he would stumble in a battle of wits and be exposed as a dullard. One courtier, recently returned from England, reports that the English do not cultivate wit but practice instead another craft called "hew-mah" (humor)--funny and perhaps even clever, but impassive and victimless. In the film, the Marquis de Bellegard is a kind-hearted aristocrat who collects lists of witty remarks, filing them by category: double entendres, repartees, quips, word plays, retorts, and paradoxes. In the film's final scene, now months after the Revolution, the Marquis stands with a friend on a cliff by the jagged shore of England where he and other aristocrats had found refuge. Looking back toward France over the channel, he laments, "*wit* was the very air we breathed!" A gust of wind blows his hat from his head down to the water below. "O my hat!" he exclaims. "Better your hat than your head!" his companion replies. The Marquis laughs and sighs with satisfaction, "Ah humor, it's wonderful."

The Marquis, who passed through a transitional moment of history (i.e. the French Revolution), identifies *wit* with France, the court, aristocracy and the past while *humor* represents England, refuge, the present and future. This point highlights an overlap

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Berling, Bernard Giraudeau, Judith Godrèche, and Jean Rochefort, *Ridicule* (France: Miramax,

between cultural locus and literary form.

A great shift occurred in Hebrew *belles lettres* from poetry to rhymed prose narrative as the centers of Jewish writing moved from Andalusia to Christian Spain. However, there is not an exact correspondence between literary forms and the division between Andalusian and post-Andalusian periods. The associations poetry-Andalusia/prose-Christian Spain are not as neat as wit-France/humor-England.<sup>2</sup> Poetry continued to be written in Christian Spain through the late fifteenth-century while the rhymed prose narrative took root in Andalusia during the twelfth century. Still, a general trend from a literary world dominated by rhymed, metered poetry to one dominated by rhymed prose fictional narrative is apparent. The shift to prose allowed authors much more freedom, not only prosodically but also with respect to discourse and world-making. Authors could juxtapose opposing voices, build representations of the world and enframe traditional themes in new contexts in order to uphold or degrade them. This transition in belletristic writing is only one aspect of the complex flux into which Hispano-Jewish culture was thrust during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Part one of this dissertation addressed poetic expressions of displacement by Andalusian Jewish authors who witnessed the political upheavals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Part two explores expressions of cultural renewal in the fiction of Jewish authors of thirteenth century Christian Spain. Cultural renewal was the outcome of a process of negotiation between the cultures of the Andalusian past and the Christian present. The Andalusian period, with its luminary figures and intellectual achievements, remained a powerful and persistent memory for Jews in Christian Spain. At the same time, Jewish culture in Christian Spain was touched by trends from the north, both from the Rabbinic culture of Northern France and from Christian Europe in general. Jewish intellectuals found various solutions to the problems of continuity and cultural redefinition.

Zoe). French with English subtitles.

Some held fast to the identity provided by the Andalusian past while others were more open to cultural and intellectual influences from the new environment. This section of the dissertation strives to reveal attitudes toward cultural transition embedded in Hebrew rhymed prose narratives. These attitudes are seldom stated explicitly in the narratives but can be determined through sophisticated analytical techniques.

This introductory chapter has two main purposes: 1) to present briefly the social and intellectual climate of Jewish culture in thirteenth century Christian Spain, and 2) to introduce the Hebrew rhymed prose narrative as a form that emerged through a complex interaction of Hebrew, Arabic and European literatures. The chapter shows that modern scholarship has privileged the Arabic environment in which Hebrew writing developed to the detriment of underestimating the significance of the European environment. The remaining two chapters of the dissertation continue this discussion by looking closely at two nearly contemporary Hebrew rhymed prose narratives of the thirteenth century, the *Tahkemoni* by Judah al-Harizi and *Sefer ha-meshalim* by Jacob Ben El'azar. The discussion strives to go beyond the concept of thematic influence and considers narrative form, geographical orientation and the use of landscape as tools for gauging the cultural orientation of these medieval Hispano-Jewish authors. It is shown that al-Harizi and Ben El'azar, despite their similar origins, imagined literature and the world in very different ways.

## **THE JEWS OF CHRISTIAN SPAIN IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES: CONDUITS, CONTINUITIES, CHALLENGES**

The rebels against the Philistine (i.e. Berber) kingdom had crossed the sea to Spain, after having spared no remnant of Jews from Tangiers to al-Mahdiya. "Turn your hand again as a vintager over the shoots."<sup>3</sup> They tried to do the same thing in all of the cities of the Ishmaelite kingdom... Some [Jews] were taken captive by the Christians, to whom they willingly indentured themselves on condition that they be rescued from the land of Ishmael. Others fled on foot, naked and barefoot, their feet stumbling upon the

<sup>3</sup>at least as the dichotomy between wit and humor is presented in *Ridicule*.



mountains of twilight, with "the young children asking bread, and none to break it to them."<sup>4</sup> However, He who prepares the remedy before afflictions, exalted be His name...anticipated [the calamity] by putting it into the heart of King Alfonso the *Emperador* to appoint our master and rabbi, R. Judah the Nasi b Ezra, over Calatrava and all the royal provisions. His forefathers had been among the leaders of Granada, holders of high office and men of power in every generation... they are descended from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the holy city, from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, not from [the inhabitants of] the villages or of unwalled towns... Now when this great Nasi, R. Judah, was appointed over Calatrava, the city of refuge for the exiles, he supervised the passage of the refugees, released those bound in chains and let the oppressed go free by breaking their yoke and undoing their bonds...<sup>5</sup>

The transfer of the Andalusian Jewish population, with its communal structures and distinct way of life, to Christian Spain is at the heart of Abraham Ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-qabbalah*. Writing in 1161 after being displaced by the Almohad invasion, the artful chronicler constructs his history in such a way that the transition of Jewish glory from Islamic Spain to Christian Spain seems divinely ordained, just like the initial rise of Jewish power in Andalusia.<sup>6</sup> The seeds of transition are planted already following the decline and destruction of Cordoba (1013), formerly the glory of Islamic Spain,

With the termination of the 'Amirid dynasty and the seizure of power by the Berber chiefs, the city of Cordoba dwindled and its inhabitants were compelled to flee. Some went off to Saragossa, where their descendants have remained down to the present, while others went to Toledo, where their descendants are still known until today.<sup>7</sup>

The Jews of Christian Saragossa and Toledo are thus the very descendants of the Jews who graced the streets and academies of Islamic Cordoba. Similarly, just before the Almohad attacks decimated Andalusia, the sons of Rabbi Joseph Halevi, head of the Yeshiva in Lucena, fled to Toledo where they would raise up disciples.<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Daud's response to transition is not exactly mournful, although he is clearly concerned with the possible demise of the Andalusian cultural model, Christian Spain

<sup>3</sup>Jeremiah 6:9.

<sup>4</sup>Lamentations 4:4.

<sup>5</sup>Gerson D. Cohen, *Sefer ha-qabbalah*.... pp. 70-71 [Hebrew section].

<sup>6</sup>such is Gerson Cohen's reading, *Sefer ha-qabbalah*.... pp. 293-302, with which I agree.

<sup>7</sup>Gerson D. Cohen, *Sefer ha-qabbalah*.... p. 53 [Hebrew section]. Although Ibn Daud would probably not object to the sentiment of Gerson Cohen's translation, "where their descendants have retained their identity down to the present," it is a bit far-fetched.

<sup>8</sup>Gerson D. Cohen, *Sefer ha-qabbalah*.... pp. 65-66 [Hebrew section].

provides a viable site for Andalusia's courtly and intellectual culture to survive and flourish. Despite the often quoted dictum that the Jews fared better under Muslim aegis than under Christian control, there is little to indicate that, through most of its history, the Jewish community suffered more in Christian Spain than in Muslim Andalusia. Christian rulers utilized Jews as positive colonizing and urbanizing agents just as Muslim conquerors had done during the siege of Andalusia.<sup>9</sup> In new and revived cities, Jews were assigned land for cultivation, workshops and construction. In Castile and in Aragon, Jews enjoyed an unprecedented degree of legal autonomy and professional freedom. As during the Muslim period, aristocratic Jews worked as political functionaries who mediated between rulers and the Jewish community, went on diplomatic missions outside the kingdom (particularly to the Muslim south) and patronized Jewish cultural activities. Such individuals were often given special privileges, sometimes affording them the legal status of nobility.

The unique position and extensive authority of select Jewish leaders, especially those modeling themselves after the Andalusian courtier typology, gave rise in the thirteenth century to what has been characterized as class revolts. Septimus details two such revolts in Catalonia, noting the rise of an anti-aristocratic class that characterized the ruling elite as lax in religious observance, corrupt in leadership and immoral in sexual behavior.<sup>10</sup> Practices such as indulgent wine drinking, polygamy and the keeping of concubines<sup>11</sup>--all associated with Andalusian culture--were at the center of this critique. From the aristocratic camp, we hear voices of rebuke directed toward "slaves who have revolted against their kings and rebelled against their masters."<sup>12</sup> While noting that an

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<sup>9</sup> on this and the following information, see Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain...*, vol. I, chapters 1 and 2; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition...*, introduction; Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry...*

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Septimus, "Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia"...

<sup>11</sup> Yom Tov Assis, "Sexual Behavior in Medieval Hispano-Jewish Society," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, edited by Ada Rapaport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London, 1988), 25-59.

integrated cultural history of thirteenth-century Catalonian Jewry is still far off. Septimus suggests a general continuity between the aristocrats and the political and social style of Muslim Spain while the anti-aristocrats seem at odds with such values. Septimus writes, "The *nesi'im* [princes] are aristocrats, courtiers, literate and rationalistic and perhaps not untouched by decadence. Their opponents are 'new men,' merchants, talmudists, and mystics, striving for spirituality and full of fresh energy." While Baer may not have been correct in assuming that the aristocrats were of pure Andalusian descent while their opponents were indigenous Catalonians,<sup>13</sup> a certain continuity of values is easy to discern.

Significant intellectual circles were sprouting up in Toledo, Saragossa and Barcelona. In Christian Spain and in Provence, the Hebrew language was enjoying a renaissance as Arabic and Judeo-Arabic texts were translated into Hebrew and new Hebrew writings appeared on topics usually treated in Arabic (such as astronomy, astrology, biblical exegesis, mathematics, medicine and philosophy).<sup>14</sup> The most incendiary intellectual dispute during the thirteenth century was the controversy over Maimonides concerning his codification of Jewish law and the allegorical interpretations that emerged from his rationalist thought.<sup>15</sup> Intellectual life was negotiated between two intersecting currents, one from Andalusia and another from Northern France. The former was rationalist, allegorical and engrossed with Arabic and Islamic thought. The latter was anti-rationalist, literalist and averse to contact with Greco-Arabic philosophy. Both in *halakhic* and philosophical disciplines, the intellectuals of Christian Spain struck balances between these currents.<sup>16</sup> In addition to these currents that were essentially internal to Jewish culture, Jews were effected by broader intellectual currents. They were caught

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Septimus, "ha-Shilton ha-siburi be-baršalonah be-teqfat ha-polmos 'al sifrei ha-rambam." *Tarbiš* 42 (1973), pp. 389-97.

<sup>13</sup> *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain...*, vol. I, p. 90ff..

<sup>14</sup> on translation, see Appendix B of this dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> see Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition...*, pp. 35ff.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Rabbi Meir Abulafia, see Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture...*. See also Septimus, "Open Rebuke and Concealed Love..." regarding Nahmanides.

between the cultural and religious styles of Islamdom and Christendom and Hebrew authors were touched by the literary trends of Arabic and European literatures.

## THE HEBREW RHYMED PROSE NARRATIVE

Between Islamic and Christian Spain, there is a clear shift in belletristic writing from the composition of free-standing poems to rhymed prose fictional narratives. The trend toward rhymed prose narrative began in Islamic Spain,<sup>17</sup> probably during the Almoravid period, with *Ne'um asher ben yehuda* by Solomon Ibn Saqbel (twelfth century).<sup>18</sup> Ibn Saqbel's work was followed by Joseph Ibn Zabarra's (born c. 1140) *Sefer sha'ashurim*<sup>19</sup> in Barcelona and Judah Ibn Shabbetai's (1186-1225) *Minhat yehuda sone' ha-nashim* in Toledo and its responses.<sup>20</sup> In the second decade of the thirteenth century, Judah al-Harizi translated the famous *maqāma* collection of al-Hariri of Basra into a rhymed prose Hebrew version called *Mahberet itti'el*<sup>21</sup> and composed an original collection of narratives, the *Tahkemoni*, soon afterward.<sup>22</sup> Following al-Harizi, the rhymed prose narrative form remained popular, being utilized by Jacob Ben El'azar (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) in his *Sefer ha-meshalim*,<sup>23</sup> Jacob ha-Kohen (thirteenth century) in his *Megilat ha-ofer*,<sup>24</sup> Isaac Ibn Sahula (b. 1244) in his *Mashal ha-qadmoni*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> in reality, rhymed prose is also found in earlier Hebrew forms, e.g. the *siluq* section of the classical *qedushta* or the historical text from Italy *Megilat ahim'as* (c. 1054). Further, see Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah ha-ivrit... sarfat*, p. 55, note 174 and p. 93, note 4.

<sup>18</sup> Schirmann, HHSP, vol. 1, pp. 554ff.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ben Me'ir Zabarra, *Sefer sha'ashurim*, edited by Israel Davidson (Berlin, 1925).

<sup>20</sup> Matti Huss, "'Minhat yehudah,' 'Ezrat ha-nashim,' ve-'Ein mishpat' - mahadurot mada'iyot bilviyat mavo', hilufei girsa'ot, meqorot u-perushim" (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> al-Hariri, *Mahberot itti'el*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by Yis'haq Peres (Tel-Aviv: Moledet, 1951).

<sup>22</sup> Yehuda al-Harizi, *Tahkemoni*, edited by Y. Toporovsky (Tel Aviv, 1952).

<sup>23</sup> Ya'aqov Ben El'azar, *Sipurei 'ahava shel Ya'aqov Ben El'azar*, critical edition with introduction and commentary Yonah David (Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishing - Tel Aviv University, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Zvi Malakhi, "'Megilat ha-ofer' le-rav Elihu ha-Kohen, maqāma alegorit me-sefarad," in *Be-oreah mada', mehqarim be-tarbut yisra'el mugashim le-aharon mirski*, edited by Zvi Malakhi (Lod: Makhon habermann le-mehqarei sifrut, 1986), pp. 317-52; see also, Israel Levin, "ha-'Ofer ve-ha-šipurim: 'al 'megilat ha-ofer' le-rav eliyahu ha-kohen ve-'igeret ha-šipurim' le-ibn sina," *Mehaqrei yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 10-11 (1987-88): pp. 577-611.

and others.<sup>26</sup>

## IMAGINING CONTEXTS

In scholarship, influences on the Hebrew narrative have been imagined to derive either from Arabic sources only or from a mixture of Arabic and European sources, depending upon how scholars view the flow of literary information in the Iberian Peninsula. The following discussion explores why scholarship has privileged the Arabic context over the European and advocates a more nuanced perspective on the literary environment in which Hebrew fiction flourished in Christian Spain.

Several factors help explain the shift to rhymed prose Hebrew narrative in Christian Spain. Dan Pagis describes one aspect of the shift in sociological terms, postulating that the Hebrew reading audience expanded in the twelfth-century to include non-aristocrats, thereby requiring a medium more flexible than poetry.<sup>27</sup> The most widely accepted thesis understands the shift as an imitative trend, inspired by the popularization of Arabic rhymed prose narratives, or *maqāmāt* (singular, *maqāma*), in the Iberian Peninsula. When the Arabic *maqāma*, which originated in Persia during the late tenth century, became popular in Spain, Hebrew authors sought to emulate it just as they had imitated Arabic poetry previously. Another suggestion that has attracted less attention points out that some Hebrew narratives bear similarities with early Romance literature and other European sources. As such, the Hebrew rhymed prose narrative, often called the Hebrew *maqāma* or *maḥberet*,<sup>28</sup> has been situated between two great world literatures.

<sup>26</sup> Yiśḥaq ben Shelomo Ben Sahula, *Meshal ha-qadmoni*, (ed. Yisrael Zamora) (Tel Aviv, Israel: Mosad Bialik, 1952).

<sup>27</sup> The rhymed prose form also gained popularity outside of the Iberian Peninsula down to the modern period. For samples of other texts, see Yehudah Ratzaby, *Yalqut ha-maqāma ha-ivrit* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1974). For an Egyptian example from the second half of the thirteenth century, see Yosef Ben Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi's *Ne'um aḥituv ben ḥakhamoni*, published in Yosef Yahalom, "Tafqido shel sipur ha-misgeret be-ivudim 'ivriyim shel maqamot," in *Sefer Yisra'el Levin* (1994), pp. 145-54.

<sup>27</sup> Dan Pagis, "Variety in Medieval Rhymed Narratives," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978): p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> on this terminology, see S. D. Goitein, "ha-Maqāma ve-ha-maḥberet: perek be-toledot ha-sifrut ve-ha-

Understanding the degree to which Hebrew authors emulated literary models from the Arabic and Romance environments is essential for understanding Hispano-Jewish culture in transition. Just as *halakhists* and philosophers can be located between the Jewish intellectual traditions of Andalusia and Northern France, so authors of *belles lettres* should be understood as individuals negotiating their art between two great literary cultures. Rather than seeing Hebrew literary texts as mere products of “influence” derived from one culture or another, they should be viewed as the fruits of authors aware of multiple literary models who created their texts through a process of negotiation. The emulation of Arabic literary norms by an author in thirteenth century Christian Spain would signify a lingering taste for Arabic culture and literary sensibilities. In contrast, following the norms of Romance literature would signify a shift away from the Arabic culture of the past and a turn toward the new culture reaching Jews from the north. Before turning to the treatment of this topic in scholarship, brief introductions are given to select Arabic and European sources, focusing on the *maqāma* and the Romance.

## ARABIC LITERATURE

It is impossible to give a sufficient introduction to the Arabic sources that could have contributed to the rise of the Hebrew rhymed prose narrative in a few pages. In addition to the *maqāma*, the form most intimately related to the Hebrew narrative, other sources that have received less attention might have been influential. The sources of Hebrew rhymed prose narratives are not always rhymed prose narratives themselves. One example is Abraham Ibn Ezra’s *Ḥayy ben meqīṣ*, based on Ibn Sīna’s *Ḥayy ibn yaqẓān*, which is not in rhymed prose.<sup>29</sup> In addition to texts that are known to have circulated in the Iberian Peninsula, Eastern sources should be studied as well, including those that post-

hevraḥ ba-mizrah." *Maḥberot le-sifrut* 5 (1951): pp. 26–40.

<sup>29</sup> Israel Levin, *Ḥayy ben meqīṣ le-Avraham Ibn ʿEzra* (Tel Aviv: Makhon Katz, 1983); on *Ḥayy ibn yaqẓān*, see Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, translated from the French by Willard R.

date the Hebrew texts since their sources might be earlier. One promising potential source is the medieval Arabic folk romance (*siyar shābiyya*), which has only begun to be studied by Arabists.<sup>30</sup> For the time being, the most significant Arabic source treated in the discussion of the Hebrew narrative is the *maqāma*.

### **The *Maqāma***

The *maqāma* genre was invented by Badi' al-Zamān ("the Wonder of the Age") al-Hamadhāni in tenth-century Nishapur, perhaps as a fictional diversion at the learning sessions of experts in *adab* literature.<sup>31</sup> His *maqāma* collection draws upon the content of *adab* texts--covering everything from literary models to particular themes, motifs, situations, verses of poetry and figures of speech<sup>32</sup>--and refashions it into lively fictional narratives focusing on the travels and encounters of two main characters, a narrator and a protagonist rogue (named 'Īsa Ibn Hishām and Abū al-Faḥ al-Iskandāri respectively). The *maqāmāt* are composed in a sophisticated rhetorical register, making liberal use of intertextual references, double entendres and rare words. Rhymed, metered poems are placed in the mouths of the narrator, the protagonist and other characters and are interspersed throughout the rhymed prose.

Each of al-Hamadhāni's *maqāmāt* was composed independently, being gathered into a collection of fifty texts by a later redactor. Narrative development is limited in the

Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

<sup>30</sup>there are some 30,000 pages of works to be explored. See P. Heath, "A Critical Review of Modern Scholarship on *Sīrat 'Antar Ibn Shaddād* and the Popular *Sīra*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 15 (1984): pp. 19-44.

<sup>31</sup> Badi' al-Zamān al-Hamadhāni, *Maqāmāt*, edited by Muḥammad 'Abdou (Beirut, 1993); English translation: *The Maqāmāt of Badi' al-Zamān al-Hamadhāni*, translated from the Arabic with an introduction and notes by W. J. Prendergrast (London and Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd., 1915). In general, see A. F. L. Beeston, "Al-Hamadhāni, al-Ḥarīri and the *Maqāmāt* Genre," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, edited by Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 125-35.

<sup>32</sup>On the reuse of materials such as sermons, epistles, *ḥadīth*, and poetic genres, see Abdalfattah Kilito, *Les Séances* (Paris: Sindbad, 1983) and the earlier article by the same author, "Le Genre séance: une introduction," *Studia Islamica* 43 (1976): pp. 25-51.

*maqāmāt* to a number of standard formulas, though appearing with numerous variations. One standard plot that originates with al-Hamadhānī and is imitated by later *maqāma* authors involves the appearance of the protagonist in the guise of a mendicant preacher. Standing before a congregation of supplicants in a mosque, the protagonist preaches an eloquent sermon in poetry and prose, admonishing the people to live righteously and give to charity. After filling his pockets with the money of the devout, the mercurial protagonist absconds. The narrator then recognizes the protagonist, perhaps offers a few words of mild rebuke, but is generally impressed with the ruse and the protagonist's eloquence. The motifs of disguise, mendicancy, eloquence, ruse and recognition repeat throughout many *maqāma* plots.

Al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* merited the esteem of some litterateurs in the Islamic West soon after their creation, with samples being included in the *adab* anthology *Zahr al-ādāb* by the Qayrawani scholar al-Husrī (d. 1022). Andalusian authors of the eleventh century likewise explain the inception of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* and occasionally quote the inventor of the *maqāma* genre. Yet, as Rina Drory explains, "It seems that al-Hamadhānī's early fame in al-Andalus neither made his *maqamat* an identifiable productive model for narration nor gave them exemplary status."<sup>33</sup>

The *maqāma* remained peripheral for a century after al-Hamadhānī until it was revitalized by al-Ḥarīrī, whose collection of fifty *maqāmāt* would greatly outshine al-Hamadhānī's collection in popularity and canonical status.<sup>34</sup> Al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt*--collected, organized and publicly recited by the author himself--may be characterized by an even higher degree of lexicographic virtuosity but a more formulaic vision of plot. Al-Ḥarīrī's plots are reducible to a few models, still revolving around the travels and encounters of a narrator and a protagonist (named al-Ḥārith Ibn Humām and Abū Zayd al-

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<sup>33</sup> Rina Drory, "The Maqama," in *The Literature of al-Andalus*, eds Maria Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 193.

<sup>34</sup> English translation: *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī*, edited and translated by Thomas Cheney and F.



Sarūji respectively):<sup>35</sup> 1) The protagonist arrives at a gathering that the narrator is attending. While the other participants discuss some rhetorical topic, the protagonist sits silently, feigning ignorance. Ultimately, the protagonist reveals his superior intellect and reprimands the attendees who, in turn, are embarrassed and offer him money. Taking the money, the protagonist departs. 2) The narrator arrives at a location to find people gathering around an eloquent man. The speaker wins money from the viewers by selling phony charms and potions or simply by turning an eloquent phrase. The narrator recognizes the speaker as the protagonist in disguise and the protagonist departs. 3) The protagonist appears as a mendicant complaining over his fate, arousing people's compassion and collecting their money. The protagonist exposes his identity to the narrator (or the narrator recognizes him) and departs. 4) The protagonist appears as a defendant against another party (e.g. his wife) before a judge. The judge makes a ruling that the two sides are equal and, at the end, all is declared to be fiction.

Al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* were received in Andalusia with far greater reverence than al-Hamadhānī's collection already during the author's lifetime. Among the attendees of al-Ḥarīrī's recitation of his own *maqāmāt* in Baghdad in 1110 was the Andalusī traveler al-Qudāī, who returned to Andalusia and repeated the words of the renowned eastern author.<sup>36</sup> Only when al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* gained canonical status later in the twelfth century, meriting extensive commentary by al-Sharīshī and other scholars, did the *maqāma* genre take root firmly in Andalusia. It is not until this time that Andalusian authors began to imitate *maqāmāt* in Arabic. The appearance of the Hebrew *maqāma* at about the same time parallels this proliferation.

The only collection of Andalusian Arabic *maqāmāt* to follow the classical model

Steingass, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867-98 (rpt 1969)).

<sup>35</sup>for this list, see 'Abdal Raḥman Marī, "Hashpa'at maqamot al-ḥarīrī 'al maḥbarot taḥkemoni" (Tel Aviv: Bar-Ilan University, 1995), p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Mackay, *Certificates of Transmission on a Manuscript of the Maqamas of Ḥarīrī (Ms. Cairo, Adab 105)* (Philadelphia, 1971).

closely was written by al-Saraqustī, also known as Ibn al-Ashtarkuwi (d. 1143), who explicitly composed his *Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, a collection of fifty narratives, as a challenge to al-Ḥarīrī's collection.<sup>37</sup> Although al-Saraqustī's *maqāmāt* predate Judah al-Ḥarīzī's by approximately seventy-five years, the *Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya* have never been introduced into the scholarly discussion of the *Tahkemoni*. As in the classical *maqāmāt*, al-Saraqustī's narratives revolve around the encounters of a narrator, Abū al-Ghamr al-Sā'ib Ibn Tammām,<sup>38</sup> and a protagonist, Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī. Al-Saraqustī's narratives not only retain the sophisticated rhetorical register of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* but do so with the additional requirement of a stricter rhyme scheme,<sup>39</sup> upping the literary ante as it were.

Yet, al-Saraqustī's *maqāmāt* are not mere imitations of earlier models with the added prosodic requirement. Although the narratives are deeply dependent upon earlier models, al-Saraqustī is often innovative with story lines and subtle aspects of structure. The narrator, for example, plays a somewhat different role, occasionally appearing as a dissimulating rogue himself and collaborating with the protagonist in his ruses (though the protagonist also dupes him in the end). As Monroe points out, the sensitive reader will realize that the narrator's tales are sometimes planted with inner contradictions, indicating that his speech, like the protagonist's, cannot be trusted. Another significant divergence from the classical *maqāma* is the fiftieth *maqāma* of the collection, which records the death of the protagonist, giving the collection a sort of "ending."

Significantly, al-Saraqustī's Arabic *maqāmāt* were not the first to be composed in

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<sup>37</sup> Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Saraqustī, *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, edited by Aḥmad Badr Dayf (Alexandria, 1982); James T. Monroe, "Al-Saraqustī, ibn al-Aštarkūwī: Andalusī Lexicographer, Poet, and Author of *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28.1 (1997): pp. 1-37; idem, "Al-Saraqustī, ibn al-Aštarkūwī (Part II)," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 29 (1998): pp. 31-58. I wish to thank Professor Monroe for sharing with me his translation of al-Saraqustī prior to publication. It is now available, Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Saraqustī, *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, translated by James T. Monroe (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002).

<sup>38</sup>in some narratives, the discourse is opened by a second narrator, al-Mundhir Ibn Ḥummām, apparently to begin the text on a different rhyme.

<sup>39</sup>requiring a two consonant rhyme, over and above the usual single consonant required by al-Ḥarīrī; this rhyme scheme was first applied to poetry by the Andalusian poet Abū 'Alā' al-Ma'ārri in his collection

the Iberian Peninsula. Other Andalusian *maqāmat* have merited some discussion, though significant texts still remain in manuscript.<sup>40</sup> Rina Drory mentions that the “Andalusi court maqama,” while still a fictional narrative, abandons common eastern features such as the mendicancy theme, the inclusion of two protagonists, scheme-based plots, and final exposure. Noting these same points, Ihsān ‘Abbās also comments that “many of the Andalusian *maqāmāt* have become descriptions of a journey in the lands of Andalusia.”<sup>41</sup> Nemah<sup>42</sup> incorporates several types of texts under the rubric *maqāma*, which he defines prosodically as rhymed prose with poems interspersed whether or not the text exhibits real narrative development. The *maqāma* is used for eulogy, invective, love poetry, descriptions of towns, pedagogy and as a medium for discussing the administration of justice. Significant among the *maqāmāt* described by Nemah is that of Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī al-Khisāl (1073-1146),<sup>43</sup> which weaves together several typical *maqāma* scenarios into a single, continuous narrative.<sup>44</sup> Nemah concludes,

this *maqāma* differs materially from those of al-Ḥarīrī in that it is longer and it does not deal with one particular anecdote only, but rather relates a whole series of incidents which is held together by the personality of the protagonist, the old man... Evidently it was the intention of Ibn Abi l-Khisāl to show off his virtuosity in word-painting by

*luzūm mā lā yalzam.*

<sup>40</sup>For more extensive discussions of the Andalusian *maqāma*, see Drory, “The Maqamah...”; H. Nemah, “Andalusian *Maqāmāt*,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 5 (1974): pp. 83-92; Fernando De La Granja, *Maqāmas y risālas Andāluzas* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe De Cultura, 1976); Ihsān ‘Abbās, *Tārīkh al-adab al-andalusī - asr al-tawā’if wa-l-murābitīn* (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1997), pp. 243ff; Ḥasan ‘Abbās, *Fann al-maqāma fī al-qarn al-sādis* (Cairo, 1986); Yūsuf Nūr ‘Awad, *Fann al-maqāmāt bayna al-mashriq wa al-maghrib* (Beirut, 1979).

<sup>41</sup>*Tārīkh al-adab al-andalusī*, p. 247.

<sup>42</sup>“Andalusian Maqāmāt”...

<sup>43</sup>Nemah calls him the first *maqāma* author of Andalusia; he dies only a few years after al-Saraqustī, so it seems difficult to know which author composed his collection first. The earliest Andalusian *maqāmāt* mentioned by Drory date from the reign of the Almerian governor al-Muṭasim ibn Ṣumādīh, who reigned from 1051 until 1091. “The Maqama”..., p. 196.

<sup>44</sup>The narrator, who shares the name of al-Ḥarīrī’s narrator al-Ḥarīth, is wandering the countryside (described in detail) and comes upon a *sheikh* collecting money from the poor through his impressive eloquence. The narrator invites the *sheikh* to stay at his home with the intention of stealing his money. The *sheikh* only pretends to sleep and is nowhere to be found when the narrator awakes; his only trace is a series of poems left in the narrators house. The *sheikh* has taken leave for the tavern where he has spent all his money and is in debt to the tavern-keeper (the narrative includes a detailed description of the tavern, customers and servants). Finally, the narrator finds the *sheikh* and petitions him to compose

combining several *maqāmāt* in one.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the goal of “word-painting,” the shift to a more complex narrative form may reflect a different aesthetic in Andalusia.

The major *maqāma* collections by al-Hamadhāni, al-Ḥarīri and al-Saraqustī all give the sense of being composed after some preferable period had come to an end. The current age is oppressive. People are ignorant and miserly and refined culture is difficult to find. The protagonist is a “half-outsider”<sup>46</sup> who complains over his fate and eeks out a living through petty scams all over the world, wherever his reputation has not preceded him. Abū al-Faḥ is from Alexandria,<sup>47</sup> a city that fell into decline with the ascent of the Fātimid dynasty. Abū Zayd, even if he is misrepresenting himself, complains that he took up wandering when his home was destroyed by Byzantine Christians.<sup>48</sup> Al-Saraqustī wrote during the Almoravid period, after the Taifa period had passed, and looked to an idyllic place and time outside of the Iberian Peninsula. Although he was born in Saragossa and settled in Cordoba, al-Saraqustī’s *maqāmāt* are set almost exclusively outside of the Iberian Peninsula with a strong preference for the East (Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Iraq). In his *maqāma* of the poets (*maqāma* 30), in which Abū Ḥabīb teaches al-Sā’ib and his fellow travelers about the history of poetry, only poets from the Jāhiliyya, ‘Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd periods are included. When the narrator asks Abū Ḥabīb to “bear with me, and offer me full information and knowledge regarding those poets who are our contemporaries?,” the protagonist brushes him off and responds, “tomorrow is another day” before departing. It

verses in his honor; the *sheikh* obliges him with a poem of eighteen lines.

<sup>45</sup>“Andalusian Maqāmāt”..... p. 85.

<sup>46</sup> James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī‘ Az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983), p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>Because al-Hamadhāni locates Alexandria as a city at the “‘Umayyad Frontier,” Muḥammad ‘Abdou, the editor of the *maqāmāt*, argues that this is not Alexandria in Egypt but the lesser known Alexandria in Spain (p. 64, note 4). ‘Abdou’s suggestion seems a bit far fetched since Alexandria was often referred to as al-thagr (the frontier) in Fātimid times and later.

<sup>48</sup> the character is said to be based on an actual person of the same name, who came to a mosque of Basra in worn garments and eloquently begged for alms after his home in Serūj was destroyed by the Franks in 1101. See the introduction to al-Ḥarīri’s *maqāmāt* by Thomas Chenery, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīri*.... p.

is perhaps for these reasons that one biographer wrote of al-Saraqustī. [he is] “Saragossan with regard to his physical place of origin. Iraqi with regard to his intellectual homeland.”<sup>49</sup>

The aesthetic value of *maqāmāt* has often been denigrated in modern Western scholarship.<sup>50</sup> Because of the texts’ penchant for rhetorical play, they have often been deemed mere “rhetorical pyrotechnics.” Plots have been considered flat, predictable, contrived, and simplistic. Narrative frames have been discounted as insignificant or as mere tools exploited for the presentation of rhetorical material. More recent scholarship has valued the playful subtleties of these fascinating texts, appreciating the narratives from structuralist<sup>51</sup> and post-structuralist<sup>52</sup> perspectives.

## EUROPEAN LITERATURE

### Spanish

In exploring the range of sources that might have played a role in the emergence of Hebrew rhymed prose fiction, we should consider the various literatures of twelfth and thirteenth century Spain that existed alongside Arabic. Spanish itself was a “late bloomer” among the vernacular literatures of Europe. Apart from remnants of the romance lyric, beginning with the *kharjas* of Hebrew and Arabic *muwashshahs*, the earliest texts date to the middle of the twelfth century. The first national poem of Spain, the *Cantar de Mio Cid*, which narrates events of the late eleventh century, can be dated to 1140 at the earliest.<sup>53</sup> The epic recounts the exile of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar from the court of Alfonso

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<sup>49</sup>al-Dabbī (d. 1203) quoting al-Fath; see Monroe, “Al-Saraqustī... (part I), p. 4, note 8.

<sup>50</sup> for a convenient collection of comments of scholars such as Cheney, Nicholson, Prendergrast, Gibb, Von Grunebaum and others, see Monroe, *The Art of Badī‘ az-Zamān...*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>51</sup> e.g. James Monroe, *The Art of Badī‘ az-Zamān...*

<sup>52</sup> e.g. Daniel Beaumont, “The Trickster and Rhetoric in the *Maqāmāt*,” *Edebiyāt* 5 (1994): pp. 1-14.

<sup>53</sup>Menéndez Pidal dates the text to 1140. Others date the text later, to the late 12th or early 13th century, e.g. Alan D. Deyermond, *A Literary History of Spain: The Middle Ages* (London; New York: Ernest Benn Ltd.; Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1971) p. 45.

VI of Castile and Leon and his subsequent rise to fame as the conqueror of Muslim Valencia in the name of the kingdom that had renounced him. The poem shows a clear concern for courtly ideals and the model of the knight. It bears signs of influence from French literary models and likely signs of Arabic influence.<sup>54</sup> The earliest Spanish fictional narratives date to the early thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup> In addition to Spanish, texts (and recitations) in Latin and French helped shape the literary culture of the Iberian Peninsula.

### Latin

There is a tendency to consider Latin literature irrelevant in studies of Hispano-Jewish literature because Hebrew authors generally did not know Latin. However, given the powerful influence that Latin had on the rise of European literature,<sup>56</sup> the contents of this literature should not be ignored. It is unlikely, for example, that Jacob Ben El'azar read Latin, even though portions of his *Sefer ha-meshalim* remind the reader of moments in Latin allegorical writing.<sup>57</sup> Even if Latin sources were not read by Hebrew authors, their contents may have been transmitted orally or discussed generally in intellectual circles. Latin even had its own rhymed prose narrative tradition, which has never been studied alongside the Arabic *maqāma*.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> regarding Arabic influence, the most obvious sign is the hero's epithet *Cid*, from the Arabic *sayyid*, "master, lord."

<sup>55</sup> Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, *A New History of the Spanish Language* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961). See pp. 44ff. on the epic and pp. 155ff. on Spanish prose fiction. It should be noted that a "narrative-lyric" also emerged in the late twelfth, early thirteenth century with clear signs of French influence. Striking examples include the *Disputa del alma y el cuerpo*, a debate between the body and the soul, *Denuestos del agua y el vino*, a debate between water and wine, and *Elena y Maria*, in which two girls debate the qualities of their lovers, one a knight and the other a cleric. See p. 55-56. Such debates, of course, share much in common with rhetorical *maqāmāt*.

<sup>56</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

<sup>57</sup> compare, for example, the first chapter of *Sefer ha-meshalim*, in which Intellect (*sekhel*), Wisdom's companion, rides a chariot toward the narrator's soul, with Alan of Lille's (d. 1202) *Anticlaudianus - or the Good and Perfect Man*, translation and commentary by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), in which Reason drives a chariot constructed by the seven Liberal Arts, drawn by the five Senses, to request God's assistance in constructing a perfect human being (per the request of Nature). While the aims of the two texts are quite different, the parallel is striking.

## French

The European sources that hold the most promise as sources of Hebrew narrative are the various literatures in French vernacular. Although the focus of the following discussion will be on the Romance verse narrative, mention will be made of other French genres that might have touched Hebrew authors. These genres include the *Chansons de Geste*, the Troubador lyric and allegorical writing.<sup>59</sup> The discussion of these genres is extremely brief; some topics will be resumed in subsequent chapters.

### *Chansons de Geste*

Toward the end of the eleventh century, French epic poems narrating events that took place three centuries earlier during the reigns of Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious began to appear. The *Chansons de Geste* (*chanson* = song; *geste* (*gesta*) = things done, high deeds, exploits) are about warfare, specifically the battles between the Carolingians and the Muslims of Spain, usually called Saracens in the literature. The earliest surviving poem, the *Chanson de Roland*, dates from 1098 and recounts the journey of Roland, Charlemagne's nephew, back to France following a victorious seven year expedition against the Saracens in Spain. The protagonists of the other *chansons* are Charlemagne's barons. The *Chansons* were retold and rewritten many times throughout the Middle Ages and often reflect events from the time of composition, particularly the conflict with Islam during the Crusades. Among the *Chansons*' dominant aspects is the representation of Muslims as Other.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup>The so-called *mixtum sive compositum*, see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin...*, pp. 147ff. As in the case of Arabic, there are Latin discussions regarding the respective merits of poetry and prose.

<sup>59</sup>Further details on specific texts will be given later on in this chapter and in subsequent chapters. Most of the discussion is adapted from Michel Zink, *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*, translated by Jeff Rider (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995) and Denis Hollier et. al., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1994).

## The Troubador Lyric

The rise of the Troubador lyric is approximately contemporaneous with the *Chansons de Roland*. The first vernacular songs of France--and these poems were meant to be sung--derive not from the laity but from the elite. The first lyric poet was a Provençal prince, William IX, count of Poitiers and duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127), whose style was soon emulated by the *Troubadors* in Provence and later by the *Trouvères* in Northern France in the early thirteenth century.<sup>61</sup> The troubadors themselves stemmed from various social classes, ranging from princes to petty rural nobles and the children of castle servants. The origins of the lyric have been the subject of much debate, with different weights being ascribed to the influence of Latin and Arabic precedents.<sup>62</sup>

At the risk of oversimplification, we might say that the Troubador lyric was preoccupied with two subjects: courtliness and one of its subcategories, *fin' amour* (refined love). To be courtly meant the possession of a good education, skills in hunting, fighting and conversation, and the cultivation of values such as impartiality, liberality and a nobility of heart. Above all, to uphold the courtly ideal meant to love, to seek the favors of a lady--generally one's social superior, one's *dame*--despite obstacles. This love was seldom about consummation and love poetry was more about longing than gratification.<sup>63</sup> Love defied Reason, causing the lover to act foolishly in his quest for the beloved.

## Romance

In the middle of the twelfth century, in Northern France, there arose a new literary genre that was intended to be read rather than sung. The first Romances--such as the

<sup>60</sup> see Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984).

<sup>61</sup> see Zink, *Medieval French Literature...*, chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History...*

<sup>63</sup> Zink, *Medieval French Literature...*, pp. 37-40.



*Roman d'Alexander*, the *Roman d'Thebes* and the *Roman d'Eneas*--were adaptations of Latin works.<sup>64</sup> Soon afterward, the settings in which Romances unfolded shifted from Rome to Britain, with Romance authors--usually Church clerks trained in Latin--basing stories on works of recent history.<sup>65</sup>

The nature of Romance, and of Western literature, would change in the work of Chrétien de Troyes, a poet of the late twelfth century first associated with the court of Champagne and later with Flanders. All of Chrétien's romances revolve around the court of King Arthur, although Arthur himself is never featured as a protagonist. The author assumes prior knowledge on the part of the reader about Arthur, the round table, and the cast of knights and ladies. Rather than choosing history for his subject, Chrétien made the principal topics of his romances love (following the ideals of the Troubadors) and the evolution of protagonists through their adventures. Concerning the centrality of adventure, Zink writes,

The adventures experienced by the hero are simultaneously the cause and the sign of his evolution. The external adventure is simultaneously the source and the image of an internal one... The solitary figure of the knight errant, almost entirely Chrétien's invention, emblemizes the concerns of his romances: the discovery of one's self, of love, and of the other.<sup>66</sup>

Many other Romances followed during the thirteenth century, ultimately abandoning the narrative verse form and turning to prose. A famous example is the story of *Aucassin et Nicolette*,<sup>67</sup> a "chante-fable" composed half in prose and half in verse. It is the story of Aucassin, son of the count of Beaucaire, who is forbidden by his father to marry his love Nicolette, a girl of "unknown lineage" bought from the Saracens who turns out to be the princess of Carthage.

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<sup>64</sup>in these cases Pseudo-Calisthenes, Statius's *Thebaid* and Virgil's *Aeneid* respectively.

<sup>65</sup>such as Wace's *Roman de Brut*, an adaptation of the *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*), see Zink, *Medieval French Literature...*, p. 53.

<sup>66</sup>*Medieval French Literature...*, p. 56.

<sup>67</sup>Eugene Mason, trans., *Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Medieval Romances and Legends* (London:

## **Allegory**

Allegorical writing, in which one thing is said but another is meant, began well before the Middle Ages. Methods of allegorical interpretation have long been central to Jewish<sup>68</sup> and Christian<sup>69</sup> approaches to the Hebrew Bible.<sup>70</sup> In the classical tradition, the *Psychomachia* (*The Battle of the Soul*) by Prudentius (4th century) has been called the first “fully-fledged allegorical poem.”<sup>71</sup> This narrative presents a battle of the Vices and Virtues as a great military confrontation wherein each Vice is personified as a warrior who is ultimately slain by his opposing Virtue. C. S. Lewis interprets this story as a basic expression of the “inner life,” the inner struggle of a moral being.<sup>72</sup>

With time, simplistic plots such as battles and dialogues gave way to more complex forms such as drama, journey, biography and romance.<sup>73</sup> The turn to these more complex forms made the interpretation of allegorical texts more difficult to determine. It need not be the case that each object in an allegory correspond to a single, specific object outside of the text. In fact, allegories seldom make their meanings completely transparent; the reader is always working to uncover new meanings, to reconcile them with previous assumptions and to negotiate through contradictions. Hult has remarked concerning the *Roman de la rose*, the most famous of medieval allegorical romances, “This massive and centrifugal text, characterized by large-scale digressions and repetitious wordplay, defies attempts to control its meaning, to identify a unified message.”<sup>74</sup> Like non-allegorical

New York: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1910).

<sup>68</sup> Frank Talmage, “Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism,” in *Jewish Spirituality - From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Green (New York, 1987), vol. I, pp. 313-55.

<sup>69</sup> Philip Rollinson, *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture* (London: Harvester Press, 1981).

<sup>70</sup> one should really distinguish between allegorical writing, in which an author creates a text that lends itself to allegorical interpretation, and allegorical reading, in which a reader applies allegorical methods to a text that may or may not have been meant to be read allegorically.

<sup>71</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 66.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>73</sup> C. Van Dyke, *The Fiction of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory* (Ithaca

romances, the *Roman de la rose* is set in a courtly setting and treats courtly behavior including, above all, love (the speaker in the poem is infatuated by his love for the rose, whose virginity he ultimately takes). The garden is at once an allegorical realm and the earthly garden of the court; characters are simultaneously human players and conceptual abstractions. In recent years, many fascinating discussions have treated the finer points of allegorical writing, some of which will be treated in the coming chapters in connection with Jacob Ben El'azar.

### **Circulation**

To what degree did these various literatures circulate in the Iberian Peninsula during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? It is clear that the Troubadour lyric circulated in Spain, especially after the expulsion of the Troubadours from Provence during the Albigensian Crusade (1209); exiled troubadour poets relocated in Spain within the courts of James I and Pedro III of Aragon and Alfonso X of Castile. Menocal, in delineating the heartland of the lyric, follows the cultural map intimated by Samuel Stern's discovery of the Romance *kharjas* in Hebrew and Arabic *muwashshahas*.<sup>75</sup> She depicts Spain of the eleventh century as a hybrid multicultural, multilingual society, part of a map whose borders reached "from al-Andalus in the southwest through Provence at the center to Sicily and Tuscany in the east."<sup>76</sup> The heartland of narrative during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries might entail a map that is even more extensive. In addition to the literature of the land of *oc* (Southern France, Provence) where the Troubadour lyric was

and London, 1985), p. 66.

<sup>74</sup> David F. Hult, "Jean de Meun's Continuation of Le roman de la rose," in *A New History of French Literature*, edited by Denis Hollier et. al. (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press), p. 99. This essential text has been translated several times into English. See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 3rd ed., translated by Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). There is also a useful bibliography of the *Roman*, Heather M. Arden, *The Roman de la Rose: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993).

<sup>75</sup>S. M. Stern, "Les vers finaux..."

<sup>76</sup> Maria Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke

born, we might also consider the literature of the land of *oil*, Northern France, the home of Romance fiction. One should also keep in mind that some Jewish authors--such as Judah al-Ḥarīzi and possibly Jacob Ben El'azar--spent time in Provence, where the Romances of the north had undoubtedly reached. The problem of information flowing from Northern France to Christian Spain seems considerably reduced when one recalls that Jewish Studies has little difficulty accepting that the teachings of Northern French rabbis were known in thirteenth century Aragon.

### THE HEBREW RHYMED PROSE NARRATIVE

As mentioned, the Hebrew rhymed prose narrative has usually been called the Hebrew *maqāma* or the *maḥberet*. There has been significant disagreement among scholars concerning which Hebrew texts may be designated *maqāmāt* properly. The narrowest definition is suggested by Stern, who only considers rhymed prose narratives modeled after the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhāni and al-Ḥarīrī to be *maqāmāt*.<sup>77</sup> On the opposite extreme, Schirmann uses the term *maqāma* in referring to all Hebrew texts written in rhymed prose.<sup>78</sup> Levin sees Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Ḥayy ben meqīṣ*--a Hebrew adaptation of Ibn Sīna's *Ḥayy ibn yaqẓān*--as influenced by the *maqāma* simply because it is written in rhymed prose (*without* metrical poems being interspersed).<sup>79</sup> Pagis is the first to stress the variety of rhymed prose narratives,

we are here dealing not only with a chronological evolution of one specific genre, but also with a multitude of genres, some completely unconnected with the *maqama*... The blurring of distinctions seems to have led to regrettable results. One of these was a somewhat normative approach which judged various works by their proximity to the *maqama* proper, occasionally evaluating them as lesser ramifications of the pure genre and evolving a theory of flowering and decline in keeping with this principle.<sup>80</sup>

University Press, 1994), p. 39.

<sup>77</sup> S. M. Stern, "Meqorah ha-'aravi shel 'maqāmat ha-ternegol' le-al-Ḥarīzī." *Tarbiš* 17 (1946): pp. 100-87.

<sup>78</sup> Jefim Schirmann, *Die hebräische Übersetzung der Maqamen des Hariri* (Frankfurt a.M., 1930), pp. 71-72. Despite the loose terminology, Schirmann does divide the texts into various types, including collections of fables, novellas, polemical writings and the classical model of wandering rogues.

Pagis distinguishes among three categories of rhymed prose narratives: 1) classical (according the model of al-Ḥarīrī, exemplified in Hebrew by al-Ḥarīzī), 2) near classical (exemplified by Hebrew authors before al-Ḥarīzī), and 3) rhymed prose narratives of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that are influenced by European literature.<sup>81</sup> Huss further refines Pagis' classification by renaming the second category the "Andalusian Hebrew *Maqāma*," arguing that such texts as *Sefer sha'ashurim*, *Minḥat yehudah* and others share basic characteristics despite their diversity. Huss identifies six fundamental qualities that most of these texts share: 1) they are written for the purpose of entertainment; 2) they are composed in rhymed prose with metrical poems interspersed; 3) they consist of one continuous story, not several; 4) they make use of fictional characters but without utilizing the narrator/protagonist dichotomy of the classical scheme; 5) they generally use the fixed phrase "he picked up his parable and said" (*va-yisa' meshalo va-yomar*) to introduce poems; 6) the narratives are generally introduced with the formula "So-and-So son of So-and-So spoke."<sup>82</sup> In Huss' view, the Andalusian Hebrew *maqāma* is more similar to the Andalusian Arabic *maqāma* than the classical *maqāma*, though his definition of the Hebrew *maqāmā* is more rigid than Nemah's conception of the Arabic.

Like the Arabic *maqāmāt*, the Hebrew *maqāmāt* have been viewed primarily as vehicles for rhetorical display. For this reason, little attention has been paid to literary aspects of the texts such as the diversity of introductions and conclusions among episodes, plot development, narrative style, and the dynamic relationship between narrator and protagonist. Only a few studies of the Hebrew *maqāmāt* have taken notice of such topics and given readings of texts that strive to do more than ferret out Arabic parallels.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Israel Levin, *Hayy ben meqis...*

<sup>80</sup> Dan Pagis, "Variety in Medieval ...", pp. 90-91.

<sup>81</sup> Dan Pagis, *Ḥidush u-masoret be-shirat ha-ḥol* (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 199.

<sup>82</sup> Matti Huss, "'Minḥat yehudah,' 'Ezrat ha-nashim,' ve-'Ein mishpat'..." , pp. 26-7.

<sup>83</sup> Noteworthy studies include: Ross Brann, "Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Muslims and Jews in Judah al-Ḥarīzī's *Tahkemoni*," *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992): pp. 1-22; Matti Huss, "Lo' haya ve-lo' nivra' - 'iyun mashve me-ma'amad ha-bidayon be-maqāma ha-'ivrit ve-ha-'aravit."

Studying the literary techniques of Hebrew narratives not only leads to their greater appreciation but also to a more nuanced view of their position on the map of world literature.

## **BETWEEN ARABIC AND EUROPEAN LITERATURE**

Scholarship has exhibited disagreement regarding the extent to which Hebrew rhymed prose narratives may be viewed as products of Arabic or European environments. The vast majority of studies assume a context that is either entirely or mostly Arabic. There is little doubt that the prosodic features of the Hebrew narratives--rhymed prose with poems interspersed--are borrowed from the Arabic *maqāma*. Judah al-Ḥarīzi's *Tahkemoni* has gained the most attention by modern scholars, perhaps because the narratives follow the classical model most faithfully. Many of al-Ḥarīzi's narratives are borrowed from Arabic *maqāmāt* by al-Hamadhāni and al-Ḥarīri as well as other Arabic texts.<sup>84</sup> However, the Hebrew narratives written before the *Tahkemoni* are less classical in their content even though they share the prosodic features of the *maqāma*. In essence, there is a curious development in Hebrew writing from a less classical model to one that is more classical, from the innovative to the imitative. Only some Hebrew narratives truly seem a part of the Arabic *maqāma* tradition or the Arabic literary tradition more generally.

Links made by scholars between themes appearing in the Hebrew narratives and precedents in European literature are extremely rare. Scheindlin considers Ibn Ṣaḡbel's *Ne'um asher ben yehudah*, composed already in Muslim Spain in the early twelfth century, to have a strong affinity for themes of Romance literature. According to Scheindlin, the attitudes toward love and the style of narrative presentation are,

*Mehqarei yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 18 (2001): pp. 58-104; idem... "'Minhat yehudah.' "Ezrat ha-nashim,' ve-'Ein mishpat'..."; Dan Pagis, "Variety in Medieval..."; Raymond Scheindlin, "Fawns of the Palace and Fawns of the Field," *Prooftexts* 6 (1986): pp. 189-203; Yosef Yahalom, "Tafqido shel sipur ha-misgeret...".

<sup>84</sup>See chapter six of this dissertation for a full bibliography. Also, for a convenient summary of this

normally associated more with the Romance literature of the period than with the Judeo-Arabic heritage of Andalusian Jewry. Though the story's cultural environment is clearly Arabic, its main point, the lampooning of the protagonist because of his immature understanding of the rules of love, gives it more the character of a romance than a *maqama*.<sup>85</sup>

Huss considers *Minḥat yehuda*'s theme of *molestiae nuptiarum*, distinct from the "wiles of women" motif of Arabic literature, to be inspired by misogynistic European literature and debates over celibacy within the Catholic Church.<sup>86</sup> Romance roots have been posited for Jacob Ben El'azar's *Sefer ha-meshalim* by Schirmann and Scheindlin, although a comprehensive study of the book has not been undertaken.<sup>87</sup> Pagis considers the later rhymed prose narratives to be influenced by European literature.<sup>88</sup> In general, however, scholars view the Hebrew narratives as products of the Arabic environment only, discounting the possibility of other influences, even when the attribution to Arabic seems somewhat forced.<sup>89</sup>

Scholarship on Hebrew narratives has tried to link themes to the Arabic context whenever possible. An enlightening example of this tendency may be demonstrated by Schirmann's treatment of race and racism in chapter eight of Jacob Ben El'azar's *Sefer ha-meshalim*. In the story, the narrator witnesses an aristocrat carousing with a woman who is described as "a worn out black woman, her lips like a fire-brand<sup>90</sup> plucked from burning, her eyes like flames."<sup>91</sup> Witnessing the licentious encounter, the narrator becomes enraged,

extensive bibliography, see 'Abdal Raḥman Marī, "Hashpa'at maqamot al-ḥarīri 'al maḥbarot taḥkemoni" (Tel Aviv: Bar-Ilan University, 1995), pp. 279-80.

<sup>85</sup>Scheindlin, "Fawns of the Palace...", p. 200.

<sup>86</sup>"Minḥat yehudah," "Ezrat ha-nashim," ve-'Ein mishpaṭ'...", pp. 54ff..

<sup>87</sup>discussed further in chapter six of this dissertation.

<sup>88</sup>*Hidush u-masoret...*, p. 199.

<sup>89</sup>Zvi Malakhi considers possible Arabic influences on Hebrew allegorical writing in Spain without considering the possibility of Christian influence, even for texts of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The author deems some of the stories "caustic and crude" and even "foreign to the Jewish spirit." Malakhi concludes that "there is no way to explain these strange phenomena except to surmise that there is here a mimicry or translation of Arabic compositions that are still unknown, that may be found in the future." Apart from the unwelcome disparagement of the literature, Malakhi's comment highlights the assumption of a unidirectional vector of Arabic influence on Hebrew texts. See Zvi Malakhi, "Ha-maqāma ha-'aravit ve-hashpa'atah 'al ha-alegoriya ha-'ivrit," *Mahanayim* 1 (1992): pp. 176-79. Elsewhere, however, Malakhi mentions the possibility of Christian allegory, "'Megilat ha-'ofer..." p. 320.

leading him to fulminate against this “deviant” behavior and physically assault the couple. In an article of 1939,<sup>92</sup> Schirmann posited that the origin of the attitude toward race might be found in early European literature since the racist attitude seemed inexplicable against the background of Arabic literature. Forty years later, after Bernard Lewis published an article detailing negative attitudes toward blackness in Arabic sources,<sup>93</sup> Schirmann revised his opinion.

This [example from Jacob Ben El'azar], of course, is an example of racism in our literature.... For a long time, I held that, concerning this point, the author adapted himself to the system of his Christian environment. I did not even venture to consider Arabic influence, since, according to the common wisdom, the Arabs did not know discrimination in this world between white and black Muslims: members of all races were equal before their Creator... Today I must admit that I erred in this matter as many have erred before me. A few years ago, the well known British Orientalist Bernard Lewis published detailed research on the relationship of Arab Muslims toward blacks... [Lewis concludes that] the great majority of Arabs did not view blacks as their brethren; rather, they related to them with disdain, mockery and even hatred. Although the Christians did not love them either, there is no need to attribute only them with the racist influence on Jacob Ben El'azar; the motif of the black fits more naturally with the rest of the motifs whose origins are Arabic.<sup>94</sup>

For Schirmann, the default vector of influence is Arabic-Hebrew, with Romance-Hebrew only existing as an outside possibility when the default seems insufficient. After boldly positing the possibility of Romance influence, Schirmann retreats to the more accepted vector of influence as soon as it seems plausible. Schirmann does this even though he remains open to Romance influence for other aspects of the same book.<sup>95</sup> It is true that racist attitudes are discernible in both Arabic and Romance literature. What Schirmann fails to do is to systematically compare the nature of racist expressions in Arabic and Romance literature *and then* contemplate the Hebrew expression against those models.

<sup>90</sup> Rashi, in his commentary on Amos 4:11, associates the word with blackness.

<sup>91</sup> J. Schirmann, "ha-Sha'ar ha-shemini me-'sefer ha-meshalim' le-ya'aqov ben el'azar," *Qoves 'al yad* 8 (1975): lines 259-60.

<sup>92</sup> J. Schirmann, "Der Neger und die Negerin," *MGGW* 83 (1939): pp. 481-92. On the subject of race in French narrative, see Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

<sup>93</sup> The article is Bernard Lewis, "Raza y color en el Islam," *Al-Andalus* 33 (1968): pp. 1-51.

<sup>94</sup> J. Schirmann, "Ma'aseh be-zaqen sav'u'a," in *Le-toldot ha-shirah ve-ha-drama ha-ivrit*, idem. (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 386.



Why has scholarship been so insistent about the predominance of Hebrew narrative's Arabic environment? The answer to this question is intimately related to a scholarly vision about medieval Jewish culture that governs the conception of Hebrew literature in medieval Spain. Medieval Hispano-Jewish verse has been viewed as one of the products of the great Arabic-Jewish symbiosis that characterized medieval Jewish communities from Iraq to Andalusia. Goitein has called the emergence of medieval Hebrew poetry the "apex" of this symbiosis whereby Jewish intellectuals invigorated the Jewish tradition by infusing it with Arabic learning and style.<sup>96</sup> As shown in the discussion on "periodization" in the introduction to this dissertation, the Hebrew literature of Spain has been viewed according to a model of growth and decline wherein quality is equated with adherence to Arabic forms in Hebrew writing. From this perspective, the *maqāma* is viewed as a later manifestation of the symbiosis phenomenon, exhibiting itself even after Arab hegemony had dwindled. Jewish studies has also been governed by a thesis that Jews were seldom influenced by the intellectual trends of Christendom, where Jews were generally more insular and isolated. Thus, the possibility of Romance literature's positive influence on Hebrew writing would seem unlikely from the outset.<sup>97</sup>

The problem of determining the sources of Hebrew rhymed prose narratives is extremely complex. A theme that seems to be of Arabic origin at first glance may prove to have a more proximate Romance relative. Conversely, a theme that resembles Romance might be found to have a precedent in an unknown Arabic text. To argue that a

<sup>95</sup>see chapter six of this dissertation.

<sup>96</sup>S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs...*, p. 155.

<sup>97</sup>Interestingly, Maria Rosa Menocal has noted the opposite phenomenon in Christian scholarship when tracing the influences upon a figure such as Raymond Llull. "Urvoy makes explicit the general rejection of the comparison between Llull and Ibn 'Arabī first posited by Ribera and subsequently by Miguel Asin Palacios—that is, perhaps there are "literary" links of a direct sort that may be accepted, but from a doctrinal perspective the assumption of a direct influence is not warranted because Llull may have drawn inspiration from too many other sources. *In a number of ways this is exactly the kind of highly prejudiced argument made whenever Arabic "sources" are at stake: if any other source can be found, then that source is far likelier, essentially eliminating the Arabic possibility.*" (Italics mine). *Shards of Love...*, pp. 220-21.

given theme is definitively *not* Arabic, one must be prepared to submit that the theme appears nowhere in the vast corpus of medieval Arabic literature, a position that would be foolhardy given that so much of this corpus has yet to be properly explored. To argue that a given theme is definitively of Romance origin, it must be maintained that the theme was circulating in the Iberian Peninsula before the presence of an actual Romance text is documented. The evidence for the presence of Romance fiction in the Iberian Peninsula during the twelfth century is only circumstantial; we have no actual texts.<sup>98</sup> One must assume that the written text circulated earlier than has been documented or that the material was generally known in oral form.<sup>99</sup> The problem is further compounded by debates regarding the relationship between Arabic and Romance literature in general, with some scholars arguing that Arabic literature contributed to the rise of the Romance lyric<sup>100</sup> while others describe European vernacular literature as an outgrowth of the classical tradition only.<sup>101</sup>

To unravel the interplay between Hebrew, Arabic and European texts in the Iberian Peninsula, we must document as many thematic parallels as possible and then try to piece the puzzle together. Systematic comparison of Hebrew with Romance and other

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<sup>98</sup> there is evidence for the existence of Romance language and verse however: see chapter one of this dissertation and the following footnote for more detail.

<sup>99</sup>The problems in imagining the context of Hebrew rhymed prose are not unlike the problems that have surrounded discussions of the *muwashshah*. The *muwashshah* is a strophic form indigenous to Andalusia, composed mostly in classical Arabic (or Hebrew) but concluding with a couplet (called the *kharja*) in colloquial Andalusian Arabic or a dialect of Ibero-Romance. The Romance *kharjas* are the earliest evidence of Romance verse in the Iberian Peninsula. On one hand, scholars, largely Arabists, have explained the strophic form as an outgrowth of an Eastern Arabic strophic form called the *musamma*. According to this theory, the *muwashshah* became a popular form that inspired the composition of concluding verses in Romance and may have influenced the rise of the Troubadour lyric. Others, often scholars of European literature, have tended to see the *muwashshah* as a native Iberian form created under the impact of an early, otherwise undocumented, Romance poetry; the Romance *kharjas*, then, have been referred to as the remaining "islands" of what was once a complete "archipelago" of Romance verse. At stake in this debate is much more than our understanding of a literary form but also our conception of vectors of influence between Arabic and European cultures. See James Monroe, "Zajal and *Muwashshaha*: Hispano-Arabic Poetry and the Romance Tradition," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 398-419. On the Hebrew *muwashshah*, see Tova Rosen-Moged, *Le-'ezor shir...*

<sup>100</sup>Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History...*; idem, *Shards of Love...*

European literatures is in great need, as is the exploration of many Arabic texts, particularly those from the Islamic East, which have not been introduced into the discussion.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, we must not only consider themes but also study other subjects such as narrative form and technique. Perhaps most importantly, we must unlearn or rethink some of the dominant academic narratives that discount the possibility of Romance influence a priori. By reimagining the context of Hebrew rhymed prose fiction, much more will be understood about Hispano-Jewish culture in transition and the interplay of literary texts in the multi-confessional atmosphere of thirteenth-century Christian Spain.

The following chapters of this dissertation do not attempt to resolve issues of literary influence definitively. Rather, they compare and contrast two thirteenth-century Hebrew rhymed prose fictional narratives from various literary perspectives while pointing out heretofore unnoticed contacts with Arabic and Romance literatures. Importantly, the analysis strives to go beyond conventional concepts of “literary influence” wherein an author’s work is merely shaped by his literary environment. All too often, Hebrew authors have been portrayed as passive vessels through which literary influences pass indiscriminately. Instead, authors are viewed as individuals aware of multiple literary traditions who select and rework existing materials in innovative, ironic and even subversive ways. Thus, the presence of Arabic themes does not necessarily prove that an author was “influenced” by a particular text. Rather, it shows that the author had agency and consciously chose to make use of that material, possibly inverting its original signification and using it toward a different end.

The two texts compared in the following chapters are the *Tahkemoni* by Judah al-Harizi and *Sefer ha-meshalim* by Jacob Ben El’azar. Both authors were born in Christian

<sup>101</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin...*

<sup>102</sup> One fruitful parallel between a section of Ibn Zabarra’s *Sefer sha’ashu’im* and Ibn Butlān’s *Risālat dawāt al-atibba* (an Eastern Arabic source) has been pointed out recently by Arie Schippers, “Ibn Zabāra’s *Book of Delight* (Barcelona, 1170) and the Transmission of Wisdom from East to West.” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 26 (1999): pp. 149-61. Compare with J. Schirmann, “The Harmful

Toledo in the latter half of the twelfth century and composed their works during the first half of the thirteenth century. While it seems that Ben El'azar spent his whole life in the Iberian Peninsula, traveling, perhaps, only to Provence, al-Ḥarīzi traveled widely, ultimately reaching the Islamic East as far as Iraq and then settling in Aleppo. Both authors exhibit a strong familiarity with Arabic literature, though they relate to it in different ways. Whereas al-Ḥarīzi largely remains a faithful transmitter of the *maqāma* genre, Ben El'azar toys with the conventions of the genre, turning instead to a new literary sensibility associated with Romance. Although many references will be made to parallels between these texts and Arabic and Romance selections, the focus of the discussion is not on documenting the works' sources. Rather, the two works are contrasted with respect to their narrative forms and uses of landscape and geography. Based mainly on the internal logic of each work, the chapters show that the *Tahkemoni* reflects the perspective of an author of the Islamic world while *Sefer ha-meshalim* reflects the perspective of an author of the Christian world looking outward at the world of Islam.

Food: A Curious Parallel Between Cervantes and Joseph Zabarra." in *Romanica et Occidentalia*, edited by Moshe Lazar (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. 140-42.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FORM: IMITATION, EXPLOITATION AND REALIA

Instead of the virginal fullness of an inexhaustible object, the prose writer is faced with a multiplicity of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down in the object by social consciousness. Along with the internal contradictions of the object itself, the prose writer comes to discover as well the social heteroglossia that surrounds the object, the tower of Babel confusion of languages that goes on around any object. The dialectics of the object are interwoven with the social dialogue surrounding it. For the prose writer, the object is a condensation of heterological voices among which his own voice must also resound; these voices create the background necessary for his own voice, without which his literary nuances would not be perceived, and without which they "do not sound."

Mikhail Bakhtin

Discussions of Hebrew rhymed prose narratives between Arabic and Romance have generally concentrated on theme more than form. The technique used by scholars has been to trace a given theme of a Hebrew text to its "origin" and conclude that the original text "influenced" the Hebrew text. While the presence of themes from Arabic and European literature in Hebrew texts does point to authors' awareness of these literatures, the "influence" model has done little to describe how Hebrew authors work with existing material. Themes cannot be viewed in isolation; they must be read in the framework of the narrative as a whole. Authors can tweak themes, manipulate them and co-opt them for novel purposes. The following discussion introduces the narrative works of Judah al-Ḥarīzi and Jacob Ben El'azar and focuses on narrative form. The discussion has two purposes: 1) to orient the narratives between Arabic and Romance fiction from the perspective of form (rather than theme only), and 2) to show how al-Ḥarīzi and Ben El'azar use form to convey attitudes toward social realia, i.e. how topics pertinent to

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<sup>1</sup> quoted in T. Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, translated by Wlad Godzich, *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 13 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 72.

Hispano-Jewish culture in the thirteenth century are refracted through the narratives. Although significant attention is given to documenting Arabic and Romance themes in the Hebrew texts, the discussion shows that Hebrew authors actively rework these themes, subjugating them in the service of other purposes such as parody or even subversion.

### **JUDAH AL-ḤARĪZI (1166?-1225) AND THE *TAḤKEMONI***

Until Joseph Sadan's discovery of an entry on al-Ḥarīzi in a medieval Arabic biographical dictionary, which identifies the author as a native of Toledo, determining al-Ḥarīzi's place of birth was mainly guesswork. Early scholars designated his birthplace as Toledo, Barcelona or Granada, each representing different assumptions about the nature of Jewish culture in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Several scholars doubted the possibility of Toledo, then in the Christian kingdom of Castile, precisely because al-Ḥarīzi was so well versed in the Arabic tradition and adept at writing Arabic *belles lettres*. For this reason, al-Ḥarīzi was inscribed into the tradition of Granada, the former home of Samuel ha-Nagid, Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi and an illustrious seat of Jewish-Arabic symbiosis. Subsequent scholarship, however, has proved beyond doubt that Arabic culture was alive and well in Castile and that such a context could well explain the education of a literary phenomenon such as al-Ḥarīzi.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, even with al-Ḥarīzi's birthplace firmly set in Toledo, the impact of the Christian context on the author's work, particularly his renowned *Taḥkemoni*, continues to be debated. Rina Drory<sup>4</sup> argues that al-Ḥarīzi's zealous attempt to ennoble the Hebrew language through the *Taḥkemoni* stems from the author's cultural background as a Jew of

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<sup>2</sup>see Joseph Sadan, "Rabbi Yehudah al-Ḥarīzi ke-šomet tarbuti - biografiyah 'aravit shel yošer yehudi be-'einei mizrahan," *Pe'amim* 68 (1996): p. 25, note 21 on the various opinions regarding al-Ḥarīzi's birthplace. This is the best work on al-Ḥarīzi's biography.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., pp. 18-28.

<sup>4</sup>Rina Drory, "Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Culture," *Poetics Today* 14, no. 2 (1993): 277-302; idem., "Al-Ḥarīzi's *Maqāmāt*: A Tricultural Literary Product?" *Medieval Translator* 4 (19): pp. 66-85; idem., "ha-Heqsher ha-samui min ha-'ayin: 'al

Christian Spain. In Drory's view, the *Tahkemoni* is part of the cultural enterprise of Jewish intellectuals (such as the Ibn Tibbons) who were transplanting Arabic knowledge into an invigorated Hebrew language in the Christian context,

...if not for the prevailing cultural climate in northern Spain and Provence at the time, al-Harizi would most probably never have written his Hebrew maqamat... In other words, it took a non-Muslim and non-Arabic cultural atmosphere, that of Christian Spain, to produce a literary work so notably Arabic-Hebrew in nature.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Joseph Sadan tacitly critiques Drory's view (her articles are conspicuously absent from Sadan's bibliography) and emphasizes the direct influence Arabic had on al-Harizi, both in Christian Spain and in the East, where the *Tahkemoni* was composed. For Sadan, the *Tahkemoni* need not be seen as a part of the transfer of Jewish-Arabic learning to the Christian context.

Al-Harizi's first Hebrew writings were translations of Judeo-Arabic and Arabic *halakhic*, philosophical and belletristic works, usually commissioned by Jewish intellectuals in Christian Spain and Provence. Among his translations are<sup>6</sup> Moses Ibn Ezra's *Maqalat al-hadiqa fi ma'ana al-majaz wa al-haqiqa*, entitled 'Arugat ha-bosem in Hebrew;<sup>7</sup> Maimonides' *Dalalat al-hairin* (*Guide of the Perplexed*), entitled *Moreh nevukhim* in Hebrew;<sup>8</sup> Maimonides' *Introduction to the Mishnah*<sup>9</sup> and the commentary on the first five tractates of *Zera'im*<sup>10</sup>; Maimonides' *Epistle on Resurrection*<sup>11</sup>; 'Ali Ibn Rudhwān's *Epistle on Morals*, entitled *Iggeret 'ali ha-ishma'eli* in Hebrew<sup>12</sup>; Hunayn Ibn

tošarim sifrutiyim shel mifgash telat-tarbuti bi-yemei ha-beinayim." *Pe'amim* 46 (1991): pp. 9-28.

<sup>5</sup>"Literary Contacts...", p. 298.

<sup>6</sup>this list has been reiterated several times in scholarship. I am using Drory's, "Literary Contacts..." p. 285 and appendix.

<sup>7</sup>Moshe Idel, "Zehuto shel metargem sefer 'arugat ha-bosem le-rav moshe ibn 'ezra." *Kiryat sefer* 51 (1975-76): pp. 484-87.

<sup>8</sup>Moshe Ben Maimon, *Moreh ha-nevukhim be-tirgumo shel rabbi yehuda al-harizi* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1953).

<sup>9</sup>M. D. Rabinovitz, *Rabenu moshe ben maimon: haqdamot le-ferush ha-mishnah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kook, 1961).

<sup>10</sup>according to al-Harizi's testimony, see Yehuda al-Harizi, *Tahkemoni*, edited by Y. Toporovsky (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 406.

<sup>11</sup>Moshe Ben Maimon, "Ma'amar tehiyat ha-metim," translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by A. S. Halkin, *Koves 'al yad* 9 (1989): pp. 129-50.

Ishaq's *Adāb al-falāsifa* (Dicto of the Philosophers), entitled *Musrei ha-filosofim* in Hebrew<sup>13</sup>; Galen's *Dialogue on the Soul*<sup>14</sup>; and al-Ḥarīrī's Arabic *maqāmāt*. The translation of al-Ḥarīrī, entitled *Mahberet 'itti'el* in Hebrew,<sup>15</sup> would be the transitional work between al-Ḥarīzī's early translations and the composition of his original fictional masterpiece, the *Tahkemoni*.

Unlike *Mahberet 'itti'el*, which was translated in Spain, the *Tahkemoni* is the work of an author who had left his homeland.<sup>16</sup> The many dedications of the *Tahkemoni* to patrons of the East, both in Hebrew and in Judeo-Arabic, indicate that the author had left Spain to seek patronage in the most thriving centers of Arabic culture.<sup>17</sup> The *Tahkemoni* survives in many versions and a critical edition has never been attempted. In fact, the book stubbornly resists the idea of an "Urtext." The differences in the versions show that the author was constantly reworking his text, not in order to revise drafts with the goal of creating a superior, final text, but rather to fit the exigencies of the moment. Most conspicuously, as Yahalom will show in a forthcoming book, the same individuals who are praised as generous patrons in one version are lampooned as miserly ignoramuses in the next, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup> For these reasons, a critical edition that aims to provide a single "correct reading" should never be made; the most faithful representation of al-Ḥarīzī's

<sup>12</sup> 'Ali Ibn Rudhwān, *Iggeret 'ali ha-ishma'eli*, edited by M. Grossberg, translated by Judah al-Ḥarīzī (London, 1900).

<sup>13</sup> Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, *Sefer musrei ha-filosofim (Sinnsprüche der Philosophen)*, translated by Judah al-Ḥarīzī, edited by A. Loewenthal (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Kauffmann, 1896).

<sup>14</sup> Galenus, *Dialog uber die Seele*, translated by Judah al-Ḥarīzī, edited by A. Jellinek (Leipzig: C. L. Fritzsche, 1852).

<sup>15</sup> al-Ḥarīrī, *Mahberot 'itti'el*, translated by Judah al-Ḥarīzī, edited by Yiṣḥaq Peres (Tel-Aviv: Moledet, 1951); Ezra Fleischer, "An Overlooked Fragment of the Translation by Yehudah al-Ḥarīzī of the Maqāmas of al-Ḥarīrī," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 24 (1973): pp. 179-84. Al-Ḥarīzī wrote the translation while still in northern Spain or Provence, sometime between 1205 and 1216 (see Drory, "Literary Contacts..." (p. 285). For further bibliography and a discussion of the translation method, see Appendix B of this dissertation.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to this short introduction to the *Tahkemoni*, one should see some of the numerous fine introductions to the book. See, for example, Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat*, pp. 184ff.

<sup>17</sup> On the dedications, see A. M. Habermann, "Haqdashot le-sefer 'Tahkemoni' ve-reshimat tokhen maqamotav," *Mahbarot le-sifrut* 5 (1953): pp. 39-46 and Rina Drory, "Al-Ḥarīzī's *Maqāmāt*: A Tricultural..."



masterpiece would be the parallel publication of numerous versions, as Yahalom will do with select chapters.

As with the poetry of the Andalusian period, the *Tahkemoni* has been viewed primarily as a testimony to Jewish-Arab symbiosis and the “influence” of Arabic literature on Hebrew literature. Scholarship has been consumed with revealing the sources of al-Harizi’s narratives by uncovering influences from the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhāni, al-Hariri and other Arabic sources.<sup>19</sup> While important, such an approach does little to go beyond the imitative aspects of al-Harizi’s work. Other studies of the *Tahkemoni* have attempted to use the text as a testimony to the author’s biography<sup>20</sup> and realia of thirteenth century culture.<sup>21</sup> Recently, Huss has considered the complex interplay between fiction and reality in the *Tahkemoni* and other rhymed prose narratives.<sup>22</sup> Despite scholarship’s longstanding interest in the *Tahkemoni*, little effort has been made to read the book as a text emanating from a culture in transition following the decline of Andalusian Jewry. Even if Drory’s study does make the context of Christian Spain visible by considering the impetus for the *Tahkemoni*’s creation, it does not read a dimension of cultural transition within the narratives themselves. Beneath the *Tahkemoni*’s layers of rhetoric and irony, there is a sophisticated discourse about Andalusia, the past and cultural transition.

Like the *maqāmāt* of al-Harizi’s Arabic predecessors, the *Tahkemoni* makes extensive use of sophisticated rhetorical play and intertextual allusion. Each of the

<sup>18</sup> the book will be called *Masā’ei yehudah*.

<sup>19</sup> Jefim Schirmann, “le-Heqer meqorotav shel sefer tahkemoni li-yehudah al-harizi,” *Tarbis* 23 (1952): pp. 198ff; Judith Dishon, “Ne’um asher ben yehudah le-Shelomo Ibn Saqbel ve-ha-maqāma ha-esrim be-tahkemoni li-Yehudah al-Harizi,” *Biqoret u-farshanut* 6 (1974): pp. 57-65; Judith Dishon, “le-Meqorah shel ha-mahberet ha-esrim ve-ehat be-‘sefer Tahkemoni,” *Biqoret u-farshanut* 13-14 (1979): pp. 9ff; Y. Danah, “al-Hamadhāni ke-maqor le-rav yehudah al-harizi,” *Dappim le-mehqar be-sifrut* 1 (1984): pp. 79-89; Y. Danah, “le-Meqoro shel sefer Tahkemoni,” *Tarbis* 44 (1975): pp. 172ff; Judah Ratzaby, “le-Meqorotav shel Tahkemoni,” *Tarbis* 26 (1957): pp. 424ff; S. M. Stern, “Meqorah ha-aravi shel ‘maqāmāt ha-ternegol’ le-al-Harizi,” *Tarbis* 17 (1946): pp. 100-87; Abdal Rahman Marī, “Hashpa’at maqamot al-hariri ‘al mahbarot tahkemoni” (Tel Aviv: Bar-Ilan University, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shurah ha-ivrit...sarfat...*, pp. 153-68 and references there.

<sup>21</sup> see below in this chapter.

<sup>22</sup> Matti Huss, “‘Lo’ hayah ve lo’ nivra...”; idem., “ha-Bidayon u-ma’amado ba-maqāmah ha-ivrit:

*Tahkemoni*'s fifty narratives involves an interaction between the narrator and the protagonist. The main characters (and other characters) possess symbolic names that can be deciphered through semantic and intertextual analysis. The narrator is Heman the Ezrahi, a name that reverberates against several usages in the Bible. Heman is a wise man with whom Solomon is compared (I Kings 5:11)<sup>23</sup> and there is another Heman who is a Levite called "Heman the poet (*ha-meshorer*)" (I Ch. 6:18). In addition, the name Ezrahi should be considered for its semantic sense, derived from the root *zrh*, "to rise from the soil" (and the root of the modern Hebrew word for "citizen"). Thus, it is not surprising that the narrator reveals his native land to be Spain.<sup>24</sup> The author has thus bestowed upon the narrator a name that evokes wisdom, poetry and Spain.

The narrator's status as "one who rises from the soil" places him in stark contrast with the protagonist, Hever ha-Qeni from Alon Sa'ananim, the namesake of a character from Judges 4. He is Hever, not only because he is a "friend" to the narrator, but also because he "brings together" (from the root *hbr*) scattered bits of rhetoric and teaching.<sup>25</sup> While his home *Sa'ananim* is a simple place name in the Bible, it is significant here because of the force of its root, *sn*, "to wander."<sup>26</sup> Thus, he comes from the place of abstract and eternal wandering.

The constant movement from place to place in the *Tahkemoni* imbues the text with the ideal of wanderlust common in *maqāma* literature. While there is no certain evidence that al-Harīzi knew al-Saraqstī's *maqāmāt*, there is a strong point of overlap between the two texts with respect to character names. Like Hever ha-Qeni, al-Saraqstī's narrator is

Yehudah al-Harīzi ve- Immanu'el ha-Romi - hemshekh o temurah?" *Tarbis* 67 (1998): pp. 351-78.

<sup>23</sup>actually, here it is written, "He (Solomon) was the wisest of all men: [wiser] than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalkol, and Darda..." Heman is the son of Zerah the son of Judah; by making the narrator a descendant of Judah, al-Harīzi might be making a reference to himself.

<sup>24</sup>chapter 49, p. 382.

<sup>25</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 274. "Therefore they call my name 'Hever,' because I bring together (*'ahaber*) all precious scattered [poems]."

<sup>26</sup>on the association of this root with the Arabic cognate *zn*, see chapter three of this dissertation.

Furthermore, the Qenites may be associated with Qayin (Cain) of Genesis, who was condemned by God to

a wanderer; he is Abū al-Ghamr al-Sā'ib, "the Possessor of Naivete, the Wanderer." As mentioned, al-Ḥarīzī's protagonist claims to have taken up wandering after his home was destroyed by Byzantine Christians. It is perhaps al-Ḥarīzī's own experience of wandering that led him to select the *maqāma* with its tales of itinerant rhetoricians to convey aspects of his social world, one that is concerned with displacement and renewal during a transitional chapter of Jewish history.

The *Tahkemoni* covers an extraordinary range of topics. As al-Ḥarīzī writes in the introduction,

I gathered together in this book many parables and sweet themes. Among them all types of rhetoric and striking riddles, words of teaching, songs of friendship, proverbs of rectitude, words of admonition, events of history and tidings of the years. The remembrance of death and the place of the shadow of death; words of repentance and pardoning of guilt. The delights of love and love songs. The betrothing of women, bridal canopy and marriage, and matters of divorce; the drunkenness of drunkards; the asceticism of ascetics; wars of heroes and events of kings; the adventures of travel; songs of praise, and supplications of prayers; instruction of the sages, and associations of the upright. The desire of fawns; gardens and villages; words of princes; the speech of children; the hunt of hunters; the cunning of tricksters and the folly of fools; the slandering of scorners, the blaspheming of revilers. And wonderful songs and epistles in wonderful words.<sup>27</sup>

Like the Arabic *maqāma*, the *Tahkemoni* is meant to entertain, to astound the reader with eloquent speech and bring delight through humorous scenarios. In addition, al-Ḥarīzī states that he wrote the book to ennoble the Hebrew language, which had "declined appallingly"<sup>28</sup> in his day. Although Hebrew had enjoyed a kind of renaissance in the thirteenth century, being employed for a wide range of topics that had previously been treated in Arabic only, al-Ḥarīzī lamented the decline of belletristic writing in the tradition of the Andalusian poets.

### European Themes?

One question that has never been asked is whether, in addition to Arabic sources,

become a ceaseless wanderer on earth (Genesis 4:12).

<sup>27</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 13.

al-Harizi utilizes themes or plots from European literature. Although the *Tahkemoni* indisputably endeavors to emulate Arabic literary norms for the tastes of an Eastern audience, this does not require that the other literatures of the Iberian Peninsula never surface in the book. Despite his dedication to Arabic style, even composing Arabic poetry that is largely indistinguishable from that of Eastern Muslim authors,<sup>29</sup> al-Harizi was not necessarily impervious to the literary trends of Christian Spain and France. Some moments in the *Tahkemoni* bear earmarks of the European tradition. While it is premature to attribute particular sources, and indeed such sources may never be known, a few thematic parallels are worth mentioning.

First, in the *Tahkemoni*'s introduction, when the author is in a state he describes as "I was asleep but my heart was awake,"<sup>30</sup> the Hebrew Tongue comes to him in the form of a woman and charges him to gird his loins and battle zealously on her behalf, to bring dignity to the Holy Language that has fallen into decline. While personification, particularly the personification of Israel as a woman, is known in earlier Jewish sources, this episode is strikingly similar to encounters with *Natura* (Nature) in Christian sources. For example, Alan of Lille's *The Complaint of Nature* (*De planctu naturae*)<sup>31</sup> begins with the poet forlorn because of the loose sexual morals of his age (homosexuality had become rampant, threatening the normal course of reproduction). When the poet enters a state described as "half-way between wakefulness and sleep," *Natura* (who oversees reproduction on earth) descends from heaven adorned in beautiful garments and addresses

<sup>28</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Harizi's Arabic compositions include the well known *maqāma* describing his travels to the East (which is parallel to chapter 46 of the *Tahkemoni*) and numerous poems preserved in the biography discovered by Sadan. The Arabic *maqāma* has been in the process of piecemeal publication for many years; the manuscript is still incomplete. See Yehudah Ratzaby, "Maqāma 'aravit me-'eto shel al-Harizi." *Biqoret u-farshanut* 15 (1980): pp. 5-51 and bibliography therein. A more complete version will be published by Yahalom in *Mas'ei yehudah* (forthcoming). On the poems in the bibliography, see Joseph Sadan, "Rabbi Yehudah al-Harizi ke-šomet..." pp. 40ff.; 52ff..

<sup>30</sup>Song of Songs 5:2.

<sup>31</sup> Alan of Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*. Translation and commentary by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980).

the poet.<sup>32</sup>

Second, in chapter 19, one of the *Tahkemoni*'s rhetorical episodes, the narrator comes to the river Euphrates where seven youths are debating which is the best of seven virtues: humility, zeal, courage, faithfulness, wisdom, culture or a good heart. While these virtues might be somewhat universal, such lists of virtues, frequently seven in number, are often enumerated in classical and European sources. In the thirteenth-century Spanish text *La leyenda de los Infantes de Lara*,<sup>33</sup> a father pronounces a eulogy over seven murdered sons, enumerating their virtues that taken together summarize the seven qualities of the ideal knight: loyalty, justice, truth, valor, fidelity, generosity, and fondness for good company.

Third, in chapter 31, the protagonist relates an adventure in which he and a band of travelers encountered a "man" riding a horse who reveals "himself" to be a lovely maiden. The maiden tells a story that she was cloistered in a royal chamber until a robber kidnapped and assaulted her. She escaped and wandered the wilderness until she encountered Hever ha-Qeni and his companions. She leads the travelers to a spring behind a mountain where she reveals her beauty and impresses the men with her military skill by shooting an arrow into the air and splitting it in twain. Suddenly, she redirects her bow and shoots one of the travelers in the chest. She forces the remaining companions to bind each other with ropes. The tale ends with the protagonist's escape when he unsheathes a knife and stabs the maiden.

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<sup>32</sup> consider also the personification of *Philosophia* in Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by Joel C. Relihan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2001).

<sup>33</sup> R. Menendez Pidal, ed., *La leyenda de los Infantes de Lara* (Madrid, 1934). Menendez Pidal dates the text to the second half of the thirteenth century (p. 4). Alan Deyermond, however, dates the text as early as 1000, *A Literary History of Spain*, p. 39. One should also see the essay by E. Curtius, "The 'Chivalric System of the Virtues'" in *European Literature and the Latin...*, pp. 519-37. Curtius mentions that "Islam too developed an ideal of knighthood, which exhibits 'striking coincidences' with that of the Christian West... These indications perhaps suffice to show that we need a new discipline of medieval studies, based on the broadest foundations" (p. 537, and see note 34). While Arabic does possess a genre of biographical-hagiographical literature called *manāqib* literature, which records the *manāqib* (qualities and characteristics) and *faḍā'il* (virtues) of notable individuals, this is not identical with the literature of vices

The story, as it is known, is based on al-Hamadhāni's *maqāma* 6, the "maqāma of the Lion," which includes many of the same details (the spring behind the mountain, splitting the arrow in twain, shooting a companion in the chest, the protagonist's escape). However, in al-Hamadhāni's version, the rider is not a woman in disguise but a man.<sup>34</sup> Al-Harīzi's addition alters the sense of the story. While both versions are meant to entertain, al-Harīzi's version is based on an inversion of the known social order wherein men dominate women. This technique is common in French narrative, as is the theme of the cross-dressed knight. However, the theme is also not absent from Arabic sources, and ultimate judgment on the matter of "influence" should be reserved.<sup>35</sup> With respect to form, however, the overarching literary frame remains al-Hamadhāni's: it is a fictional tale invented by the protagonist for the delight of the narrator (and the reader). Even if al-Harīzi did utilize certain themes of European literature, his conception of literature as a whole remained Arabic.

## Form

The narrative structures of the *Tahkemoni* are fairly consistent, revolving around the encounters of the narrator and the protagonist according to the pattern of the classical *maqāma*. In each episode, the two characters meet up in a city or another setting, have some exchange, and then depart, only to meet again in the subsequent episode. The narrator is traveling in search of learning, culture, and rhetorical excellence. The protagonist is a sort of anti-hero, a mercurial master of eloquence whose disregard for social convention makes him an entertaining if not exemplary character. Also a master of

and virtues associated with the Classical and European traditions. On *manāqib* literature, see C. E. Bosworth, "Manāqib Literature," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 504-05.

<sup>34</sup>There are also some minor differences in form. While Abū Fath's identity is not revealed until the end of the *maqāma*, Hever ha-Qeni's is known from the beginning.

<sup>35</sup> further below in the discussion of Jacob Ben El'azar. Most importantly, if a Romance origin is accepted in the case of Ben El'azar, there is no reason it should be rejected in the case of al-Harīzi.

disguise and chicanery, he earns a living through petty scams, duping unsuspecting citizens with an eloquent tongue while flouting social mores beneath the surface.

Ross Brann categorizes al-Harīzi's *maqāmāt* according to four basic patterns, although, as Brann recognizes, not every *maqāma* fits neatly into a category while some exhibit elements of more than one category:<sup>36</sup> 1) rhetorical anecdotes in which the narrative element exists merely as a set up for rhetorical exercises,<sup>37</sup> 2) episodes in which the narrative element is a vehicle for descriptive or didactic discourse,<sup>38</sup> 3) tales involving a ruse or some other deception,<sup>39</sup> and 4) accounts of adventure and rescue.<sup>40</sup> In rhetorical episodes (category 1), the narrative frame seems but a thin veneer for rhetorical display, as when the narrator arrives at a poetry tournament and is dumbfounded at the skill of an unknown master who is revealed to be the protagonist. Recognition is usually followed by a departure scene, although sometimes this is altered or omitted. Descriptive and didactic episodes (category 2) can have equally few plot twists. For example, in *maqāma* 18, the narrator joins a group of intellectuals discussing Hebrew poetry, among them an old man sitting silently yet appearing to mock their words. The old man ultimately speaks and instructs the others in the ways of composing poetry. At the conclusion, the narrator recognizes the old man as Hever ha-Qeni who quickly quits the scene.

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<sup>36</sup> "Power in the Portrayal..." p. 8. Brann only includes a few examples for each type; other chapters are added below.

<sup>37</sup> #4 (Debate of the Ant and Flea); #5 (*Maqāma* of the Months of the Year); #8 (A Letter Read Forward as Praise, Read Backwards as Reproach); #9 (Contest of Poets); #11 (Trilingual Poem, Poems with and without the Letter *Resh*); #13 (Parable of Body and Soul); #15 (On Prayer); #16 (Poets' Boasting Match); #19 (Youths Debate Seven Virtues); #23 (Panegyric for a Man Who Lost His Daughter but Whose Wife Bore a Son); #25 (The Hunt); #26 (Vicissitudes and Benefits of Travel); #27 (In Praise of Wine); #32 (Poetic Repartee Between Youth and Sage); #33 (Alphabetical Wordplay on Sinners and Saints); #36 (Homonym Poems); #39 (Poetic Dispute Between Day and Night); #40 (Dispute Between Pen and Sword); #41 (Dispute Between Man and Woman); #42 (Miserliness versus Generosity); #43 (Sea versus Dry Land); #44 (Teacher Who Asks Pupils Questions); #45 (Of Anecdotes, Wise Sayings and Sealed Enigmas); #49 (In Praise of Fruits and Trees of the Garden); #50 (Scattered Poems)

<sup>38</sup> #17 (Against the Karaites); #18 (Origins of Poetry); #46 (Men of the Eastern Cities); #47 (Descriptions of Cities).

<sup>39</sup> #6 (The Marriage); #20 (Seven Virgins); #21 (Hever Deceives a Country Bumpkin); #29 (The Mendicant Preacher and His Son); #30 (Wandering Physician); #31 (The Captured Robber); #38 (Amulets).

In the remaining categories, the narrative can be more dynamic and entertaining. A common example of category 3, tales of deception, that originates with al-Hamadhāni<sup>41</sup> and echoes in al-Harīrī<sup>42</sup> and al-Harīzī<sup>43</sup> involves a mendicant preacher who swindles a pious congregation out of its earnings through a deceitful rhetoric of piety. The narrator arrives at a house of worship (a mosque in the Arabic versions, a synagogue in the Hebrew) where the mendicant is preaching to the public about the plight of the poor and the merits of charity. After the preacher gathers contributions, the narrator approaches and recognizes him as the protagonist. While the narrator may mildly censure the rogue's deceit, he generally lauds his wily schemes and unparalleled mastery of rhetoric, never exposing the protagonist's identity. *Maqāma* 28, the story of the cross-dressed horsewoman described above is an example of category 4, tales of adventure or escape.

The most constant and salient element of the classical *maqāma* form is the moment of recognition wherein Heman ha-Ezrahi realizes that the man he has encountered is Hever ha-Qeni. This can happen in a number of ways. It is often not until the end of an episode that the narrator recognizes the protagonist, usually after a ruse has been executed. In other instances, Hever is discernible from the first moment of the encounter. This usually occurs in episodes wherein the protagonist relates a self-contained story to the narrator. At the end of the protagonist's tale, the narrator takes delight in the protagonist's intelligence and the fictitious quality of his speech.

As is common in the Arabic *maqāma*, the characters in the *Tahkemoni* exhibit no signs of development. Hever ha-Qeni is always deceitful, mercurial, eloquent and proud of his wiles. Heman ha-Ezrahi is always in search of rhetoric and remains ever-gullible.<sup>44</sup> (somehow) never learning that the disguised rhetoricians whom he encounters all over the

<sup>41</sup>#31 (The Horseman's Ruse), #37 (The Snake Charmer), #34 (Tale of the Merchant).

<sup>42</sup>*maqāma* 17, *al-Bukhtariyya*, ed. 'Abdou, pp. 82ff..

<sup>43</sup>e.g. *maqāma* 1, *al-Sarī'a'iyya* and others.

<sup>44</sup>*Tahkemoni*..., *maqāma* 29, pp. 250ff..

<sup>45</sup>hence the name of al-Saraqustī's narrator, Abū al-Ghamr, "Possessor of Naivete."



world all turn out to be the same person. The characters are fixed types whose qualities are completely static. Even the protagonist's protean nature is unchanging. In no episode does a character face a personal challenge that he overcomes to emerge matured and ennobled. The lack of character development is not a sign of low art, as some earlier commentators who compared the *maqāmāt* with Western aesthetics maintained. Rather, the pattern of interaction that makes the *maqāma* possible is entirely dependent upon the main characters' predictability.

Throughout the *Tahkemoni*, al-Harizi remains more or less faithful to the literary values of the classical *maqāma*, even if occasional themes may be tied to precedents in European literature. The distinctions in form between the *Tahkemoni* and the *maqāmāt* of al-Hariri are usually quite subtle and do not detract from the Arabic style of the text.<sup>45</sup> In the following chapter, it is shown that the author's geographical orientation parallels his literary orientation. Although born in Christian Spain, al-Harizi's gaze remains directed toward the Islamic world.

## Realia

From its beginnings, scholarship on the *Tahkemoni* has concerned itself with the reconstruction of the author's biography and the realia of the thirteenth century. From the places Hever ha-Qeni visits and the individuals he encounters, positivists have used the *Tahkemoni* as an almost documentary source. Judith Dishon treats the *Tahkemoni* as a realistic representation of thirteenth century realia such as architectural elements and professions. "Alharizi was one of the Jewish travelers of the Middle Ages who wrote about his adventures in a poetical yet nonetheless realistic and descriptive way."<sup>46</sup> Ross

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<sup>45</sup> D. S. Segal, "ha-Petiha, ha-siyum ve-ha-sipur ha-'otef be-sefer 'Tahkemoni' li-Yehuda al-Harizi," in *Mehqarim be-sifrut am yisra'el u-be-tarbut teiman - sefer ha-yuval le-profesor Ratzaby* (Ramat Gan, 1991), 415-17; Yosef Yahalom, "Tafqido shel sipur ha-misgeret...". Yahalom argues that al-Harizi sometimes tempers risqué elements of stories by emphasizing fictionality more than al-Hariri does.

<sup>46</sup> "Medieval Panorama in the Book of Tahkemoni," *P.LAJR* 56 (1989): p. 11.

Brann is right in critiquing Dishon's simplistic approach,

The *Tahkemoni* undoubtedly reflects certain realia of the places al-Harizi visited and possibly refers to his experiences or incidents he witnessed on his travels. But to completely separate the realistic from the imaginative is to ignore the way in which these elements are intertwined in the text and to seriously misunderstand the literary character of the *Tahkemoni*.<sup>47</sup>

Brann's approach concentrates on the contrasting literary representations of Muslim characters in the *Tahkemoni*. He concludes that *maqāma* 22, the "Maqāma of the Astrologer," is ultimately an expression of Jewish powerlessness in Muslim society and Jewish ambivalence toward life under Islam.<sup>48</sup>

One must ask whether the *Tahkemoni* addresses other thirteenth century realia. It is possible that *maqāma* 7, the "Battle of Two Warriors," is not only a rhetorically sophisticated battle description but also an allusion to the Muslim-Christian battles of the *Reconquista* or the Crusades. Hever ha-Qeni relates that he traveled in his youth with a band of valorous men from Persia to the lands of Meshekh and Tiras until they reached the "Land of Qedar" (i.e. Islamdom), which was caught in the throes of war. The travelers witnessed a great battle. On one side the children of Savta' and Ra'ima were arrayed; the children of Togarmah stood opposite them. Tracing the lineages of the warring parties, we find that Savta' and Ra'ima are sons of Kush son of Ham son of Noah<sup>49</sup> while Togarmah is the son of Gomer son of Yefet son of Noah.<sup>50</sup> People from Kush (or *kushim*) are sometimes associated with Muslims in Hebrew literature,<sup>51</sup> and one of Kush's brothers is Misrayim, associated, of course, with Egypt. One of Togarmah's brothers is Ashkenaz and one of his uncles is Yavan, domains associated with Christendom. Meshekh and Tiras, toward which the protagonist is traveling, are also brothers of Togarmah.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Hever ha-Qeni

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<sup>47</sup>"Power in the Portrayal..." p. 14, note 2.

<sup>48</sup> also on this *maqāma*, see Raymond Scheindlin, "Al-Harizi's Astrologer: A Document of Jewish-Islamic Relations," *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* 1 (1993): pp. 165-75.

<sup>49</sup>Genesis 10:7; I Chronicles 1:9.

<sup>50</sup> Genesis 10:3.

<sup>51</sup> see e.g. Abraham Ibn Ezra, HHSP, vol. I, p. 587, lines 31-32, which is also about a Muslim-Christian battle. See also the discussion of Jacob Ben El'azar below.

and his friends were traveling from Persia to Christendom when they halted in Islamdom to witness a battle between Muslims and Christians. The travelers were trapped in the middle of the battle, "we were caught between them, as if they were lions and we were prey between their teeth," but tried to remain neutral, "and between them we dwelt in silence."<sup>53</sup> This may be an allusion to the Jewish predicament between the warring parties of Christianity and Islam during the thirteenth century. The portrayal is not meant to be realistic and the episode is hardly a sophisticated political commentary. Still, beneath the *maqāma*'s entertaining episodes and rhetorical brilliance is a kernel of reality.

The task of "finding" the author's attitudes in the *Tahkemoni* is a complex endeavor. At times the reader feels the author surfacing in each of the two main characters, the narrator Heman ha-Ezrahi and the protagonist Hever ha-Qeni. Like al-Harizi, the narrator is a native of Spain who travels the world in search of fine rhetoric. Occasionally, the author allows himself to shine through the protagonist's speech, suggesting that the protagonist's perspective might be the author's.<sup>54</sup> at least for a moment. There is undoubtedly a bit of the author in both characters. As symbols of Spain and Wandering, Heman ha-Ezrahi and Hever ha-Qeni embody the two poles between which the author moved during his life. Still, one must not confuse either of the main characters with the author himself. Statements placed in the mouth of the protagonist are often unreliable and, despite their convincing presentation, might be the opposite of what the author truly believes.<sup>55</sup> The author appears, disappears and reappears elsewhere, sometimes we are allowed glimpses of him, but we cannot pin him down.

At times, the protagonist makes arguments that we can assume al-Harizi himself

<sup>52</sup>Genesis 10:3.

<sup>53</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 83.

<sup>54</sup>the most famous example occurs in chapter 35, p. 287. When Hever relates that he was in Spain, distraught and upset, and left to travel east, he inserts the biblical quotation, "At that time Judah went down from his brothers" (Genesis 38:1), evoking the name of the author. For other examples, see Huss, "Lo haya ve-lo nivra...", p. 76, note 74. The same technique is used by Jacob Ben El'azar (see below).

<sup>55</sup>See also the argument of James Monroe, *The Art of Badi' az-Zamān...*, pp. 47ff.

would have supported, such as the diatribe against the Karaites in *maqāma* 17. The same is true of *maqāmāt* in which the learned protagonist details the history of Hebrew poetry and prescribes rules for poetry's composition.<sup>56</sup> Certainly not all of the protagonist's speech is meant to mislead. In other cases, however, the protagonist's mendaciousness seems absolutely reprehensible, as when he swindles the pious out of their money through a deceitful sermon. In such cases, the protagonist is a model of impiety, of what one should not do. The reader, however entertained, must reject the protagonist's actions (the ruse) if not his speech (the sermon).

The author's attitudes are the most difficult to discern in the rhetorical *maqāmāt*. These episodes are generally built around a topic, which might be quite jejune, and pit opposing views about the topic against one another. Their forms are rather simple. The narrator usually arrives at a place and hears a debate. When the subject entails two opposing perspectives--such as the debate over the ant and the flea, or day and night--there are two parties. When the subject requires more voices--such as the debate over the twelve months of the year or the seven virtues--there is a matching number of speakers. In most cases, no side of the debate is clearly victorious over the other. Even in the debate over the benefits and hardships of travel (*maqāma* 26), a topic we might assume was decided in a book so consumed with wanderlust, the reader is left without an answer. The *maqāma* juxtaposes contrasting opinions on topics, giving prominence to the "social heteroglossia" around that topic, to use Bakhtin's phrase. The *maqāma* creates a forum for opposing positions to confront one another.

This is true whether the topic is trivial or significant. Let us consider the *Tahkemomi*'s treatment of wine drinking, a topic of controversy in thirteenth century Christian Spain. So idealized in Andalusian poetry, (non-sacramental) wine drinking remained a symbol of fine culture for some but became a sign of decadence for others.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*maqāma* 3 and 18.

*Maqāma* 27 is a rhetorical episode in which the benefits and harms of wine drinking are debated. Heman ha-Ezrahi reports that, in his youth, he wished to separate himself from drunkards and follow the path of the abstemious (whom he calls the “Nazarites”). After fulfilling his vow for a year, he returned to the tavern and encountered a group of youths drinking and praising wine. One would recite, “The earth is like a beautiful girl and wine is the juice of her mouth...” and another would reply, “Wine is joy’s envoy and the dissipater of misery” and so on. Among the drinkers was an elderly man whose “eye was always on the cup, the goblet continuously going around in his right hand.” The old man disparaged the others’ rhetoric and then delivered his own lengthy discourse about the praiseworthy qualities of wine. Dumbfounded by the skill of his rhetoric, the listeners asked the old man to make the opposite argument, contra wine and concerning its ill effects. The second discourse was equally as impressive as the first: wine hurts the head and confuses the soul, it makes the wise foolish and is the foundation of evil. After the discourse, many of the listeners swore off wine and took vows of abstemiousness. The old man, of course, turned out to be Hever ha-Qeni, who departed after speaking with the narrator.

While the protagonist gives equal time to arguments for and against wine, one wonders whether the two sides are truly equal. What does it mean for a wine drinker in a tavern to deliver a discourse on the harmful effects of wine that causes others to take vows of abstemiousness? As we know, there is no real argument against wine since the protagonist’s speech is unreliable. He only argues against wine to display his rhetorical skill. The text ironically doubles back on itself. In addition to this episode, Hever ha-Qeni is often portrayed as fond of the cup and we can safely say that the protagonist, at least, esteems drink. But what about al-Harīzi? Is his “real” attitude toward wine drinking somewhere in the text? We must remember that the protagonist is often an “anti-hero,” a

<sup>57</sup> also see below in the section of Jacob Ben El’azar.

model of what not to do. But does this mean that al-Harīzi was actually opposed to wine drinking? Probably not. The narrator is also a drinker<sup>58</sup> and associates drink with refined culture.<sup>59</sup> Many poems throughout the *Tahkemoni*, placed in the mouths of the narrator, the protagonist and other speakers all sing the praises of the fruit of the vine without a hint of opprobrium. Thus, wine in the *Tahkemoni* seems to maintain the status it held in Andalusian poetry, even if the opposing position is also presented. Our ability to discern this point is dependent upon a careful analysis of form.

The *Tahkemoni* offers ambivalent attitudes toward aristocracy. In chapter 3, when the narrator is traveling through a city of the East, he is invited by an aristocrat to join a feast. Inside the mansion, which is of ornate Islamic design, aristocrats are feasting on delicacies and wine. Believing that he had found fine culture and a group of fellow literati, the narrator rejoices and recites a wine poem in the Andalusian style appropriate for the occasion. Later in the episode, Hever ha-Qeni, the true intellectual, rebukes the aristocrats for their ignorance in matters of poetry and storms out of the feast.<sup>60</sup> The narrator desires aristocracy while the protagonist disdains it. Is al-Harīzi pro-aristocratic or anti-aristocratic? Can we identify him with either of the main characters? It is likely that al-Harīzi identifies with both positions. On one hand, al-Harīzi is in search of fine culture, which he expects to be associated with wealth and aristocracy. On the other hand, the “culture” available in the East is insufficient and disappointing, a dim reflection of the true culture that once existed in Andalusia.<sup>61</sup> Nowhere, however, is it suggested that aristocratic life is decadent in and of itself, or that true culture can only be found outside of the city (particularly among the Bedouin) as some Arabic authors would maintain.<sup>62</sup> Ideal men in the *Tahkemoni*, as they are described in chapter 46, generally

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<sup>58</sup>this *maqāma* and also *maqāma* 3, 23, 36.

<sup>59</sup>as in *maqāma* 3. When the narrator arrives at a feast of aristocrats, he beholds the wine and recites a wine poem appropriate for the occasion.

<sup>60</sup>see also chapter 34, (based on al-Ḥamadhāni *maqāma* 22) in which an aristocrat who rambles endlessly about his possessions is parodied.

adhere to the typology of Andalusian leadership. They are men of wealth and power who generously patronize Jewish learning and are sometimes accomplished in the disciplines of *halakhah*, the sciences and poetry themselves. In the following chapter, we will consider al-Ḥarīzi's attitude toward one of the most significant realia of his day, Spain itself.

### **JACOB BEN EL'AZAR AND *SEFER HA-MESHALIM***

The rhymed prose narratives of Jacob Ben El'azar have received far less attention than the *Tahkemoni*, both in the medieval and modern periods. *Sefer ha-meshalim* is preserved in a single manuscript only, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that it is one of the most unique examples of medieval Hebrew fiction.<sup>63</sup> Still, Ben El'azar, a younger contemporary of al-Ḥarīzi's who was also born in Toledo,<sup>64</sup> was not altogether unknown. He is glossed by David Qimhi (c. 1160-1235) some seven times regarding grammatical points.<sup>65</sup> According to an anonymous Judeo-Arabic biographical dictionary, the author composed twelve works in various disciplines; the biographer identifies Ben El'azar as the author of the grammatical work *Kitāb al-kāmil*, for which he seems to have been best known.<sup>66</sup> Of his works, five have survived:

1. *Sefer ha-meshalim* (further below)
2. A Hebrew translation (from Arabic) of *Kalila wa-Dimna*, a famous book of didactic fables about animals and people.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> on the contrasts between the East and Andalusia, see chapter seven of this dissertation.

<sup>62</sup> e.g. al-Saraqustī. Further, see chapter seven of this dissertation.

<sup>63</sup>The single manuscript, MS Minken 207, was copied in 1268, thus not long after the author's death. The text is copied in an Ashkenazic script and is bound together with *Mishlei shu'alm* (Fox Fables) of Berakhia ha-Naqdan.

<sup>64</sup>This is deduced from the fact that the family name Ibn El'azar or Abeneleazar appears several times in Arabic and Spanish texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in association with a prominent family of Toledo. See J. Schirmann, "Sipurei ha-'ahavah shel Ya'aqov Ben 'El'azar," *Yedi'ot ha-makhon le-heqer ha-shirah ha-ivrit* 5 (1939): p. 211.

<sup>65</sup> A. Geiger, "Toldot ha-Radaq," *Oṣar neḥmad* II (1857): pp. 159-62.

<sup>66</sup>see Ya'aqov Ben El'azar, *Sipurei 'ahavah shel Ya'aqov Ben El'azar*, critical edition with introduction and commentary Yonah David (Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishing - Tel Aviv University, 1993), p. 9, note 3. The dictionary is MS Leningrad 77.

3. *Kitāb al-kāmil* - a book on Hebrew grammar written in Judeo-Arabic.<sup>68</sup>

4. *Sefer pardes rimonei ha-hokhmah ve-arugat bosem ha-mezimah* (Book of the Orchard of Pomegranates of Wisdom and the Spice Garden of Thought) - a philosophical treatise in a rhetorically sophisticated Hebrew rhymed prose.<sup>69</sup>

5. *Sefer gan ha-te'udot ve-arugot huqot hamudot* (Book of the Garden of Teachings and Garden Beds of Precious Laws) - an ethical and philosophical treatise written during the author's later years. It is structured as a debate between the Soul, Wisdom and the Intellect and is also in rhymed prose.<sup>70</sup>

Apart from these scant details of birthplace, works and patrons, nothing is known about the author's life. Although David assumes that the poet "wandered much,"<sup>71</sup> there is little evidence for this. Ben El'azar never left a record of travels as al-Harizi did.

Although the author's works are dedicated to dignitaries in Spain and Provence, there is no evidence that the poet was an itinerant artist.

*Sefer ha-meshalim* was known to early scholars such as Steinschneider and Geiger who did not hold the book in very high esteem.<sup>72</sup> Schirmann, who did value the literary qualities of the work, published five chapters (the so-called "love stories") and the

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Derenbourg, *Deux versions Hébraïques du livre de Kalilah et Dimnah* (Paris: F. Vieweg, Libraire-Éditeur, 1881), pp. 312-95. The tales probably originated in India and are known in Persian, Syriac, Arabic and other renditions. There are several Arabic versions, the most famous of which is by 'Abdallah Ibn al-Muqafa'. It is unclear which Arabic version Ben El'azar had before him when creating his rendition, which is a natural result of his liberal translation method. See my comments on the translation method in Appendix B of this dissertation. On *Kalila wa-Dimna* in general, see the article by C. Brockelmann in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 4, pp. 503-06. Ben El'azar's translation has received relatively little attention, but see Angeles Navarro Peiro, "La versión hebrea de *Calila y Dimna* de Ya'āqob ben El'azar," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden, Boston, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 468-75.

<sup>68</sup> Ya'āqov Ben El'azar, *Kitāb al-kāmil*, edited by Neḥemiah Allony (Jerusalem, 1977).

<sup>69</sup>The book consists of 23 gates. Gates 13-23 are published by Israel Davidson, "Sherid me-sefer filosofi le-mehaber bilti nod'a," *ha-Sofeh le-hokhmat yisra'el* 10 (1926): pp. 94-105 (see also vol. 11, p. 96). Davidson worked from an incomplete manuscript and did not identify the author as Ben El'azar. Several complete manuscripts are preserved, see *Sipurei ahavah...* p. 10, note 10.

<sup>70</sup>the work is dedicated to Shmuel and Ezra, sons of Yehudah Ben Natanel of Beaucaire (in Provence). Further, see Schirmann, "Sipurei ha-ahavah...", p. 212.

<sup>71</sup>*Sipurei ahavah...* p. 7.

<sup>72</sup>see *Sipurei ahavah...* pp. 7-8.



author's introduction.<sup>73</sup> The remaining chapters were published subsequently by Jonah David.<sup>74</sup> Allony estimates that *Sefer ha-meshalim* was composed sometime between 1180 and 1240,<sup>75</sup> although we can safely date the book after the publication of al-Harizi's *Mahberet Itti'el* and probably after the *Tahkemoni* since Ben El'azar seems to be familiar with both of al-Harizi's works. Geiger dates the book to 1233.<sup>76</sup> Apart from the publication of the narratives, the work has seldom been discussed in modern scholarship.<sup>77</sup>

The book consists of ten chapters plus an author's introduction, loosely tied together by the personality of the narrator, whose full name is Lemu'el Ben Itti'el Rav Pe'alim me-Qavs'el.<sup>78</sup> As in the *Tahkemoni*, the narrator's name is layered with connotations of wisdom, since Lemu'el and Itti'el are both wise men in Proverbs. We will return to the specific significance of Lemu'el's name at the end of this chapter. Also, Itti'el evokes the name of the narrator in al-Harizi's translation of al-Hariri's *maqāmāt*. Ben El'azar's narrator is thus the son of a narrator who is both al-Harizi's and al-Hariri's; in this way, the author pays tribute to his predecessors. The last part of the name, Rav

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<sup>73</sup> J. Schirmann, "Sipurei ha-ahavah shel Ya'aqov Ben El'azar," *Yedi'ot ha-makhon le-heqer ha-shirah ha-ivrit* 5 (1939): 209-66 (author's introduction and chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9); "ha-Sha'ar ha-shemini me-'sefer ha-meshalim' le-ya'aqov ben el'azar," *Qoves 'al yad* 8 (1975): pp. 259-81 (chapter 8).

<sup>74</sup> *Sipurei ahavah...* Several of the chapters appeared independently prior to the publication of the whole book.

<sup>75</sup> *Kitāb al-kāmil*...., p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> "Toldot ha-Radaq," p. 161, based on a date given in chapter four (*Sipurei ahavah...*, p. 32, line 23-24). "It was in the year ninety-three when the transgressors completed [their mission]... when a king arose and his name was Meliṣ the Secr." Schirmann and David consider this dating likely. However, in the continuation of Geiger's dating, he concludes that Ben El'azar was actually of the generation of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi, and that he was the Rabbi El'azar to whom Moses Ibn Ezra dedicated several poems. His second opinion is incorrect.

<sup>77</sup> Other publications include J. Schirmann, "Der Neger und die Negerin," *MGHJ* 83 (1939): pp. 481-92; idem, "Les contes rimés de Jacob ben Eléazar de Toledo," in *Études d'Orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal* (Paris, 1962), Tome I, pp. 285-97; idem, "ha-Sha'ar ha-shemini..."; Dan Pagis, "Siburei Dimuyyim..."; D. Segal, "Mishlei Ya'aqov Ben El'azar - le-mahut ha-mahberet ha-shiv'it," in *be-Oreah mad'a*, edited by Zvi Malakhi (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 353-63; Joseph Sadan, "Identity and Inimitability: Contexts of Inter-Religious Polemics and Solidarity in Medieval Spain, in the Light of Two Passages by Moše Ibn 'Ezra and Ya'aqov ben El'azar," *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (1994): pp. 325-47; R. Scheindlin, "Sipurei ha-ahavah shel Ya'aqov Ben El'azar: bein sifrut 'aravit le-sifrut romans," *Divrei ha-kongres ha-'olami ha-'ehad-asar le-mad'a: ha-vehadut* 3:3 (1994): pp. 16ff.

<sup>78</sup> the name appears in this extended form only once, at the beginning of chapter 1 (*Sipurei ahavah...*, p. 15). More often, he is simply Lemu'el Ben Itti'el.

Pe'alim me-Qavs'el (meaning, "a man of great deeds, from Qavs'el"), is mentioned only once in the book: the reference is to one of king David's soldiers in II Samuel (23:20) in league with Yoshev ba-Shevet, a *Tahkemoni* (II Samuel 23:8).<sup>79</sup> Again, Ben El'azar seems to be placing his book within the *maqāma* tradition.

Like al-Harīzi, Ben El'azar occasionally inserts himself into the text, identifying with the perspective of the narrator. In the introduction, he writes quite plainly, "I did not mention my name in my stories, but I altered it and changed it to Lemu'el Ben Itti'el."<sup>80</sup> In chapter one, when the narrator awakes at the end of a long dream sequence placed in the mouth of Lemu'el Ben Itti'el, it is written, "And *Jacob* awoke from his sleep" (Genesis 28:16).<sup>81</sup> which is self-referential

### **Allegory**

It is worth contemplating how we should translate the title of the book, *Sefer ha-meshalim*: The book of Allegories? The Book of Parables? The Book of Fables? The Book of Proverbs? The Book of Exempla? The Book of Stories<sup>82</sup>? The Book of Poems? The Book of Prophetic Discourses<sup>83</sup>? The word *meshalim* can certainly convey each of these meanings. Several aspects of the book suggest a philosophical allegorical reading. Chapter one<sup>84</sup> explicitly identifies itself as a philosophical allegory of the Intellect and the Soul expressed through the language of love. In a dream, Lemu'el beholds the approach of "chariots of desire" followed by the "riders of love," "my soul's beloved" above them, "prince of the troop, preeminent among a multitude."<sup>85</sup> The riders approach the narrator, kiss him and embrace him. In the dream, the narrator's soul beholds the sun embracing the moon and then speaks, "This is nothing but my lover coming to me, he will not be still

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<sup>79</sup> The name is alluded to one other time in the book. In chapter three, after Lemu'el wins a poetry competition, his companions complement him, "Who is like you in great deeds (*rav pe'alim*)?"

<sup>80</sup> p. 14, lines 33-34.

<sup>81</sup> p. 17, line 76. see also p. 20, line 155.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Sadan's suggestion, see "Identity and Inimitability...", p. 325

<sup>83</sup> as in Numbers 23:7, 18; 24:3, 5.

<sup>84</sup> as mentioned in chapter five, this episode bears some resemblance to Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*.

until he sees me.”<sup>86</sup> The soul then recites a short love poem utilizing the language of the Song of Songs.

I was asleep but my heart was awake, behold the voice of a (male) gazelle was knocking.<sup>87</sup>

“(Female) gazelle, enough sleeping! Go and lean upon your lover!”<sup>88</sup>  
When my heart heard, it stirred and was unable to restrain itself.

The heart then jealously and protectively tries to hide the soul from the approaching lover.

The soul reaches for her lover, but he speaks to her with rebuke.

Leave me, and go live where you live.<sup>89</sup> You are my beloved. Why have you not come out to call me? Did you not know, have you not heard that I came to behold you, to take delight in your glory and the majesty of your splendor’s beauty?<sup>90</sup>

The soul prostrates herself before him and asks for forgiveness, stating that her heart jealously hid her away. Dejected, the lover departs. The soul trembles with desire and, sick with love, pines desperately for her lover. The narrator awakes and approaches his soul (and her maidens), gently asking what he had done to offend her, explaining that men inadvertently sin against one another. The soul speaks to him harshly.

Will you liken souls to men? Man sins against man—behold, their foundation is dust! How can you compare the son of Molekh<sup>91</sup> with the son of a king (*melekh*)? I am cut from crystal (*sapir*), my quarry is precious, awe inspiring to behold, its brightness is beautiful (*shapir*).

The soul explains that she is angry because the narrator had kept her locked away, hidden from her lover, whom she feared had gone to love another. The narrator explains that there is, in fact, “another woman” and that she is Wisdom. The narrator agrees to go with the soul to seek Wisdom, that perhaps they might find the lover; they search for the lover

<sup>85</sup>preeminent among a multitude, Song of Songs 5:10.

<sup>86</sup>i.e., within the dream, the soul deciphers the vision of the sun and the moon, understanding it as an allegory of herself and her lover. We, in turn, decipher the dream of the soul and her lover, which is an allegory of the soul and the Intellect.

<sup>87</sup>based on Song of Songs 5:2.

<sup>88</sup>Song of Songs 8:5.

<sup>89</sup>II Kings 8:1 (i.e. go live somewhere else). Interestingly, Ibn Gabirol uses this verse in a similar way, addressing the soul to return to its celestial abode according to the Neoplatonic scheme (see Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 192 [62]).

<sup>90</sup>p. 16 lines 35-38.

<sup>91</sup>The god to whom the Israelites offer child sacrifices in the valley of Ben Hinom, as in II Kings 13:10.

but cannot find him. A lengthy poem is included near the end of the chapter that helps to untangle the allegory.

God is above all. He is the most wondrous of all wondrous things.  
He is the beginning to every beginning, with no beginning and no end.  
He created everything with his wisdom. He sustains all with compassion.  
The Intellect is the first of His activities, the soul ascends after it,  
[Even] the three souls.<sup>92</sup> Wisdom was given a rank.  
Beneath it [Wisdom] is the Source of Life, whence the soul sprouted...<sup>93</sup>

The author concludes the chapter with a couplet,

The allegory of the Intellect has been completed, conveyed through [a story of] love.  
Think well, friend, and do not lift your soul up to anything blemished.

Who is the lover whose companion is Wisdom, who approaches the Soul and to whom the Soul ascends? It is the Intellect. Although the Intellect does not appear explicitly throughout the story, it is suggested in the philosophical poem ("The Intellect is the first of His activities") and in the concluding couplet, where the chapter is titled the "Allegory of the Intellect" (*meshal sekhel*). Most of the other characters in the allegory play themselves--the Soul is the Soul, Wisdom is Wisdom. Only the Intellect is not named.

Thus, at least this one chapter of *Sefer ha-meshalim* may be called an allegory in the proper sense. The question, then, is whether the rest of the book should be read as philosophical allegory. Some chapters are understood best as parables that resist interpretation in light of philosophical ideas. For example, in chapter ten, the narrator departs his hometown of *Adadah* because sin and violence had grown rampant. He wanders until he reaches *Qedesh* where he encounters a pack of wolves, taking one of the newborn cubs to raise as his own. At the same time, he encounters a youth who has strayed from his parents, whom he also takes home to raise. For some time, the wolf grows up to be trustworthy and the boy to be wise and humble, but ultimately each reverts to his original nature. The boy surrounds himself with scoundrels (*nevalim*), apparently

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<sup>92</sup> i.e. the three souls according to Aristotle (accepted in the Middle Ages by most Neoplatonists as well as Aristotelians) - the rational soul, the animal soul and the vegetative soul.

<sup>93</sup>p. 21, lines 181-86.

the people of his original stock, and leaves his adoptive father. Similarly, the wolf happens upon a flock of sheep and goats and leaves his master to pursue the flock. When the wolf's master asks him, "Will you repay my kindness with cruelty?," the wolf replies in his own defense, "I can only act in accordance with my lineage for I am no better than my ancestors!"<sup>94</sup> The narrator responds with resignation, "I raised and exalted sons but they transgressed against me. From that day forward, I knew that the branch followed its root and sprig and that the son followed his people and seed."<sup>95</sup> Just as the wolf remains a wolf, even when raised in captivity, so the son of a scoundrel remains a scoundrel, even when raised in good culture. The story is a straightforward parable with a clear moral and does not refer to any philosophical reality beyond what is presented. If all of the stories of *Sefer ha-meshalim* are, in fact, *meshalim*, then the term is being used in several ways and does not fit neatly into modern categories of reading.

The most pressing question is whether the so-called "love stories" should be read as philosophical allegories, parables of the mundane or as love stories in the plain sense only. Has Ben El'azar, in the first chapter, the "Allegory of the Intellect" spoken through the language of love, offered the reader a hermeneutic guide for interpreting the love stories? Schirmann writes that "in them [the love stories], the border between reality, legend and allegory (*mashal*) is blurred."<sup>96</sup> The use of names signifying gems (Sapir, Peninah), beauty (Shapir, Yefefiyah), intelligence (Maskil) and celestial bodies (Sahar, Kimah) make allegorical readings tempting. Is it significant that the names Sapir and Shapir, lovers in chapter five, are also words used by the soul to describe herself in chapter one? Perhaps significantly, the last part of the narrator's name, Rav Pe'alim me-Qavs'el, is also the name of a character in Don Vidal Benveniste's allegorical love story, *Melisat Efer ve-Dinah*.<sup>97</sup> In the second part of Benveniste's text, the author specifically identifies

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<sup>94</sup>lines 84-86.

<sup>95</sup>lines 90-91.

<sup>96</sup>Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat*, p. 228.

each character with a philosophical counterpart, Rav Pe'alim signifying the Active Intellect (*ha-sekhel ha-po'el*), linked through the shared root *pl*.<sup>98</sup> Although it would be anachronistic to impose the same meaning upon Ben El'azar's narrator, it is possible that the author does use names to signify ideas outside of the text.

Scheindlin does not see the love stories as philosophical allegories but as worldly allegories (what others might call parables) relating to human impulses, impulses that form the focal tension of much Romance literature: the desire for love on one hand, and the duty of social responsibility on the other. Regarding the love story of Sapir and Shapir, Scheindlin writes,

It would seem that the scene is nothing but allegorical (*alegori*), and that the two lovers possessing nearly identical names, are nothing but two inner inclinations within a single personality. The subject of the story is thus the balance of two contrary impulses in man, the admiration of beauty, the passive impulse, represented by Sapir, and participation in society, the active impulse, represented by Shapir.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, Scheindlin sees Yashfeh's two loves in chapter seven as opposing forces; Yefefiyah represents beauty while Yemimah represents social responsibility.<sup>100</sup> For Scheindlin, the messages of the love stories do extend beyond their plain meanings but are still mundane. Characters signify real inclinations that people interested in social and moral development face in the course of their lives.

Whether or not the love stories contain hidden messages of philosophical significance is difficult to evaluate. If we try to match up characters in stories with specific concepts, the alignment is never as neat as in chapter one. However, as Huss points out, allegory need not provide a one-to-one correspondence between a figure in the

<sup>97</sup> the text is published in Schirmann, HHSP, vol. 2, pp. 603ff..

<sup>98</sup> see Matti Huss, "Alagoriya u-bidayon: sugiyot be-qevi'at me'afyenav shel ha-modos ha-alagori be-siporet ha-mehurezet ha-'ivrit be-sefarad," in *Sefer Yisra'el Levin*, edited by R. Sur and T. Rozen (1994), p. 106.

<sup>99</sup>R. Scheindlin, "Sipurei ha-ahavah...", p. 18. This reading seems difficult to accept, since these two impulses are never put in opposition with one another. Birsh'a is not torn between the two, but is in love with Sapir only, just as Shapir is. Although the two may represent opposite impulses, the plot in no way brings them in contrast with one another. Scheindlin's suggestion is more convincing in the example of Yefefiyah and Yemimah.

story and an external concept.<sup>101</sup> Some of the most famous allegories in Christian literature (e.g. *The Romance of the Rose*) vigorously resist neat analysis, a point that has led to a bewildering number of interpretations. Allegory's very appeal is often tied to its ambiguity. The final verdict on the meaning of the love stories, insofar as there can ever be one, seems far off. Perhaps some light will be shed by the study of Ben El'azar's still unpublished philosophical works. The analysis in the following discussion is based on the stories' plain meanings.

### ***Sefer ha-meshalim* and Romance Literature**

In 1939, the year in which he first published chapters from *Sefer ha-meshalim*, J Schirmann suggested that the future sources of the narratives might be found in French Romance. In his later writings, Schirmann largely retained this line of argument while accepting that specific sources might indeed be unknowable.

It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that Ben El'azar was influenced in his stories by his Christian environment. However, it is difficult to resolve the question of whether he used specific Christian stories that he knew or merely borrowed isolated motifs and employed them freely. There is room in this area for further research, and it is not impossible that the problem of Ben El'azar's Christian sources will never be fully resolved.<sup>102</sup>

Of course, Ben El'azar also drew upon sources of Arabic literature. As discussed above, he knew Arabic well enough to write a grammatical treatise in that language and to translate *Kalila wa Dimna* from Arabic to Hebrew. In the introduction to *Sefer ha-meshalim*, Ben El'azar shows an acute awareness of the Arabic *maqāma* tradition, stating that he adopted his fictional device from this literature. "I did not mention my name in my stories, but I altered it and changed it to Lemu'el Ben Itti'el, for it is the practice of Ishmaelites to change their names in stories."<sup>103</sup> The theme of love, of course, is also

<sup>101</sup>ibid.

<sup>102</sup>"Alagoriyah u-bidayon..."

<sup>103</sup>Schirmann, "Sipurei ha-ahavah...", p. 238.

<sup>104</sup>*Sipurei ahavah...*, p. 14, lines 33-34.

common in Arabic literature from the 'Udhri lyric to the Andalusian story of *Biyāḍ and Riyāḍ* and the *Thousand and One Nights*. Still, there are many aspects of *Sefer ha-meshalim* that are difficult to attribute to an Arabic background.<sup>104</sup>

Most prominently, the love ideal of *Sefer ha-meshalim* seems to have little precedent in Arabic literature. Although general aspects overlap with elements of 'Udhri poetry, such as the lover pining desperately for the beloved, the idealized formulations found in *Sefer ha-meshalim* do not fit this model. Schirmann points out that the love ideal is quite the opposite of that found in Arabic (and Andalusian Hebrew) poetry: First, whereas women are almost exclusively objects of desire in Arabic poetry, the women in *Sefer ha-meshalim* are active players in their courtships.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, whereas love, or desire, in Arabic poetry is based on a physical aspect, love in *Sefer ha-meshalim* is a chaste, spiritual love.<sup>106</sup> Although, as Schirmann points out, chaste love is not unknown in the Arabic literature of Spain,<sup>107</sup> it is hardly the norm. He concludes,

It is fair to assume that the poets were influenced in this respect by Christian authors who lived during this period. The poetry of the Provençal Troubadours was known and accepted at this time in many countries, not only in Southern France, but also in Spain, Portugal and Italy.

Scheidlin takes this line of analysis to the next level and ties the *function* of love in the overall plot to Romance narrative, noting a number of significant points of overlap between Romance and *Sefer ha-meshalim*: 1) The lover must endure some test before being united with the beloved; 2) Quarreling is part of the practice of lovers;<sup>108</sup> 3) The man must learn to balance his desire for his beloved and his obligations to society.

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<sup>104</sup>consider the comment of Scheindlin, "Despite the characteristics that seem to connect the stories with the *maqāma*, they [the stories] are distant from this world in their spirit." "Sipurei ha-ahavah..." p. 16.

<sup>105</sup>*Toldot ha-shurah...sarfat*, p. 228. e.g. Penina invites Maskil, "Come my love, let us go out to the field and rest in the villages" (*Sipurei ahavah...*, p. 51, lines 61-2).

<sup>106</sup>Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shurah...sarfat*, pp. 236-7; idem., "L'amour spirituel dans la poésie hébraïque du moyen âge." *Les Lettres Romanes* 15 (1961): pp. 315-25.

<sup>107</sup>Spiritual love is the subject of the final chapter of Ibn Ḥazm's famous treatise on love, *Tawq al-hamāma*.

<sup>108</sup>the arguments of Sahar and Kimah in chapter 9 fortify their love, in accordance with the directions in Andreas Capellanus' love treatise, *The Art of Courtly Love*, translated by John Jay Parry (New York: F.



One theme that has generally been assumed to derive from the Romance tradition is that of the cross-dressed knights in the story of Yashfeh and his two loves (chapter 7). Sleeping in bed with his lover Yefefiyah, Yashfeh is kidnapped by Yemimah who had acquired military arms and a horse. Throughout the ordeal, Yashfeh does not realize that his kidnapper is a woman. The next morning, another rider approaches on horseback and challenges Yemimah. Throughout their battle, Yashfeh believes that the two knights are men. Thirteenth century Romance preserves tales of female militancy<sup>109</sup> and women who cross-dress as men to fight in battle.<sup>110</sup> The theme of women who dress as men may have an historical basis in the Crusades, when some women joined the military expeditions of men as an act of faith.<sup>111</sup>

However, medieval Arabic folk narratives,<sup>112</sup> a source that is greatly underutilized, also preserve similar themes. Several narratives involve "warrior women," some dressed in men's garb as they are in the European parallels. There are even examples of two women who challenge each other in battle. The warrior women seem particularly prominent in Arabic texts composed after the Crusades<sup>113</sup> that depict events taking place during the Arab Byzantine wars of the seventh through the ninth centuries. The women warriors are often Christian. It is possible that these stories were inspired by the realia of

Ungar, 1957), p. 158.

<sup>109</sup> Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991): pp. 522-49.

<sup>110</sup> Vern Bullough, "Transvestites in the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 6 (1974): pp. 1381-94. See also the discussion above regarding *Tahkemoni* chapter 28.

<sup>111</sup> The propriety of women's participation in the Crusades was debated by Christian clerics, see Solterer, "Figures of female militancy..." pp. 535-7. Consider also the testimony of the Arab historian of the Crusades Imād al-Dīn, "Among the Franks, there were indeed women who rode into battle with cuirasses and helmets, dressed in men's clothes; who rode out into the thick of the fray and acted like brave men although they were but tender women, maintaining that all this was an act of piety, thinking to gain heavenly rewards by it, and making it their way of life..." quoted in Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 207. It is not impossible that the example in Ben El'azar (and in al-Harīzi above) are based on such Arabic accounts, though the proximity of the European sources seem most likely.

<sup>112</sup> *Sīyar sha'abiyya* - for a brief introduction to this literature, see G. Canova, "Sīra Literature," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 726-27.

<sup>113</sup> e.g. *Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*; see *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature...*, vol. 1, p. 187.

Muslim encounters with women warriors during the Crusades. In short, it may be too early to conclude definitively whether the source of this theme is Arabic or Romance, although Romance still seems the more likely candidate. Ultimately, the very practice of documenting thematic parallels may have shortcomings as a critical tool. Aspects of narrative form definitely tie *Sefer ha-meshalim* more closely to Romance than Arabic.

### **Form**

*Sefer ha-meshalim* appears on the surface to be among the most classical Hebrew rhymed prose narratives, with only al-Harīzi's and perhaps Ibn Saqbel's works adhering more closely to the classical style. The book consists of several episodes, not one, and each episode is introduced with the fixed phrase, "Ne'um Lemu'el Ben Itti'el" (Lemu'el Ben Itti'el spoke) as in the classical *maqāmāt*. Still, numerous aspects of *Sefer ha-meshalim* separate it from the classical *maqāma* tradition. Lemu'el Ben Itti'el does not stand in opposition to a single protagonist who resurfaces in each story; he is not a foil, the butt of a scoundrel's pranks or an accomplice in a trickster's ruses. In fact, he only appears as an active character in half of the episodes (1, 2, 3, 8, 10). In the four chapters published by Schirmann as "love stories," Lemu'el narrates discrete tales that involve their own protagonists and does not participate at all. Lemu'el is primarily a relater of events and an occasional actor in rhetorical and moralistic episodes. When he does act, he is the protagonist himself, though not a mendacious one.

Perhaps even more than themes, narrative form distinguishes *Sefer ha-meshalim* from *maqāmāt* composed in the classical style. Episodes usually present some sort of tension, which is resolved through the course of the narrative. Whereas resolution in the classical *maqāma* materializes through the moment of recognition, resolution in *Sefer ha-meshalim* depends on character development and the tying up of diverse narrative threads.

Particularly in the love stories, characters are far from static; they face challenges, disappointments, and fall in love. Whereas the episodes of the *Tahkemoni* always begin and end the same way, with the narrator and the protagonist wandering from place to place, never wiser or more foolish for their experience, the episodes of *Sefer ha-meshalim* show a great diversity of developments. Maskil falls in love with Peninah and overcomes an adversary in battle; the lovers marry and spend "all of their days in tranquility and favor, enjoying their days in peace and their years in sweetness."<sup>114</sup> Yashfeh leaves his parents' home at the beginning of chapter seven and returns from Egypt with two lovers. Sahar arrives a stranger in Aleppo, marries the princess Kimah and ascends the throne after her father's death. Episodes never end with recognition and separation, with a narrator and protagonist going their separate ways. Such topics as maturation, learning and ennoblement are central to the stories' meanings.<sup>115</sup>

Plot development in *Sefer ha-meshalim* follows some of the patterns of Romance. Although the stories of *Sefer ha-meshalim* are never as complex as Chrétien de Troyes' lengthy romances, which can span generations and involve a large cast of characters, there are certain parallels in form. Plot development in *Sefer ha-meshalim* may be said to adhere to a dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which has been used to describe the structure of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes.<sup>116</sup> Lacy has summarized the plot development of Chrétien de Troyes' romances as follows,

All Chrétien's works can be divided, rather crudely perhaps, into 'before' and 'after.' The dividing line between these two parts is the crisis, by which a character realizes his failing and sets out to repair it. Put another way, the character comes to understand what he has been and sets out to become something else. The most succinct example of this is Yvain, who rejects even his own name, because it is associated with what he has been, and wishes to be known henceforth as the Knight with the Lion.... A convenient, if oversimplified, statement of the pattern of Chrétien's romances is provided by William Woods:<sup>117</sup>.... he notes three significant points in the development of these works. First,

<sup>114</sup> *Sipurai ahavah*...., p. 55, lines 203-04.

<sup>115</sup> Scheindlin, it will be remembered, points to these qualities in *Ne'um asher ben yehudah* by Ibn Saqbel and links them with the spirit of Romance literature. "Fawns of the Palace..."

<sup>116</sup> Norris J. Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien De Troyes: An Essay on Narrative Art* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980).

the hero achieves a high degree of personal happiness and worldly success in an initial and usually self-contained sequence. Then he is made aware of an error or flaw which invalidates that happiness and success. Finally, in the major portion of the poem, he undertakes a series of adventures in order to correct the error and thereby recover happiness.<sup>118</sup>

Such patterns can be observed in several episodes of *Sefer ha-meshalim*.

Let us consider chapter 9 in detail. The episode begins in the season of Spring, when a youth of royal blood named Sahar, "whose cheek was clothed in light and splendor," leaves his home of *Gat Rimon*. He is traveling by boat when he is caught in a storm that leaves him shipwrecked on the shores of Aleppo.<sup>119</sup> While he is reciting a poem about God's might, a maiden spots him and beholds his beauty. She tells the news to her mother, who relates it to another woman until all of the maidens of the city descend upon the sea shore to behold the handsome youth. Sahar inquires about a booming voice he hears coming from the "house of prayer." Two armed black men (*kushim*) approach Sahar and capture him in a net. Sahar recites a poem about his misfortune, leaving the women astounded. They are awed equally by his physical beauty and by the beauty of his words. From behind a wall, a lovely "gazelle" named Kimah tosses Sahar an apple inscribed with a short love poem. Sahar beholds Kimah's beauty and she blows him a kiss. One of the king's eunuchs spurns her for her forward behavior and shuts the palace doors before Sahar. Sahar and Kimah are both left broken-hearted, full of longing and desire.

Sahar weeps desperately in the streets until a young woman bearing a love poem, one of Kimah's messengers, informs him that the maiden who had sent him the apple was named Kimah and that she was a princess. Sahar exclaims, "Draw me after you, let us run!"<sup>120</sup> and the envoy leads him to the palace. In the courtyard where Sahar is left alone, two beautiful maidens approach and lead him to a bed to rest. Sahar is then led to another

p. 10

<sup>117</sup> William Woods, "The Plot Structure in Four Romances of Chrestien de Troyes," *Studies in Philology* 50, no. 1 (January 1953): pp. 1-15.

<sup>118</sup> Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien...*, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> on the impossibility of the "shores of Aleppo," see chapter seven of this dissertation.

chamber where there are four maidens. Sahar prostrates himself at their feet and asks naively, "Which of you is my mistress Kimah?" They tell him to lift up his eyes and behold a curtain upon which is written, "Read this poem before you enter the room." Upon the curtain is a love poem with advice for courting Kimah; to win his beloved, Sahar will have to speak eloquently with love songs. Sahar desperately continues hoping for his beloved to appear and asks the maidens for assistance. The maidens tease him a bit before bringing him to the entrance of an inner court, which is covered with another curtain inscribed with a poem.

Before you enter the room, love, lift up your eyes and read the curtain's writing.  
Come in humility to its inner court, then you will be given passage in the fawn's house.  
Choose brief words on a sweet matter, and then your soul will be drawn after the heart  
of a lover.  
Rejoice in a fawn, then your soul will find pleasure and possess all that it desires...

Sahar enters the chamber and behold, there are now eight maidens. He asks them if they have seen his beloved and they chide him with numerous biblical quotations, "Your question is too profound for us! It is deep, it is deep, who can find it out?<sup>121</sup> How can you seek Kimah on the earth?<sup>122</sup> Do you not quake, do you not tremble? Who has [ever] ascended to the heavens and descended?<sup>123</sup>" Sahar responds with a clever poem about "Kimah of the earth" (i.e. not of the heavens) and then shouts aloud, begging the women to help him. He is told to read yet another poem inscribed upon a curtain before entering a chamber. In the next chamber, Sahar meets another group of women, who hand him a scroll with a poem to read.

Finally, after much frustration and exhaustion, Sahar is surrounded by people who praise him and lead him to Kimah. He exclaims, "Would that I could see my beloved Kimah! Come what may! Alas, my roaring has poured forth like water!..." Hearing his words, Kimah responds sweetly, "My heart has wandered twice as much as yours, as the

<sup>120</sup> Song of Songs 1:4.

<sup>121</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:24.

<sup>122</sup> Kimah is the name of a constellation (Amos 5:8, Job 9:9).

reed wanders in water. My heart has gone out from within me for it is burnt by the flame of separation from you.” She recites a love poem, approaches him, prostrates herself before him and allows him to kiss her upon the hand but not upon the lips. Disappointed and confused, Sahar’s face falls. Kimah assures him, “Why has your face fallen? Is it our desire to kiss and embrace? Such is not done in our place. Rather, our desire and the desire of nobility is to purify and whiten hearts.” The two exchange sweet words and Kimah leads Sahar inside a chamber made of glass, surrounded on all sides by water. Thinking naively that he would drown, Sahar undresses in order to swim. Kimah explains the construction of the chamber and there the two take delight in one another, exchanging love poems without approaching each other all night long.

In the morning, a maiden comes and informs Kimah that her father, the king, is approaching and that she should hide Sahar. The king walks in just as Sahar is hiding and strikes him, threatening to throw him in prison. Kimah persuades her father that their love is pure and the two are allowed to marry. A great feast lasting an entire year is made for the couple.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately, the king falls ill and dies. Sahar gets up from the feast, buries the king and inherits the throne. In an epilogue, we learn that Sahar and Kimah went back and forth between quarreling and renewing their love for many years, “And so Sahar and Kimah argued from time to time. Hence they renewed their love and led it [forward], whetting the swords of their desire. But wrath never arose between them, and the soul of one longed and pined for the other.”

The story of Sahar and Kimah shares many points of commonality with the earliest Hebrew rhymed prose narrative, *Ne’um asher ben yehudah* by Ibn Saqbel.<sup>125</sup> In both

<sup>123</sup>Proverbs 30:4.

<sup>124</sup> long wedding feasts are common in Romance literature. e.g. the wedding feast of Erec and Enide lasts for two weeks. Chrétien de Troyes. *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, translated with an introduction by David Staines (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> on *Ne’um asher ben yehudah*, see Raymond Scheindlin, “Fawns of the Palace...”; see plot summary p. 189-90. The twentieth *maqāma* of the *Tahkemoni* is also based on the same text. See Judith Dishon, “Ne’um asher ben yehudah le-Shelomo Ibn Saqbel ve-ha-maqāma ha-esrim be-tahkemoni li-Yehudah al-

stories, the desire of the lover is aroused when a maiden behind a wall tosses him an apple inscribed with a love poem. In both stories, the lovers' meeting is prolonged through the protagonist's encounters with other maidens. Both stories contain the motif of an older man, the "master of the house" or the "king," interfering with the tryst and threatening the lover. *Sefer ha-meshalim* diverges from its parent text at the moment of encounter between the lovers. Whereas the beloved in *Ne'um asher ben yehudah* is revealed to be a man in disguise, retaining the *maqāma*'s resolution through ruse and recognition, Sahar and Kimah are ultimately united. This conversion of the parent text highlights the narrative's focus on the love ideal, a love that is chaste and pure that leads to a lasting union.

Scheindlin sees Asher in *Ne'um asher ben yehudah* as a ridiculous parody of a courtly lover who misses every opportunity to prove himself capable of sophisticated behavior. Asher never learns to recite poetry as is demanded of the lover. Sahar, on the other hand, undergoes a process of maturation, largely through the instruction of his wiser and more sophisticated beloved. Sahar arrives at Aleppo a stranger, unfamiliar with the ways of the land. He is confused by the booming voice coming from the "house of prayer," undoubtedly a mosque, and does not know to comply with the local sexual code of limiting kisses to the hand. He is baffled by the glass chamber, believing he would drown. Although endowed with beauty and an eloquent tongue, Sahar does not understand the code of courtly behavior, specifically how to woo his beloved through refined poetry.

Sahar is an extremely passive, even feminized, character. He is shipwrecked, captured in a net and led from chamber to chamber without making any of his own choices. When Kimah's envoy invites him to the palace, he responds with the words of the female speaker in the Song of Songs, "Draw me after you, let us run!" He blunders

Harizi." *Biqoret u-farshanut* 6 (1974): pp. 57-65 and the critique by Scheindlin, "Fawns of the Palace..."

many times in his pursuit of Kimah. Standing before four maidens, he crudely and naively asks which is his beloved. Without rebuking him, the maidens direct him to read a poem, his first lesson. Entering more chambers deeper within the palace, he continues to err until he learns to recite poetry in praise of his beloved. When the eight maidens ask, "How can you seek Kimah on the earth?" he recites a clever poem about the earthly rather than the celestial Kimah. Finally united with Kimah, Sahar continues to display his lack of refinement until the lovers become entwined in a mutual game of exchanging verses, the key to a cultured affair. Finally, Sahar reaches a point of maturity. Not only is he a capable lover, but he is also fit to rule. He ascends the throne after the death of the king and sustains his marriage with Kimah.<sup>126</sup>

Although *Ne'um asher ben yehudah* and the story of Sahar and Kimah both conclude with the marriage of the main character, the institution of marriage seems to have a different connotation in each. Scheindlin suggests that Asher's marriage to the daughter of the man who duped him as a consolation for his original beloved is a further sign of his "uncourtliness." Sahar's marriage, in contrast, is attained through the consummation of a real pursuit, one through which the protagonist matures and learns the ways of the world and of love. This story adheres to the pattern of romance in which the character overcomes his flaws through effort and learning. By getting up from his wedding feast and ascending the throne after the king's death, Sahar succeeds in balancing his duty for social responsibility with his love, just like the ideal character in Romance.

The narratives of *Sefer ha-meshalim* do not exhibit structures as elaborate as Chrétien de Troyes' "conjointure," the "putting together" of the poem, in which several narrative strains are woven together to form a coherent whole.<sup>127</sup> Jacob Ben El'azar never

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<sup>126</sup> The protagonist's ascent to the throne at the end of a narrative is common in Romance. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*, the protagonist becomes Emperor of Greece.

<sup>127</sup> Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes...*, p. 34. For a much fuller treatment of *conjointure* and many other elements of French narrative, see Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).



juggles several story lines in which a set of characters fade into the background and then come back into focus at a later point. The author is capable, however, of working with several characters at a time and concluding a narrative without leaving loose ends. As is common in Romance (and also in Shakespearian comedy), even minor characters find new fates by intertwining their lives with those of the protagonists. At the conclusion of the story of Yashfeh and his two loves, Yashfeh returns to his home town<sup>128</sup> not only with Yefefiyah and Yemimah, but also with Masos who had been his servant in Egypt. Masos is married to Yashfeh's sister Şipur and Yefefiyah and Yemimah teach her "words of love," instilling in her "the spirit of a noblewoman."

Stories always offer such a satisfying sense of conclusion. After Maskil's adversary *Kushan* dies a violent death, Maskil and Peninah erect a heap of stones over him, just as Joshua and the Israelites erected a heap of stones over Akhan Ben Zerah in Joshua 7. In chapter 5, the wicked pederast Birsh'a is banished and Sapir and Shapir are reunited. In chapter 8, the nefarious Akhbor is murdered and cast into a pit while his maidservants seek a new life beyond his control.<sup>129</sup> Apart from this, other narrative techniques distinguish *Sefer ha-meshalim* from the classical *maqāma* such as the common use of epilogues and the inclusion of lengthy poems that not only rephrase what is stated in prose but actually affect plot development.<sup>130</sup> The significance of such techniques is in need of further research.

The view that *Sefer ha-meshalim* follows a classical *maqāma* form is only true with respect to the book's most superficial qualities--prosody and use of certain fixed phrases (So-and-so son of So-and-so spoke, etc.). This deeper look into narrative form and technique shows that Ben El'azar, although indebted to the Arabic literary tradition,

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<sup>128</sup> the idea of the protagonist returning to his place of his birth, ennobled by his adventure, is common in Romance, e.g. *Erec et Enide*.

<sup>129</sup> discussed further below.

<sup>130</sup> e.g. the final plot twist in chapter 8, wherein the maidens are united with their suitors, takes place in the poem only.

boldly applied the art of a new narrative ideal that was reaching him from the Christian North. In the next and final section of this chapter, form criticism is used to reevaluate the position of Arabic literature along with certain Andalusian values in *Sefer ha-meshalim*.

### **Realia: A New Reading of the Eighth Chapter of *Sefer ha-Meshalim***

The episode of *Sefer ha-meshalim* that scholarship has associated most closely with Arabic literature is chapter eight, which Schirmann titled “The Story of a Hypocritical Old Man.”<sup>131</sup> Several elements of the story draw on known topics of Arabic literature, the *maqāma*’s motif of the hypocritical preacher in particular.<sup>132</sup> The following discussion offers a new reading of this episode that seeks to situate the Arabic themes within the overall meaning of the story. In addition, the episode is used to discuss the author’s attitudes toward social realia of the thirteenth century. Let us begin with a plot summary

Lemu’el relates that in the days of his youth he used to travel from nation to nation, “now sleeping in deserts and forests, now in village houses, as is the custom of travelers on the road.” Upon arrival at an unnamed city “whose inhabitants were wealthy and whose merchants were princes (*sarim*),” Lemu’el decides to stay. The following morning, he awakes to find that the people are really “treacherous people, children of wrong-doing... their judges, judges of deceit, wolves of the steppe who leave no bone until morning”<sup>133</sup>

Contemplating leaving, Lemu’el hears the booming voice of an old man leaning on his staff whom he takes to be an upright and virtuous man. The man, named Akhbor from Mt. Tabor, has an outstanding physical characteristic, his enormous and unruly beard, which Lemu’el perceives as a “beard of truth.”<sup>134</sup> The people gather around Akhbor, who

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<sup>131</sup> J. Schirmann, “Ma’aseh be-zaqen şavua,” in *Le-toldot ha-shirah ve-ha-drama ha-ivrit*, idem. (Jerusalem, 1979), vol. I, pp. 375-88.

<sup>132</sup> It will also be remembered that it is in connection with this episode that Schirmann links the theme of racism to Arabic precedents, many years after postulating Romance roots. See chapter five.

<sup>133</sup> the final reference is from Zephaniah 3:3.

proceeds to deliver an eloquent sermon in poetry and prose. He urges the people to lead a simple life, perform pious deeds, and give to charity. Below is an excerpt from his words.

I adjure you by the Shelter of the Most High<sup>135</sup> that you show mercy to the poor and unfortunate. Do not despise the Shelter of God when a questioner adjures you. The parable of a poor man who begged at a door for morsels of food and the occupant gave him a crumb: He [the poor man] adjured him by the Shelter of the Most High saying, "Add for me a little wheat for I have young children who dwell in hunger and thirst!" Then the owner of the house transgressed, lied and acted heretically<sup>136</sup> in his home and said, "How can you adjure me by the Shelter of the Most High? Do you not see that I myself am poor and unfortunate?" Before he even finished speaking, pangs and crushing seized him and his Creator struck him with blindness, madness and ruin. A voice came, "Such will happen to those who despise the Shelter of the Most High!" Accept discipline, my brothers, and perhaps on the Day of Anger and Rage you will be sheltered in the Shelter of the Most High!"

This is followed by another parable of a poor man who goes out to seek livelihood after a three day fast, relying upon God alone.<sup>137</sup> He asks a wealthy merchant for assistance, but the merchant who was "shaking off wine" rebukes him.<sup>138</sup> God ultimately changes the merchant's heart so that he decided to write the poor man a promissory note in the amount of four shekels, but his hand erred so that he wrote the note in the amount of four hundred shekels. Having lost his wealth, the merchant recognizes that it was God who caused his hand to err and piously accepts that it is God who makes one man wealthy and another poor.

Captivated by the sermon, the people open their purses and contribute generously to Akhbor's cause. Had this been a *maqāma* by al-Harīzi, the expected scene of

<sup>134</sup> Ben El'azar also plays with the seemingly pious beard elsewhere in *Sefer ha-meshalim*. In chapter five, Shapir is impressed by the beard of the nefarious Birsha', thinking it the beard of a judge and says, "a belly and a beard is half of being a rabbi." Birsha', of course is really a pederast and a scoundrel. Al-Hamadhāni also plays with the idea of the beard, though not as extensively as Ben El'azar. In *maqāma* 3, Abū Fath appears "with a beard that extended so far as to pierce the two arteries attached to the jugular vein." 'Abdou, p. 14, Prendergrast p. 33. Further on beards in medieval Jewish culture, see A. Horowitz, "Al mashma'uyot ha-zaqan be-qehilot yisra'el be-mizrah u-be-eropa bi-yemei ha-beinayim u-be-reshit ha-'et ha-hadashah," *Pe'amim* 59 (1994): pp. 124ff. Also, one physical characteristic detailed in the Arabic biography of al-Harīzi is that he *did not* (or could not) wear a beard, Joseph Sadan, "Rabbi Yehudah al-Harīzi ke-šomet...", p. 33.

<sup>135</sup>Psalm 91:1

<sup>136</sup>based on Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra 16b.

<sup>137</sup>note the similarity with the idea of *tawakkul* in Sūfi thought.

<sup>138</sup>*Sipurei ahavah...*, line 175. Based on Psalm 78:65, which has been understood in numerous ways

recognition and separation would now occur. The narrator would recognize the mendicant as his old friend Hever ha-Qeni, he would be astounded at his eloquence and would laud his cunning. Instead, Lemu'el Ben Itti'el follows Akhbor to a palatial home, observing him from a place of hiding. Lemu'el describes the opulent setting of the "preacher's" home.

His house had ten entrances like the mansions of military ministers. I would recount its ramparts,<sup>139</sup> courtyards and rows of masonry<sup>140</sup> were my tongue sufficient to report what my eyes beheld. Who could speak of the fountain and its waters, the birds and the latticework, the many species of trees and roses and buds, the fire-pans and vessels, vessels for drinking wine, all types of finery for dress and vessels of copper, silver and gold?<sup>141</sup>

From his hiding place, Lemu'el declares in his heart that Akhbor is a "scoundrel,<sup>142</sup> a man of nefarious deeds." While Akhbor is reclining in his courtyard, four maidservants enter, help him undress and kiss his hand. They set before him delicacies to eat and old wine to drink. Each of the maidservants sings a different wine song replete with the clichés of Andalusian poetry. For example,

Wine like the color of lightning or the color of flame, it lights the heart of its drinker with its spark.  
It is bitter, yet sweeter than honey. Its scent gives life for its vigor is like myrrh.  
If there is distress in any man's heart, it sends out a troop of joy to annihilate it.  
It makes the heart of the stingy like the heart of the generous, on account of it the tight-fisted opens his hand.<sup>143</sup>

Pleased with the poems, Akhbor recites his own poem about drinking and desire. Drunk with wine, Akhbor sports with the maidens, passing from one bosom to the next until he falls asleep in a blissful state. A fifth woman enters, this time a *kushit*, "a worn out black woman, her lips like a fire-brand<sup>144</sup> plucked from burning, her eyes like flames."<sup>145</sup>

including, "a hero overcome by wine" (Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible) or "a warrior shaking off wine" (JPS). Abraham Ibn Ezra has, "as if relying upon his strength."

<sup>139</sup>reading *mesurotav* instead of *šurotav*.

<sup>140</sup>according to Ezekiel 46:23. Otherwise, "encampments."

<sup>141</sup>*Sipurei ahavah*..., p. 79, lines 220-224.

<sup>142</sup>*mi-benei ha-nevalim*.

<sup>143</sup>*Sipurei ahavah*..., p. 80, lines 246-250.

<sup>144</sup>Rashi, in his commentary on Amos 4:11, associates the word with blackness.

<sup>145</sup>Schirmann, "ha-Sha'ar ha-shemini...", p. 270, lines 259-60.

Lemu'el can no longer control his anger and shouts, "This is all licentiousness!" He darts out from his hiding place, assaults the couple and strips them bare. Akhbor recites verses in his defense, explaining that he prefers a black woman over a "pure" one (i.e. a white one), which the narrator answers with his own verse,

What is wrong with the black woman that she has a stench, while a [white] maiden is spiced with myrrh?  
Pure like a lily in the hand of the desirer, the praise and majesty of every eye.  
Every black woman is without a mind, she is silly, noisy and wayward.<sup>146</sup>  
I tell every black woman a secret: "Return, go back to where you were created!"<sup>147</sup>

The four maidservants return to the scene and join in the attack against Akhbor. They curse him and mock him, chiding his unruly beard and his desire for the black woman. Each takes a turn reciting a poem ridiculing her lord, just as they had recited wine poems earlier. The first recites a poem mocking Akhbor's beard, a symbol of false piety,

Akhbor's beard is the beard of a foolish shepherd, its branches go in every direction.  
Its length reaches down to Sheol with great might until all effort is frustrated.  
Little animals go through it. I asked, "Are there monkeys hidden<sup>148</sup> there?"  
I saw the likeness of birds flying in it, fleas inherited it as a nest.  
They answered me, "Akhbor's beard is like a forest where there are wildcats and little foxes,  
There the escaping arrow-snake nests; it is a covering even for the rock-badger.  
There they dwell, tranquil and secure. Also a man [dwells there] beneath a grape vine of security.  
A man beneath his fig tree, in the shade of Akhbor's beard, full of sap and freshness."<sup>149</sup>

The second maidservant mocks his beard and his desire for the black woman, playing on numerous biblical verses, "...he made his bed in a dark place,<sup>150</sup> he had intercourse with the daughters of Ham,<sup>151</sup> and works over coal."<sup>152</sup>

After each takes her turn spurning Akhbor, the four together yank at his beard and beat him to death. They bind the corpse in ropes and cast it into a pit pronouncing, "A polluted man shall never dwell with us for it would be a disgrace for us!"<sup>153</sup> In an

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<sup>146</sup>noisy and wayward - said of the whore in Proverbs 7:11.

<sup>147</sup>p. 82, lines 301-04.

<sup>148</sup>*Sefunim* - compare Schirmann, *shekhenim*, "Are the inhabitants monkeys?"

<sup>149</sup>*Sipurei ahavah*... p. 83, lines 317-324.

<sup>150</sup>based on Job 17:13.

<sup>151</sup>One of Ham's sons is *Kush* (Genesis 10:6), hence the association with the *kushit* and blackness.

epilogue, the four maidens leave the mansion and go out

to the vineyards to browse in the gardens and to pick roses, strolling through orchards, meandering through the myrtles. They wore chequered robes, and told parables, riddles and precious songs by the grape-blossoms and vines and by all kinds of buds. They spoke by<sup>154</sup> the trees, the roses and the buds. At noon they lay beside the pools of water, sitting beneath the shade, playing harps and lutes. Four young men were listening to the sound of their song, hearing their dancing and playing, enjoying the sound of the music, peering through the lattice. They (the maidens) became aware of this and said, "Who is it that listens to our voices, standing behind our wall? Are you friend or foe?"<sup>155</sup>

The suitors flirt with the maidens and seek their hands in marriage but are refused for lack of chivalrous grace. One of the maidens recites a poem, concluding the episode and giving the plot a final twist,

Lovers who knocked at the doors of fawns have done wrong.  
Alas! They have been brutish, barbarous and dull-hearted!  
For lovers cannot come to a fawn unless they have been oppressed (by her).  
It is not for the oppressed to oppress unless they are flattering.  
If they are lovers, let them give a sign, a proof that<sup>156</sup> their cause is just!  
If they are lovers, why have they not restrained themselves?<sup>157</sup>  
For pure lovers<sup>158</sup> are faint-hearted, kindled flames.  
Murmuring, acting like madmen, for they are crying out in anguish.  
If you are lovers, then where are the tears flowing upon your cheeks?  
Where are the pleas of lovers? Where are the sweet words?  
Where are the constant lovers who are stronger than fawns.  
Who pronounce<sup>159</sup> their passion upon the tablet of their heart that they engraved?  
[ ... if they prosper and grow wealthy?  
Lovers, with this will you be tested, not through quarreling may you contend.  
Get up, quick, and hurry to tear off the bands of wandering!  
Let each man take possession of a companion, each portion shall be assigned by lot!<sup>160</sup>  
Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to a graceful gazelle.<sup>161</sup>  
They [the suitors] quickly understood and each man took hold of his woman.  
They [the suitors] renewed their youth and they [the women] leaned upon their lovers.

This is the only episode of *Sefer ha-meshalim* to include the standard *maqāma* plot of the

<sup>152</sup>based on Isaiah 44:12.

<sup>153</sup>inverting the statement of Jacob's sons to Shekhem in Genesis 34:14, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us."

<sup>154</sup>or "about."

<sup>155</sup>literally, "Are you one of us or our enemies?" (Joshua 5:13). The entire passage is found on pp. 84-5, lines 366-375.

<sup>156</sup>following Schirmann's reading *'im* rather than David's *yom*.

<sup>157</sup>Schirmann indicates that this line is unclear.

<sup>158</sup>following Schirmann's *tanim* rather than David's *tamid*.

<sup>159</sup>*nove'im*, following Schirmann's suggestion.

<sup>160</sup>a play on Numbers 26:56.

<sup>161</sup>based on Genesis 2:24.

deceitful mendicant. Schirmann has adduced the motif of the hypocritical preacher, the wine poems and the garden setting as evidence for the influence of Arabic literature. Indeed, the opening segment of the episode closely mimics a standard *maqāma* plot. The closest parallel from Arabic literature is the first *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīrī,<sup>162</sup> in which the protagonist swindles a mosque congregation with an eloquent sermon. The narrator follows the protagonist back to a cave and finds him luxuriating and drinking wine. The narrator mildly rebukes the protagonist, but the protagonist defends himself, blaming necessity and the cruelty of Fate for his behavior. The narrator has no response to the protagonist's defense. Also, Schirmann links the scene of Akhbor sporting with white and black maidens with an episode from the *Thousand and One Nights*.<sup>163</sup>

Ben El'azar's story differs from these precedents in numerous ways. From the moment the Lemu'el Ben Itti'el jumps out of his hiding place and physically assaults Akhbor and the black woman, the narrative goes in a direction unprecedented in Hebrew or Arabic literature--the poems on Akhbor's beard, Akhbor's violent murder, and the epilogue of the four suitors are all unique. In general, the episode may be divided into two main parts, with Lemu'el's assault on Akhbor and the black woman providing a line of division. The structure of the episode may be summarized as follows:

- I.
  - A. Lemu'el arrives at the unnamed city of sinners
  - B. Akhbor recites the sermon and collects money
  - C. Akhbor returns to his mansion
  - D. The four (white) maidservants recite wine poems
  - E. Akhbor sports with the black maidservant
- II.
  - F. Lemu'el comes out of hiding to attack Akhbor and the black woman
  - G. The four maidservants mock Akhbor with poems and kill him
  - H. The maidservants leave the mansion and retreat to the vineyards
  - I. Epilogue of the four suitors

The two sections are counterpoints to one another. Motifs in one part mirror and contrast

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<sup>162</sup>see Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī*, edited and translated by Thomas Cheney and F. Steingass, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867-98 (rpt 1969)), vol. 1,

motifs in the other. The motif of the preacher's beard, thought to be a beard of piety and truth in part one (B), is revealed to be a beard of impiety and mendaciousness in part two (G). The four wine songs sung by the maidservants in the garden (D) are paralleled by the four poems they recite to mock Akhbor (G). The women's status as Akhbor's servants and objects of desire (D) stands in contrast with their role in the epilogue as women unowned who take delight in each other's company and control the courtship with their suitors (I). The garden setting in Akhbor's mansion (C) contrasts the landscape in which the suitors court the maidens (I).<sup>164</sup> This pattern of contrast between the two parts questions whether the Arabic motifs may be called "influences." While Ben El'azar draws these motifs from Arabic literature, he enframes them within a complex plot that inverts the values of the parent literature. Through this story, Ben El'azar denigrates the ideals of Arabic literature and turns to a model that we may identify with Romance.

Scenes D and I represent two models of love that are diametrically opposed to one another. The former is easily identified with the values of Arabic and Andalusian Hebrew love poetry. A socially superior male is served and entertained by maidservants who are skilled in the arts of song and coquettish flirtation. The setting of the scene is familiar: a courtyard with fountains, various species of trees of flowers, vessels for drinking wine and other wares. It is the standard *hortus conclusus* so celebrated in Andalusian poetry, a point highlighted by the type of entertainment and the content of the wine poems. In contrast, the love ideal presented in scene I closely mimics the model presented in Troubadour poetry, Romance narrative and other episodes of *Sefer ha-meshalim*. The men are not the maidens' social superiors but are either their equals or, more likely, their inferiors. The suitors are not capable lovers who have mastered the arts of flirtation and seduction. They err in their proposal of marriage, a taboo subject in *fin' amour*, anathema

pp. 108-12.

<sup>163</sup> Schirrmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat*, p. 234, note 51.

<sup>164</sup> further, see chapter seven.



to the courtly ideal. According to the women's instructions, the men must woo them through flattery, clever conversation and outward signs of lovesickness.

Ben El'azar places the two models of love in stark contrast with one another, highlighting the preference of the latter over the former. It is insufficient to view scene D merely as a product of the influence of Arabic literature upon Hebrew literature. Ben El'azar depicts the Andalusian style love scene in order to critique it through the presentation of its opposite. The episode is ultimately about the transition from one social model to another, from one identified with the Arabic culture of Andalusia to one identified with the culture of the Christian north.

Apart from the shift in the love ideal, numerous aspects of the episode echo social issues of the thirteenth century such as aristocracy, wine drinking and sexual mores. At the beginning of the story, Lemu'el arrives at a nameless city, giving only the detail of the inhabitants' wealth, "its merchants were princes (*sarim*)," and later identifies the inhabitants as lewd and treacherous. The reader of the *Tahkemoni* will recall that al-Harīzi identifies Barcelona as a "city of princes" (*nes'im*) and Toledo as a city with many princes as well.<sup>165</sup> This is not to say that Ben El'azar is identifying the fictional locus with a specific city, but rather that he is hinting at the subject of Jewish leadership current in his day.

As discussed in chapter five, debates over aristocratic leadership were central in thirteenth century Hispano-Jewish culture. Anti-aristocrats characterized the Andalusian-style ruling elite as lax in religious observance, corrupt in leadership and immoral in sexual behavior. The aristocrats, in turn, offered rebuke toward "slaves who have revolted against their kings and rebelled against their masters."<sup>166</sup> These subjects underlie the depiction of Akhbor, who is a hybrid of the *maqāma* protagonist and an aristocrat with Andalusian tastes.

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<sup>165</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 346.

*Sefer ha-meshalim* contains a sustained critique against wine drinking. In his mendacious sermon, Akhbor chastises the uncharitable, particularly the wealthy man “shaking off wine” who rebukes the beggar on his doorstep (B). As is common in the *maqāma*, moral pronouncements are inverted when Akhbor turns out to be a wealthy wine drinker himself (D). Unlike the classical *maqāma*, however, *Sefer ha-meshalim* inverts the moral message a second time through the narrator’s critique, which Akhbor does not succeed in deflecting. Lemu’el pronounces Akhbor a *naval*, a “scoundrel” (and a homogram of “wine-skin”).<sup>167</sup> Once an inspiration for poets, wine is now a cause of cultural decay. Lemu’el laments in chapter 4, “The generation of foolishness had grown mighty, poetry was lost and hidden, it died or was broken or taken captive. Boors became great and numerous in the nation, and the mightiest among them were the imbibers of wine.”<sup>168</sup> The wine poems of chapter eight are the only wine poems in the book. They are not a product of the “influence” of Andalusian literature. Rather, the author enframes this Andalusian subject within a complex narrative form in order to critique the opulence and decadence that wine poems signify.

Finally, the narrator’s very name recalls the anti-indulgent admonition of king Lemu’el’s mother in Proverbs (chapter 31),

The words of Lemu’el, king of Massa, with which his mother<sup>169</sup> admonished him: Do not give your strength to women, your vigor to those who destroy kings. Wine is not for kings. O Lemu’el, not for kings to drink, nor any strong drink for princes, lest they drink and forget what has been ordained...Speak up for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.

The moral message of chapter eight of *Sefer ha-meshalim* fits this admonition precisely, touching upon leadership, sexual propriety, wine drinking and the needs of the poor.

<sup>166</sup>see chapter five.

<sup>167</sup>*nevalim*, “scoundrels,” are common objects of scorn in *Sefer ha-meshalim*. In chapter ten, the boy raised by the narrator to be upright reverts to his original people, a band of *nevalim*. In chapter seven, Yashfeh temporarily joins a band of *nevalim* who lead him down to Egypt.

<sup>168</sup>*Sipurei ahavah*..., p. 32, lines 1 and 19.

<sup>169</sup>Interestingly, in the Romance *Beaudous*, a young man is instructed in courtly values by his mother before he goes to join King Arthur’s court. It is possible that Ben El’azar is appealing to a similar

While Jacob Ben El'azar was certainly familiar with Arabic literature, he inverts its themes in favor of a new mood and symbolic vocabulary. The predictable pattern of the deceitful mendicant is recast in a new narrative frame, stressing not continuity but a break with the past. The two part structure of the narrative allows contrasting motifs to stand out in bold relief. It is insufficient to hold that Ben El'azar is influenced by the *maqāma* genre or Andalusian wine poetry. Rather, he subverts these models through a calculated intertextual game. Akhbor is a caricature of the Andalusian style aristocrat; his home is the Andalusian palace, his taste for wine, wine poetry and subservient women is that of a despised elite. Casting Akhbor's corpse into a pit is a fantasy of revolution against an Andalusian style aristocracy.

Ben El'azar, to the extent that he may be identified with his narrator, appears to be anti-aristocratic. On one hand, he is the proud intellectual heir of the Andalusian tradition, sharing its passions for grammar, philosophy, Arabic and Hebrew. On the other hand, he repudiates Andalusian social values and rejects any leadership that upholds those values. During the thirteenth century, social disputes were budding between Jewish groups that have usually been divided sharply between rationalist aristocrats and spiritualist talmudists. Ben El'azar seems to represent a third position.

sensibility. On *Beaudous*, see Roberta L. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 164.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SPACE: LANDSCAPE, GEOGRAPHY AND TRANSITION

In chapter three, it was shown that Hebrew authors exploit the cultural significances of garden, desert and forest landscapes to express emotions of loss, estrangement and nostalgia. It was shown that the Andalusian Hebrew poetics of estrangement are grounded in a lingering memory of the garden and its counterpoints in desert and forest. The first part of this chapter continues this discussion by considering aspects of landscape in *maqāma* literature, focusing on the role of idyllic landscapes in al-Harīzi and Ben El'azar. The discussion explores the significance of authors' idealizations of given landscapes as a gauge for measuring their cultural outlooks between the Islamic and European worlds. The second half of this chapter considers the representation of geography in *maqāma* literature, another dimension of narrative space, again focusing on the cultural outlooks al-Harīzi and Ben El'azar. Although born in Christian Spain, al-Harīzi retains the cultural outlook of a Jew of the Islamic world whereas Ben El'azar appears as a Jew of the Christian world imagining the Islamic world from afar.

#### LANDSCAPE: IDYLLIC PLACES

The *maqāmāt* make use of a variety of landscapes ranging from desert wastelands to oases, open meadows, mountain passes, natural rivers and palace gardens, sometimes existing in real geography and sometimes in generic or imaginary places. The various authors of *maqāmāt* identify certain landscapes as idyllic places over others by building upon the associations that are culturally inscribed within those landscapes. The following discussion focuses on the preferred landscapes of al-Harīzi and Ben El'azar by situating their ideal spaces *vis a vis* the Arabic and European traditions. Al-Harīzi diverges from the Arabic *maqāma* tradition by identifying the garden over the desert as the font of

literary culture. The Hebrew author remembers the Andalusian *hortus conclusus* as the source from which Hebrew poetry sprang just as Arabic authors identify the Arabian desert as the birthplace of Arabic verse. Ben El'azar idealizes neither the desert nor the *hortus conclusus* but chooses yet another locus to set his idyllic scenes, a locus whose origins may be traced to the European tradition.

In modern scholarship, the *maqāma* episodes that have been the least valued from a narrative perspective are the so-called rhetorical *maqāmāt*. Very little happens in these episodes with respect to action, humor or plot development.<sup>1</sup> Although the narrative frame seems merely a thin veneer for rhetorical pyrotechnics, the significance of these episodes should not be overlooked. Because the characters of *maqāmāt* are ultimately in search of fine rhetoric, it is worth noting where they actually find it. Rhetorical episodes sometimes contain subtle elements that create the feeling of an idyllic place: the protagonist may appear undisguised, the ubiquitous ruse might be absent, discourse might be more honest than deceitful, and departure scenes might be altered or omitted.

In *maqāma* 27 of al-Hamadhāni,<sup>2</sup> 'Isa Ibn Hishām travels through the desert, coming to the shade of a Bedouin tent. By the tent pegs are several Arab youths, one of whom is improvising poetry of a superlative quality. The Bedouin youth assures the narrator that he has arrived at the "house of security, the land of hospitable reception" as one might expect of the Bedouin, famed for their generosity. In fact, the narrator has arrived at the house of al-Aswad Ibn Qinān, a famous Bedouin *sheikh* (long dead by al-Hamadhāni's day).<sup>3</sup> The narrator is ultimately brought to a house where seven others are also enjoying hospitality, Abu Faṭḥ among them. The protagonist tells the narrator that

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<sup>1</sup>The narrator usually arrives at a location, beholds the protagonist (either disguised or undisguised, alone or with a group of people), and listens to rhetoric in poetry and prose. The topic of the rhetorical display is often quite jejune (praise of various months of the year or furnishings of the garden, debates over the comparative virtues of ant vs. flea, night vs. day, man vs. woman, etc.) At the conclusion of the rhetorical display, there is usually some kind of departure.

<sup>2</sup>ed. Muḥammad 'Abdou, pp. 138-141, translation Prendergrast, pp. 110-113.

<sup>3</sup>see the note by 'Abdou, p. 139, note 9.

they have been enjoying hospitality at the house of al-Aswad for some time, and that he should do the same. The two continue to reside together for a stint (*zaman*) before departing. Of course the story is one variety of a ruse wherein the protagonist, and ultimately the narrator, take advantage of Bedouin hospitality, freeloading to enjoy extended comfort. Still, the Bedouin themselves appear as blameless. This is rare instance wherein the narrator and protagonist remain together for a period of time, suggesting that they are actually enjoying this “land of hospitable reception” where generosity reigns and poetry is pure. This is not to say that al-Hamadhāni necessarily longed for the desert in a real sense nor that he rejected the urban culture of his time. Rather, the story demonstrates that the Bedouin desert had resonance for him as a place of hospitality and elevated poetry.

Absent from al-Hamadhani’s narratives is any idealization of aristocratic garden culture. As in the *Tahkemoni*, the social mores of aristocrats are sometimes mocked. In *maqāma* 22, the protagonist reports that he was brought to an aristocratic mansion with the promise of being fed. Instead, his hunger is prolonged as the wealthy proprietor takes him on an endless tour of the palaces’ luxuries, bragging ostentatiously all the while. In *maqāma* 15, the narrator is invited to a banquet in a luxurious home,

whose carpets were spread and whose coverings were unfolded and whose table was laid, and we found ourselves among a company who were passing their time amid bunches of myrtle twigs, and bouquets of roses, broached wine vats and the sound of the flute and the lute...a table whose vessels were filled, whose gardens were in flower and whose dishes were arranged in rows with viands of various hues...<sup>4</sup>

The company is busy praising the writings of al-Jāhiz when a gluttonous rhetorician rebukes them for their literary ignorance and points out the famous author’s blunders.<sup>5</sup> Rather than constituting any ideal space, the aristocratic palace is the site of exposing the lack of *adab* (refined culture) of the ruling class. As in al-Ḥarīzi’s writings, the aristocracy

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<sup>4</sup>Prendergrast p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>both of these episodes are imitated by al-Ḥarīzi, *maqāma* 3 and *maqāma* 34. See chapter six of this dissertation.

is approached with ambivalence.

The aristocratic garden fares slightly better in al-Ḥarīrī. Most of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* are rhetorical and take place in all kinds of settings. Only one episode, *maqāma* 24, takes place in a garden setting; the garden is described briefly, evoking the description of paradise in the Qur'ān. The narrator is with a group of youths in the environs of Baghdad in springtime. The narrator and the youths agree to amuse themselves by

going forth to one of the meadows (*murūj*), to cast our eyes on the verdant gardens, and refine our thoughts by watching for rains. We set out, twelve<sup>o</sup> in number and as the two drinking companions of Jadīma<sup>7</sup> in affection, to a garden that had claimed its ornamentation and adorned itself (Qur'ān 10:25),<sup>8</sup> whose flowers were diverse and colored. With us was headstrong ruddy (wine) and cup bearers like suns, the singer who sings and amuses the listener...<sup>9</sup>

Even if this setting is outside, beyond the palace and city, the furnishings and social activities are what would be expected of the palace garden soirée--flowers, wine, a singer. The protagonist approaches the scene and a grammatical debate ensues, ending with the presentation of twelve grammatical riddles (corresponding to the twelve companions). Abu Zayd refuses to give solutions until he is given a gift from each of the twelve. Although the protagonist ultimately shows his superior wit as he did in al-Hamadhani's *maqāma* 15, the garden is not the site of absolute mockery. Rather, it appears as a pleasant location for rhetorical exchange.

The ideal landscape in al-Saraqustī's *maqāmāt* is certainly the desert. The author sometimes refers to specific deserts but also to unidentifiable desert landscapes. Although one might expect the Andalusian author to have had some interest in the garden, this landscape is largely lacking in his collection. The desert is far more idealized than it is in al-Hamadhāni or al-Ḥarīrī. In *maqāma* 47, al-Sā'ib Ibn Tammām reports that during the

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<sup>o</sup>literally, "like the months."

<sup>7</sup>according to al-Sharīshī, this was Jadīma Ibn Mālik, a king of 'Iraq recognized for his intelligence. His companions were named Mālik and 'Aqīl. Further, see al-Sharīshī's comments, vol. 2 p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>as one can see from al-Sharīshī's note. Qur'ān commentators held various opinions as to the exact meaning of the verse.

<sup>9</sup>al-Ḥarīrī, pp. 3-13.

days of his youth he was fond of the company of “pure-blooded, Bedouin Arabs, people endowed with reliable genealogies” and so he “marched over their winding dunes and sandy hillocks.” In the desert of Banū Asad, in the Arabian Peninsula, the narrator and his fellow travelers hunt oryx and retire by oasis pools. Abu Ḥabīb arrives undisguised and shares eloquent anecdotes with the Bedouin. Finally, they come to the subject of love poetry and erotic verse and Abu Ḥabīb calls upon seven youths to recite love poems. The youths recite poems in the ‘Udhri style, their discourse continuing through the night until Abu Ḥabīb’s expected departure.

Similarly, al-Saraqustī’s *maqāma* of the poets (*maqāma* 30), in which Abu Ḥabīb lavishes praise upon Jahiliyya, ‘Umayyad and ‘Abbasid poets, is set in a “tractless wilderness, in the company of emaciated travelers, deeply engaged in conversation, handling the reins, and stroking the manes of horses.” When the noonday heat becomes too intense, the desert travelers pitch tents in the bend of the valley. There they encounter Abu Ḥabīb, who shares his knowledge of poets with the travelers and finally departs.<sup>10</sup> There is no ruse in either of these episodes: the narrator is able to recognize the protagonist with minimal scrutinizing, and the discourse is all quite honest.<sup>11</sup> Living in a politically tumultuous time, al-Saraqusti looks eastward and backward to the font of Arab culture, fantasizing about a distant place and time characterized by generosity, valor and precious discourse.

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<sup>10</sup>As mentioned earlier, the absence of Andalusian poets is striking. It should be noted, by the way, that the praise lavished upon poets makes use of extensive word play based on the poets’ names in the same manner as al-Ḥarīzi (chapter 3). Neither al-Hamadhāni nor al-Ḥarīri do this in quite the same way.

<sup>11</sup>A related idyllic landscape of al-Saraqustī’s *maqāmāt* is the desert oasis. In *maqāma* 44, al-Sā’ib is travelling with a “brave youth who was descended from royalty... enjoying the wilderness of wastelands and deserts.” They reach a “fertile valley, and were seated under the still branches of a tree... beneath an outstretched shade, next to a meandering river, and beside some plants of which the fruit was ripe for picking.” This place reminds the travelers of the mountain-pass of Bawwān memorialized by al-Mutanabbī and the home of al-Sā’ib’s companion. Ultimately, Abu Ḥabīb appears and congratulates the youth for finding such a worthy friend as al-Sā’ib. The *maqāma* is atypical in that there is no ruse. Al-Sā’ib asks Abu Ḥabīb to stay with them, but the protagonist declines and departs. On the mountain-pass of Bawwān, see A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a Selection with Introduction, Translations, and Notes* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 134-140, no. 25, lines 1-19.



Al-Harīzi never idealizes the untamed desert as al-Saraqsti does.<sup>12</sup> In the *Tahkemoni*, rhetoric can be found in a market square, a synagogue, a house of study, a garden, a court or along the road. Still, these places are not given equal weight in the book. The most idealized landscape for al-Harīzi is clearly the courtly garden, the landscape most closely associated with the culture of Andalusian Jewry. For al-Harīzi, the garden is the locus of high Jewish culture just as the desert is the locus of high Arab culture for al-Saraqsti. As mentioned, al-Harīzi includes a garden description comprising only a few lines in a rhetorical *maqāma*.<sup>13</sup> In his translation of the episode, al-Harīzi takes this small window of opportunity to compose an extensive garden description.

We went out to a garden bed surrounded with lilies, dressed in standards, dripping with calamus and cassia. The eyes of its buds were like the eyes of a cloistered woman, the pomegranates of its lilies like the breasts of a maiden. Its breezes hovered from its four quarters and blew the scents of its spices. The hands of the rains opened from their locked storerooms and let out the stores of its spices. Before us were fruit bearing trees of every kind with their seeds.<sup>14</sup> With us there was a love sick woman rousing love-song; she is the daughter of grapes (i.e. wine), circling by way of attractive wine-pourers banded with silver (cups). With us were poets teaching instruction to murmurers. First came singers and then musicians,<sup>15</sup> pleasing the hearts of listeners and bringing them joy...<sup>16</sup>

As an author of the Hebrew Andalusian tradition, al-Harīzi was eager to utilize a genre popular in his literary world yet largely neglected by al-Harīri.<sup>17</sup> In his rewriting of this

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<sup>12</sup>A few episodes do take place in the desert, however. *Maqāma* 25, the *maqāma* of the hunt, is set in the desert. In *maqāma* 37, the narrator and his company travel "on the path of the desert and in the steppe" but then happen upon an oasis. In the episode, the protagonist earns some money by charming a snake that had bitten someone. *Maqāma* 31 (the story of the cross-dressed knight discussed at length in chapter six) is also set in a desert oasis.

<sup>13</sup>Although quoted above, I copy it here for convenience. The narrator and the youths agree to amuse themselves by "going forth to one of the meadows (*murūj*), to cast our eyes on the verdant gardens, and refine our thoughts by watching for rains. We set out, twelve in number and as the two drinking companions of Jadīma in affection, to a garden that had claimed its ornamentation and adorned itself (Qur'ān 10:25), whose flowers were diverse and colored. With us was headstrong ruddy (wine) and cup bearers like suns, the singer who sings and amuses the listener..."

<sup>14</sup>Genesis 1:12.

<sup>15</sup>Psalm 68:26.

<sup>16</sup>*Itt'el*, pp. 201-02.

<sup>17</sup>Lavi suggests that al-Harīzi's passage is consistent with his method of translation. Because the verse from the Qur'ān included in al-Harīri's description is such a loaded phrase, al-Harīzi had to expand extensively to capture the feeling of the original. See Lavi, "A Comparative Study of al-Harīri's *Maqamat*..." p. 54.

episode, al-Harīzi allows the garden tradition, and hence the garden itself, to live.<sup>18</sup>

The Andalusian style garden serves as the setting of two rhetorical *maqāmāt* in the *Tahkemoni*. Although rhetorical *maqāmāt* also take place in other settings, these garden episodes are distinguishable from the others because of their subtle departures in narrative form. *Maqāma* five is set in a garden in spring. Heman ha-Ezrahi witnesses a tournament of twelve poets each charged to improvise a poem on a month of the year. Hever ha-Qeni stands among them as teacher and prince.

The time was the month of spring, the beloved and cherished month of Nisan. Rain was formed from the tears of dew on the rose's cheek. The garden, with its embroidery of roses, was a mouth encircled by lips. The earth wore embroidered garments of buds. She decked herself with her earrings and jewels. The rose illuminated her eyes like a flame, illuminating the front of her face, her gardens, her flowers and buds. Upon her gardens were buds and blossoms; her lilies were upon her Sharon. Herbs were green upon her face. The garden's spices were drawn to our nostrils, going wherever the wind headed...<sup>19</sup>

In this description (which is more extensive than what is quoted here), al-Harīzi captures many aspects of the Andalusian garden, from the flowers and garden beds, to the thunderstorm that brings water to the garden and the wine that brings joy. The subsequent poems on months of the year likewise include much garden description. Hever ha-Qeni is the prince of this culture, master of its social order and rhetorical forms. Significantly, this garden is not set in or near any city in real geography. Rather, it is utopian in the true sense of the word--it exists "nowhere." The *maqāma* makes a transition from placelessness to real geography in its atypical conclusion wherein the poems reach Damascus and become as dear to the community as the *Shem'a* prayer. There is no standard departure scene; rather, the utopian garden of rhetoric would seem to

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<sup>18</sup>The *Tahkemoni* also makes use of a few other landscapes. In *maqāma* 19, Heman happens upon seven youths by the Euphrates river who are arguing which is the best of the seven virtues: humility, zeal, courage, fidelity, wisdom, culture and a good heart. Hever ha-Qeni enters the scene and declares them all wrong and that generosity is the greatest of virtues (see above, chapter six). Episode 20, in which the narrator encounters seven beautiful maidens, is set in a field (*sadeh*); after a flirtatious exchange with the tallest of them, Heman finds that she is actually Hever ha-Qeni, long beard and all, disguised behind a veil.

<sup>19</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 59.

go on *ad infinitum*. By omitting a departure scene and by radically altering the standard *maqāma* formula, al-Harīzi distinguishes between the garden and other landscapes, making it stand out as an ideal place.

The standard *maqāma* conclusion is also diverged from in *maqāma* 49. A Zephyr of Dawn (*ruah sheharim*) brings the narrator to a garden in order to utter secrets to him,

She brought me to a garden, lush and refreshing, its bushes entangled, its plants intertwined. The bounteous crop of its moons, its bulbs and flowers, the tenderness of its blossoms were like the cheek of her youth, inlaid with embroidered designs. The garden bed was decorated with the garment of her delight and her scarlet settings.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the rest of the *maqāma*, the narrator continues to describe (in poetry and prose) the many furnishings of the garden: trees, grapes, garden beds, watercourses, wine goblets, wine, a single female musician and beautiful male youths. At the end of the episode, Heman approaches the handsome youths who greet him and ask him his place of origin,

They greeted me in peace, saying, "Peace upon you, what is your place of origin?" I said, "Spain is my land, and the Land of Israel<sup>21</sup> is my destination." They said to me, "May your height not grow dim, may your place not be lacking!" They made me a place among those summoned. Behold! most of them were a company of prophets! Among them was the father of wondrous poetry, Hever ha-Qeni. When he recognized me, he ran to embrace me. He fell on my neck and kissed me, and said to his companions, "Now your happiness and rejoicing are complete, for until now you have not come to your resting place and inheritance." I stayed a month to delight in them and to pluck delicacies from the fruit of their mouths, until Time inclined the whip of separation upon us and pretended not to know us, and painted our eyes with the mascara of wandering and separated us.

Just as Heman is the poets' "resting place and inheritance," this garden is the destination of the narrator's journey. The garden exists nowhere in real geography. Even if it is outdoors and not adjacent to a palace, the garden is strongly associated with the accoutrements and organization of the Andalusian garden. The idea of a wandering intellectual from Spain finding his place of repose in a placeless garden is suggestive of nostalgia for a lost culture. Whereas Mosul is the setting for a *maqāma* about an

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<sup>20</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 377.

<sup>21</sup>literally, "the Land of the Gazelle."

incompetent cantor and the poets of Damascus are all said to be inept, the Andalusian-style garden where Hever ha-Qeni teaches the poetry of old is suspended beyond any conventional space. The personified Zephyr of Dawn leads the narrator to a secret garden where culture and rhetoric survive. As in the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra, the garden is a place remembered that evokes Andalusian culture. Again, there is no abrupt separation of narrator and protagonist. Heman and Hever, who usually repel one another quickly, stay together for an entire month.<sup>22</sup> The idyllic and fantastic sense that pervades this garden episode is created by the suspension of narrative space and the slowing of narrative time.

As discussed in chapter three, the garden becomes an icon of Andalusian culture in the minds of Muslim and Jewish poets. Poets long for Andalusia of the past by remembering it as a garden and describe places of their own day as new gardens. Al-Harīzi remembers the Spain of his youth as a garden and portrays Alexandria and Damascus in similar terms. The connection between the Andalusian garden of the past, current day gardens and the fantasy gardens of rhetoric is significant. The garden remains a symbolic place of origin, a cultural spring that is partially realized in other geographical locations but is also an unattainable chimera. The persistence of the garden as an ideal place in al-Harīzi's oeuvre points to cultural remembering and longing. As stated concisely in the *Tahkemoni*'s opening poem,

... In his land his might and glory rose on high,  
                   but with wandering he is brought low, humbled...  
 His land was the garden of God.  
                   But he was exiled from its comeliness, driven out...  
 His name is well-known, Judah Ben Solomon,  
                   and the name of his land and birthplace is Spain.<sup>23</sup>

*Sefer ha-meshalim* does not make extensive use of landscape in its rhetorical episodes. Chapter 2, a debate over the respective virtues of poetry and prose, is not set in

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<sup>22</sup>In *maqāma* 45, in which Hever comes to the home of Heman to eat food and drink wine in exchange for some parables, the two stay together for several days. Another ideal place was the inside of an intellectual's home.

<sup>23</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 3.

a garden, meadow, or desert but rather in a *beit midrash*, a house of study. Chapter three, a tournament among poets, takes place in a generic council of intellectuals. Ideal landscapes are simply not to be found in the book's rhetorical episodes.

In *Sefer ha-meshalim*, the feeling of having arrived at an idyllic place is experienced in the love stories, particularly at moments when lovers are united. In chapter six, the story of Maskil and Peninah, the pure and innocent youths are sporting with one another when she suggests to him,

‘Come, my love, we will go out to the field and repose in the villages, for such is the custom of fawns.’ He hastened to rise from his seat and readied his chariot. Male and female youths went out and strolled along the rivers and alighted upon the river of love, the place where nobility delights. There were stones like sapphires, water flowing over them; sweet, pleasant trees surrounded it (the river), their branches long, their boughs many, species of birds of flight upon them, leaping and twittering. The valleys were covered with spice beds, spread over with them. They fondled the breasts of delight and covered themselves with the garment<sup>24</sup> of pleasure. They sat beneath the shade of tranquility, delighting in joy and mirth.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly the vocabulary of this landscape description is very similar to that found in Andalusian garden poems. Still, this landscape seems rather distinct. First, the setting seems to be outdoors and not connected to a palace. This is not the planned landscape of a courtyard interior, nor is it the desert oasis occasionally encountered in other *maqāma* literature. At the “river of love,” there is ample space for lovers to stroll at leisure. Unlike the rivulets in a man-made garden, the water of the river flows over stones, which seem like radiant gems. Around the river are trees with chirping birds, and beyond the foreground are valleys. There is no sense that the landscape has been planned by an engineer or an artist, nor is the description made to impose a sense of the artificial upon the natural. Activities associated with the Andalusian garden, such as wine drinking and the entertainment of singers, are also absent.

A similar landscape is present in chapter five, in which the young lovers Sapir and Shapir (both male) are separated when Shapir is tempted away by the nefarious Birsh'a of

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<sup>24</sup>literally “hair.”

Sodom.<sup>26</sup> After wallowing to the point of self-destruction, Sapir is led to his lover and finds him with Birsh'a at *'ein rogel*.<sup>27</sup> After Birsh'a is imprisoned and Shapir repents for the folly of his temptation, the lovers retire to a spring,

His (Sapir's) heart rejoiced in his beloved and his glory was glad. He beheld the spring, that it was bread with sweet waters, watering planes and valleys. Pleasant<sup>28</sup> trees were planted along its banks, watering them at every moment that they might send forth branches. All of the birds upon them were chirping. The spring was pure like the face of a gazelle. Its stones were white, (also) rubies large and small, redder than the color of coral.<sup>29</sup>

Again the landscape seems natural, not planned. Again we find trees planted by water, birds chirping and stones like gems beneath the water.

What is this place to which the lovers have retreated? What is the landscape's significance and whence its origin? Tracing sources for landscape descriptions is a difficult endeavor, especially since most world literatures include descriptions of gardens and natural refuges. If we look to the *maqāma* literature, the closest analog is the desert oasis, a natural setting that includes several of the same details--natural springs, trees, etc. In the 'Udhri tradition, the desert oasis can even serve as the site of lovers' trysts. Another suggestive example from the Arabic corpus is the Spring of Life situated at the border of the celestial Occident and Orient, the symbolic threshold of Matter and Form, in Ibn Sina's allegorical tale *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*.<sup>30</sup> The premise that *Sefer ha-meshalim* is a

<sup>25</sup>p. 51, lines 61-69.

<sup>26</sup>Birsh'a is the name of the Sodomite king in Genesis 14:2.

<sup>27</sup>1 Kings 1:9. This is where Adonijah, trying to muster support in usurping the throne, makes a sacrificial offering in the presence of princes and courtiers. The place name is significant here because it reminds the reader of an incident in which one tries to usurp what rightfully belongs to another, as Birsh'a has "usurped" Shapir.

<sup>28</sup>following Schirmann's correction of *'aṣet no'am* instead of *'aṣet t'ar'am*.

<sup>29</sup>p. 46, lines 160-64.

<sup>30</sup>"What aids in gaining this strength [to journey to the different celestial climes] is to immerse oneself in the spring of water that flows near the permanent Spring of Life. When the pilgrim has been guided on the road to that spring, and then purifies himself in it and drinks of that sweet-tasting water, a new strength arises in his limbs, making him able to cross vast deserts. The deserts seem to roll up before him... Whoever bathes in that spring becomes so light that he can walk on water, can climb the highest peaks without weariness, until finally he comes to one of the two circumscriptions [Occident and Orient] by which this world is intersected." Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital...*, pp. 141-42. Also see Corbin's commentary pp. 159-60. In the Hebrew version by Abraham Ibn Ezra, the narrator

book of allegories might suggest that the water sources symbolize some philosophical notion along similar lines.

However, the settings of *Sefer ha-meshalim* also bear a striking resemblance with a landscape of the classical and European tradition that Curtius has called the “pleasance,” the *locus amoenus*. Curtius describes this as a “beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also add a breeze.”<sup>31</sup> Curtius gives only one example from late Latin poetry, from a poem by Tiberianus, a poet of the Constantine period.

Through the fields there went a river: down the airy glen it wound,  
Smiling mid its radiant pebbles, decked with flowery plants around.  
Dark-hued laurels waved above it close by myrtle greeneries,  
Gently swaying to the whispers and caresses of the breeze...<sup>32</sup>

Even earlier, in Greek traditions of Arcadia, we find the following description in an idyll of Theocritus (third-century B.C.E.),

Then went Castor of the nimble coursers and Polydeuces ruddy as the wine together  
wandering afield from the rest, for to see the wild woodland of all manner of trees  
among the hill. Now beneath a certain slabby rock they did find a feshet brimming  
ever with water pure and clear. The pebbles at the bottom of it were like to silver and  
crystal, and long and tall there grew beside it, as well firs and poplars and planes and  
spiry cypresses, as all fragrant flowers which abound in the meadows of outgoing spring  
to be loved and laboured of the shag bee. In that place there sat taking the air a man  
both huge and terrible...<sup>33</sup>

Castor’s and Polydeuces’ encounter with the “huge and terrible” man certainly reminds one of the giant black horseman who disrupts Maskil’s and Peninah’s tranquil moment by the river of love.

Romance literature adopts the pleasance of classical verse and transforms it into a

describes how he was actually immersed in the spring and how his ailments were alleviated. Israel Levin, *Hayy Ben Meqis...*, p. 60. See also the use of allegorical landscape in Yosef ben Tanhum ha-Yerushalmi’s *Ne’um ahituv ben hakhamoni*, in Yosef Yahalom, “Tafqido shel sipur ha-misgeret...”, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup>Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages...*, p. 196.

<sup>32</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Theocritus, Idylls 22:36–42, translation in J. M. Edmonds, trans., *The Greek Bucolic Poets* (London:

site of lovers' trysts and allegorical suggestion. The allegorical garden of the *Roman de la Rose*, a work roughly contemporary with *Sefer ha-meshalim*,<sup>34</sup> bears many elements of its predecessors. Apart from the paintings (of Hatred, Felony, Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, Pope-Holiness and Poverty) on the four walls, the garden consists of a few basic objects: birds, trees, a lawn, the marble Fountain of Narcissus and luminous crystals at the bottom of the fountain.<sup>35</sup>

The path from classical idylls, to medieval Romance and *Sefer ha-meshalim* is extremely winding, to the extent that it can be documented at all.<sup>36</sup> Striking in all of the excerpts--from Theocritus, to Tiberianus, to Guillaume de Lorris and Jacob Ben El'azar-- is the inclusion of "radiant pebbles" beneath the water of the river or spring. Absent in all of the examples are the rigid alignment of space and the manicured presentation of nature that would be expected in the Andalusian garden. Even in the *Roman de la Rose*, in which the garden is clearly artificial, secluded within walls and possessing a marble fountain, the organization of space is relatively haphazard. The trees are spaced widely around the fountain, held together loosely by a green lawn. In Romance, even landscapes that are artificially planned lack the careful ordering of space associated with the Andalusian garden.

The Andalusian style garden is anything but idealized in *Sefer ha-meshalim*. Instead, the locus associated with wine drinking and the entertainment of aristocrats by maidens and boys is the object of scorn and disdain. As discussed in the final section of

William Heinemann, 1919), p. 259.

<sup>34</sup>the early part of this classic book was composed at about the same time as *Sefer ha-meshalim*.

<sup>35</sup> see Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 3rd ed., translated by Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 32-53.

<sup>36</sup> see Nathaniel B. Smith, "In Search of the Ideal Landscape: From 'Locus Amoenus' to 'Parc Du Champ Joli' in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Viator* 11 (1980): pp. 225-43; James J. Wilhelm, *The Cruellest Month: Spring, Nature, and Love in Classical and Medieval Lyrics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965); Kee Kenneth, "Two Chaucerian Gardens," *Mediaeval Studies* 23 (1961): pp. 154-62. For gardens in moral, theological and literary works, see D. W. Robertson Jr., "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory," *Speculum* 26 (1951): pp. 24-49.



chapter six of this dissertation, the narrator Lemu'el Ben 'Ittiel becomes enraged upon witnessing the immoral practices of an aristocrat in his palace garden. The identification of the garden in chapter eight of *Sefer ha-meshalim* with the Andalusian style *hortus conclusus* is unmistakable. Such a garden would be Heman ha-Ezrahi's and Hever ha-Qeni's finest refuge but is a decadent bastion of immorality in Lemu'el Ben 'Ittiel's view.

At the end of the episode, the four maidservants leave the palace garden after murdering their lord Akhbor and enter another setting where they are approached by the four suitors,

They went out to the vineyards to browse in the gardens and to pick roses, strolling through orchards, meandering through the myrtles. They wore chequered robes, and told parables, riddles and precious songs by the grape-blossoms and vines and by all kinds of buds. They spoke by<sup>37</sup> the trees, the roses and the buds. At noon they lay beside the pools of water, sitting beneath the shade, playing harps and lutes. Four young men were listening to the sound of their song, hearing their dancing and playing, enjoying the sound of the music, observing from the windows. They (the maidens) became aware of this and said, "Who is it that listens to our voices, standing behind our wall? Are you friend or foe?"<sup>38</sup>

The space is clearly surrounded with walls. Apart from this, there is nothing symmetrical about the spatial alignment. This garden could not be more distinct from the Andalusian garden. Never in Andalusian literature does a group of four maidens go out to a garden to enjoy each other's company and to be courted by an equal number of suitors. Rather than a group of men being served by a subservient woman, the women now appear as the social superiors, a common scenario of the Romance courtship.<sup>39</sup> This ideal place is the frolicking ground of maidens and suitors who participate in the expected felicitous activities of Romance literature--singing, dancing and flirtation.

As opposed to the *hortus conclusus*, the aristocratic social garden of European literature is usually the *hortus ludi*, so-called because of its association with play (*ludus*) and leisure.<sup>40</sup> The *hortus ludi* is intended as a pleasant social space removed from the

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<sup>37</sup>or "about."

<sup>38</sup>literally, "Are you one of us or our enemies?" (Joshua 5:13). The entire passage is found on pp. 84-5, lines 366-375.

noise, stench and gloom of the castle. It is a playground for knights and ladies, the scene of dining, dancing, conversing, courting, frolicking and music making. Additionally, it serves as a place of refuge for lovers, especially those whose forbidden love makes them flee beyond society's gaze.<sup>39</sup> These activities are distinguishable from the activities associated with the Andalusian garden. Although one might find music, rhetoric and flirtation in both settings, the assumed social dynamic is different in each. In the Andalusian garden, one is always aware of an elite company of men being entertained by a singing-girl or flirtatious wine pourer. The participants are usually seated and served, a sign of their social superiority over the servant. In the *hortus ludi*, social equals entertain each other by playing on instruments, reciting poems and by making flirtatious conversation. As shown in the previous chapter, Ben El'azar's episode contrasts Andalusian social models with those idealized in Romance literature. The sharp dichotomy between cultural models is expressed succinctly through the language of landscape as the maidens leave the *hortus conclusus* and enter the *hortus ludi*.

In short, Ben El'azar has selected an ideal space quite distinct from that of al-Ḥarīzi, however indebted to al-Ḥarīzi's language and style he might have been. In turning to the new landscape, Ben El'azar breaks with the Andalusian tradition on literary and ideological grounds. The following section shows that al-Ḥarīzi's and Ben El'azar's representations of geographical space differ as much as their treatments of landscape: al-

<sup>39</sup> further, see chapter six of this dissertation.

<sup>40</sup> on the *hortus ludi*, see Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden...*, pp. 38ff.

<sup>41</sup> Such is the case in the Romance *Cliges* by Chrétien de Troyes. The lovers Cliges and Fenice retreat to a man-made garden to partake in their forbidden love. "She (Fenice) then entered a pleasant and agreeable orchard. In the center of the orchard was a grafted tree that spread out at the top and was covered with many leaves and flowers. All the branches were trained to hang down so that they almost touched the ground, all, that is, except the trunk from which they grew. The trunk rose straight up. Fenice desired no other location. The small lawn beneath the grafted tree was most delightful and beautiful... It was there that Fenice went to play, and made her bed beneath the grafted tree. It was there that the pair knew their joy and delight. And a high wall connected to the tower surrounded the entire orchard so that no one might come there without climbing first through the tower. Now Fenice was happy. There was nothing that displeased her. Lying on the flowers and the leaves, she had all she desired: she was free to embrace her lover." See Chrétien

Harīzi appears as an author firmly planted in the Islamic world while Ben El'azar adopts the perspective of an author from Christendom looking outward at the world of Islam.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

One feature common to all Hebrew poetry of the Andalusian period is a confined conception of space. The poet's gaze is generally fixed within strict borders, focusing on the limits of the garden, perhaps looking up to the sky, but almost never beyond his immediate surroundings. Mention is seldom made of places outside of Andalusia, and when they are mentioned, those places appear as extremely distant. In the days of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, Khazaria was a remote, quasi-mythic kingdom that the Jewish patron could "explore" through epistles and emissaries only.<sup>42</sup> When Samuel ha-Nagid claimed victory in the battle of Alfuentes, he asked his coreligionists to regale him as far as Palestine, Egypt and the academies of Babylonia, clearly at the ends of the earth.<sup>43</sup> Zion, which naturally merited much attention in devotional verse, also appeared as distant, almost unattainable. Beginning in the mid-twelfth century, this narrow purview began to open up slightly with Moses Ibn Ezra's poems of estrangement from Castile and Navarre and Judah Halevi's poems from his journey to the land of Israel. Still, throughout the writings of these wandering poets, the distances from Andalusia to Navarre and Palestine continue to appear vast.

The Hebrew rhymed prose narratives are consistent in depicting a different conception of space. Although the precise formulation of narrative space differs from one text to another, places suddenly appear much closer together. Characters are constantly on the move, jumping from city to city--and to non-existent utopian places--in the blink of an eye. Following the decline of Andalusian Jewry, Hebrew literature became very

de Troyes. *The Complete Romances*... pp. 164-65.

<sup>42</sup>on Ibn Shaprut's letter to the Khazar king, see Jefim Schirmann. *Toldot ha-shirah...muslemit...*, pp. 108-10.

concerned with places, now casting an eye toward a broad world that individuals (especially fictional characters) could traverse with ease. Here is a point where history and literature converge; the geo-political shifts of the post-Andalusian period brought about a literary transformation in which the very layout of the world was reimagined.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, R. W. Southern has noted a similar phenomenon concerning a shift in European literature from Epic to Romance in the wake of the Crusades. Comparing the *Song of Roland* with the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes, he writes of the former, "We are in a limited world, the boundaries of which are clearly marked. It is for the most part ... France from Mont. St. Michel to the Rhine and from Boulogne to the Loire, with the coast road to the Pyrenees well mapped. Beyond the Pyrenees lies an unknown Moslem world, a wonder-world of fantasy and evil--a kind of parody of the Christian world..."<sup>45</sup> In Romance, however, "we take a bird's eye view of earth from above, where all unevennesses are levelled out, and from where it seems that men can go anywhere without difficulty... The world is a wide one and we can move effortlessly from Winchester to Regensburg or Constantinople."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in the post-Andalusian period, Hispano-Jewish literature looked beyond the Duero, the Pyrenees, and the Straits of Gibraltar to set its stories in Palestine, Egypt, the Maghreb, Provence, Syria and Iraq, all closer together than ever before.

### **Travel Literature and the *Maqāma*: The *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela***

Travel literature is one of the *maqāma*'s closest literary relatives, both on thematic and structural levels. The narrator of the *maqāma* functions very much like the protagonist of travel literature, relating places and events over a wide area. The *maqāma*

<sup>43</sup>Schirmann, HHSP, vol. 1, p. 85-92 [25], line 145-6.

<sup>44</sup>see also the fine essay by Robert Edwards, "Exile. Self. Society," in *Exile in Literature*, edited by M. I. Lagos Pope Londres (London: Associated Presses, 1988), pp. 15-31, especially p. 23.

<sup>45</sup>R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 242-3.

sometimes draws on the world described by travel writers, using the “facticity” of travel accounts to lend movement, familiarity and sometimes irony to texts.<sup>47</sup> Like fiction, travel writing is a form of representation, offering a partial depiction of what exists. In selecting an array of places in which to set their stories, and by ordering those places in a specific way, the authors of travelogues and *maqāmāt* reveal a great deal about how they perceive the world.

Narratives not only produce a rough sketch of the places within an author’s purview, but also give those places unequal weight, distorting their distances and presenting them in a kind of fragmented hierarchy. This representation of space may be saliently demonstrated in a famous Hebrew travelogue, the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. The contrasting representations of space in this travelogue and in the *Tahkemoni* demonstrate how the two authors identified with opposing cultural perspectives, one as a member of the Christian world and the other as a member of the Islamic world. Following this discussion, further comparison is made with *Sefer ha-meshalim*

The *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* has been an essential text for reconstructing the Jewish communities of the twelfth century. Scholars have generally been interested in using Benjamin’s data to paint a picture of the medieval Jewish world in a positivist fashion.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, we are interested in Benjamin as a literary author and in the construction of the world that emerges from his representation. Benjamin explicitly begins his journey from his birthplace, Tudela in Christian Spain, writing in the first person,

I journeyed first from my native town to the city of Saragossa, and thence by way of the River Ebro to Tortosa. From there I went a journey of two days to the ancient city of Tarragona with its Cyclopean and Greek buildings, the like thereof is not found among

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 244-5.

<sup>47</sup> Percy Adams makes a similar point concerning the modern novel, “writers who invented characters and sent them on journeys—and that means the great majority of authors of epics, romances, historic and other long narratives—satirized the details of travelers, employed such details imaginatively, perhaps fantastically, or actually transferred real ones from travel books.” *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1983), p. 112.

<sup>48</sup> see, e.g., the introduction by Adler, Benjamin of Tudela, *Sefer Masa’ot Rabbi Binyamin*, edited by

any of the buildings in the country of Sefarad. It is situated by the sea, and two day's journey from the city of Barcelona, where there is a holy congregation, including sages, wise and illustrious men, such as R. Sheshet, R. Shealtiel and R. Solomon, and R. Abraham, son of Chisdai. This is a small and beautiful city lying upon the sea-coast. Merchants come thither from all quarters with their wares, from Greece, from Pisa, Genoa, Sicily, Alexandria in Egypt, Palestine, Africa and all its coasts. Thence it is a day and a half to Gerona, in which there is a small congregation of Jews. A three days journey takes one to Narbonne...<sup>48</sup>

By the time he leaves Barcelona, Benjamin changes voice from the first person "I journeyed" to the impersonal "It is an x day journey to destination y," a voice he sustains throughout the rest of the narrative. For this reason, the text is understood best as an "itinerary" rather than a first person travelogue. The use of this formula makes it difficult to know whether the author journeyed from place to place in the order related, and sometimes whether he journeyed to those places at all.<sup>50</sup>

Benjamin offers relatively sparse information about the first cities he encounters, most notably his home town of Tudela, for which no information is offered whatsoever. Tortosa is equally generic. The architecture of Tarragona is mentioned only because it is anomalous in Spain. It is a common characteristic of the travelogue to be reticent about places that are the most familiar to the author, both because the author imagines an audience of readers with a perspective similar to his own and because the familiar seldom seems worthy of documentation. Despite the sparing amount of detail, we can already see hints of the subject categories that will concern Benjamin throughout the itinerary: distances, geography, architecture, beauty, mercantile activity, trade routes, Jewish communities and illustrious men. Barcelona merits some detail, being beautiful and an important mercantile center. Nearby Gerona has a small community of Jews. Not represented in this passage is Benjamin's penchant for ancient sites of religious and historical significance, which he details abundantly for the communities of the East.

Marcus Nathan Adler (London, 1907).

<sup>48</sup>*ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup>Even Adler, who generally sees the itinerary as a first-hand account, questions whether Benjamin ever traveled to Yemen. *ibid.*, p. 48, note 2. Adler does not think that Benjamin saw much of Persia or China

The amount of detail Benjamin offers increases the further he strays from his place of origin. His descriptions of the communities of the East have a certain “wonders of the East” feel about them. Baghdad, apart from its lovely landscape, architecture, wise men and philosophers, also houses “magicians, masters in all types of witchcraft.” In Persia, we read of the “people who worship the wind and live in the wilderness, and who do not eat bread, nor drink wine, but live on raw uncooked meat. They have no noses, and in lieu thereof, they have two small holes, through which they breath.”<sup>51</sup> We also read about Chinese helmsmen who, when thrown from their ship in a storm, cleverly cover themselves in ox hide so to be seized by a griffin. Intending to devour the sailor, the griffin brings him to a mountaintop but is then slain by the clever helmsman.<sup>52</sup>

The order of the itinerary is roughly as follows: Spain - Provence - Italy - Constantinople - Greece - Levant - Iraq - Yemen - Persia - India - China - Aden - Lybia - Ethiopia - Egypt - Sicily - Italy (again) - Germany - France (again). It has already been noted that the order of Benjamin’s travels seems somewhat “circuitous.”<sup>53</sup> Why would one journey from Iraq to Persia via Yemen? Why not reach Yemen from Egypt? Why travel as far east as China and then return to Egypt, which was so close to Palestine early in the narrative? Why the repetition of Italy and France, even mentioning specific cities twice? Adler describes the erratic pattern as “understandable” given the turbulent political situation of Benjamin’s time.<sup>54</sup>

As much as the curious order of the text might reflect medieval trade routes, it also helps illustrate Benjamin’s world view. The world is roughly divided into Christian and

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<sup>51</sup>p. 60 [English].

<sup>52</sup>p. 66 [English]. Al-Saraqusi includes a clever reversal of this in *maqāma* 36. The narrator arrives in China and finds the protagonist weaving tales before the Chinese about a fantastical Phoenix that exists in the Maghreb! Al-Saraqusi points to the absurdity of “wonders of the East” by reversing the locations, suggesting that people will believe far-fetched stories about distant places and that the Phoenix is no more real in China than it is in the Maghreb.

<sup>53</sup>Adler, introduction, p. ix.

<sup>54</sup>ibid.

Muslim kingdoms. Benjamin begins in Christendom, where he is from, and ultimately comes to Palestine, a disputed territory in his day. From the disputed land, he embarks upon the Muslim world, beginning with three Arabic speaking countries (Syria, Iraq, Yemen) and then exploring more remote territories of Muslim influence (Persia, China, India). He then backtracks to more of the Arabic speaking Islamic world in North Africa, Egypt and Sicily. From Sicily, he returns to the Christian world for his final sections on Italy, Germany and finally France, bringing the text back to the border of where it began. Thus, Christian Spain would seem to contact the Christian world only, ignoring the Muslim kingdom in Andalusia and making North Africa seem more distant than it is in reality. The Iberian Peninsula appears as a part of Europe only. Thus, Benjamin's perspective is very much one of an author from the Christian world who sees the Islamic world as distant, foreign and exotic.

### **Geography in the Arabic *Maqāma***

It is more difficult to find spatial order in the *maqāmāt* than in travelogues since episodes seldom follow one another in a consistent way and time is anything but chronological.<sup>55</sup> Still, much can be learned about an author's conception of space, especially when we contrast one author with another. Al-Hamadhāni's stories are set exclusively in the Islamic world with a heavy emphasis on the cities of Iraq and Persia although Syria, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula also appear with some frequency. Al-Hariri's map of the world looks very much the same. Both authors largely refer to that part of the world most familiar to them. Interestingly, al-Saraqustī's *maqāmāt*, although composed in Andalusia by an author who may have never traveled to the East, are set almost exclusively in the East, focusing especially on the Arabian Peninsula. As Monroe has mentioned, "there is, therefore, a deliberate attempt to downplay the presence of al-

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<sup>55</sup>on the (probably intentional) temporal contradictions in al-Hamadhāni, see James T. Monroe. *The Art of* 225



Andalus in the work, since it is portrayed as a place one either leaves, gets drunk in, is stranded on the shores of, or fails to reach.”<sup>56</sup> Al-Saraqusti does not dwell on cities in his immediate sphere of reference, nor does he simply reuse the geographical scheme of al-Hamadhāni and al-Ḥarīri. Writing soon after the Almoravid takeover of Andalusia, al-Saraqusti turned to the East as a more appropriate location for the realization of literary scenarios.

### Geography in Al-Ḥarīzi

In his Hebrew translation of al-Ḥarīri’s *maqāmāt*, al-Ḥarīzi transplants almost all stories to Palestine and its environs, both because he wished to maintain the purity of his lexicon by only selecting biblical place names and because he wished to recreate the significance of Arabic place names in Hebrew discourse. The most obvious example is the resetting of al-Ḥarīri’s *maqāma* of Mecca, the destination of Muslim pilgrims, in Jerusalem, the destination of Jewish pilgrims.<sup>57</sup> In *maqāma* 19, the narrator departs from Iraq due to a drought in the direction of Naṣībīn, a place praised by geographers for its beauty and plenty. In al-Ḥarīzi’s rendition, the narrator begins in the drought-ridden land of *maratayim* (Jeremiah 50:21, in Babylonia) and descends into Egypt, hearing that “there are rations in Egypt.”<sup>58</sup> Al-Ḥarīzi replaces a land of plenty recognized in Arabic geography with a Hebrew equivalent, mediated through the Joseph story in the Bible. *Maqāma* 24 is set in *Qatīrat al-rabā’a*, which, according to al-Sharīshī, was an estate in Baghdad consisting of two fiefs on two sides of a river. Al-Ḥarīzi sets the story in *Mispeh gil’ad*, which was also constructed on two sides of a river (the Jordan), the eastern part

*Badī’ Az-Zamān*... pp. 109ff.

<sup>56</sup>James T. Monroe, “Al-Saraqusti... (part II)” ... p. 32, note 6.

<sup>57</sup>*Maqāma* 14: Al-Ḥarīri’s narrator journeys from Baghdad (*medinat al-salām*) to al-khayf, in Mecca. In al-Ḥarīzi’s version, he begins in *‘ein rogel* (near Jerusalem, II Samuel 17:17; I Kings 1:19; Joshua 15:7, 18:16 on the border of Judah and Benjamin, literally meaning “spring of treaders,” playing on the meaning of *rgl* as “pilgrim”) and goes on pilgrimage. Although Jerusalem is not mentioned explicitly, it seems clear that it is the destination of the pilgrim.

being allotted to the Gadites and Reubenites (Numbers 32) and the western part to Menasseh (Joshua 17).<sup>59</sup> More important to al-Ḥarīzi than actual locations is the meaning associated with places within their respective cultural discourses.<sup>60</sup> In some instances, al-Ḥarīzi manages to preserve the approximate location of a place while invigorating the text with a biblical reference, as when he translates Alexandria in *maqāma* 9 with the biblical *'on*, the residence of Potiphara, father in law of Joseph.<sup>61</sup> Although al-Ḥarīzi includes places from Egypt to Palestine and Iraq, covering much of the same geography as al-Ḥarīri (excluding the Maghreb, Azerbaijan and Persia), the weight of the narratives has surely shifted to Palestine and its environs, producing a “Hebraized” or “Judaized” text.

In composing the *Tahkemoni*, al-Ḥarīzi had more freedom to set stories wherever he chose. However, the author ironically de-emphasized Palestine and included a broader vision of geography. The romping ground of Heman ha-Ezrahi and Hever ha-Qeni ranges from the Maghreb to Andalusia, Christian Spain, Provence, Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Iraq (i.e. most of the world inhabited by Jews). Place names in the *Tahkemoni* are a complex topic since they are sometimes selected for semantic and intertextual associations and do not refer to specific places as such. For example, *maqāma* 6, wherein Hever ha-Qeni relates to the narrator how he was duped into marriage with a hideous woman through the deceit of an old hag, is set in *Teveṣ* (Judges 9:50), recalling the story of Abimelech’s failed siege of a tower when a woman dropped a millstone on his head.<sup>62</sup> In fact, it is not the protagonist who sets his story in *Teveṣ* but rather the narrator (who does

<sup>58</sup>Genesis 42:2.

<sup>59</sup>Lavi, “A Comparative Study of al-Ḥarīri’s Maqamat....” p. 27.

<sup>60</sup>In other cases, however, al-Ḥarīzi preserves actual locations, as in *maqāma* 22 where he translates *al-furāt*, the Euphrates river, with its Hebrew cognate and equivalent, the river *perat* (Genesis 2:14 and many other places). Only occasionally does al-Ḥarīzi mimic the name of an Arabic place name when there is no Hebrew cognate: for example, he translates *San’a* in Yemen as *San’a* (*maqāma* 1).

<sup>61</sup>(Genesis 41:45, 50). Similarly, al-Ḥarīzi also translates *hākīm iskandariyya*, “judge of Alexandria” as *kohen 'on*, “priest of 'on” (Genesis 41:45, 50). Further on the association of Alexandria with 'on, see Jacob Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine Under the Fatimid Caliphs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920-22), vol. II - Hebrew index and glossary, p. 420.

<sup>62</sup>cracking his skull. Abimelech cries out to his attendant to slay him, lest it would be said of him “A

not yet know the protagonist's story!) who opens, "I alighted in *Teves*." The reader is tipped off that a story about the wiles of women is coming even before the protagonist appears.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, *maqāma* 36 is set in the land of *Sev'irim* (the Sabaites, Isaiah 45:14), where the protagonist proceeds to a tavern to find Hever ha-Qeni and a group of youths drinking wine.<sup>64</sup> Of course, *Sev'irim* also calls to mind its homonym "drunkards, wine imbibers." (Ezekiel 23:42) rendering the place name "the land of the wine drinkers," which is fitting for the scene that follows.

In many other cases, however, place names are selected from concrete locations in al-Harizi's world, offering some representation of reality. Stories are set in Damascus, Jerusalem, Tiberias, Mosul, Antioch, Baghdad, etc., many of which the author himself is believed to have visited. In some cases, places are identified by their names in the Bible while in other cases they are simply transliterated into Hebrew characters. Al-Harizi sometimes offers glimpses of his attitudes toward specific communities. His ludicrous portrayal of the boorish community of Mosul, with its unlettered cantor who botches the morning prayers into a blasphemous garble, undoubtedly contains a kernel of truth for the author.<sup>65</sup> Complaints about the distortion and plagiarism of Andalusian poetry in Damascus taverns likely has some basis in reality.<sup>66</sup>

Apart from giving the names of cities that make up the author's world, the *maqāmāt* seldom offer much in the way of *ordering* space. Unlike the narration in most travelogues, *maqāma* narration is not continuous but purposefully fragmented. Moving from one chapter to the next, the reader senses that the order of cities is almost random. The chapter of the *Tahkemoni* that offers the most insight into al-Harizi's conception of

woman killed him!"

<sup>63</sup>David Segal notes that the place name prefigures the subject of the chapter, though he does not make this same point exactly. See Judah al-Harizi, *The Book of Tahkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain*, translated and explicated by David Simha Segal (London: Portland, Or: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), p. 455.

<sup>64</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 295.

<sup>65</sup>*maqāma* 24.

space is *maqāma* 46, in which Hever ha-Qeni, appearing undisguised from the beginning of the chapter, recounts all the lands he has visited and the laudable and blameworthy qualities of the cities' inhabitants. This chapter has been useful for positivists who have strived to reconstruct the communities described, taking al-Ḥarīzi's description as an eyewitness account. In contrast, the following analysis considers how al-Ḥarīzi represents and orders space in the narrative. Hever ha-Qeni begins his discourse,

I was told in the days of my youth that Spain was a delight to the eyes, its light like the sun in the midst of the heavens (Joshua 10:13), the spice of its dust myrrh to the nose, the flavor of its delicacies like honey to the jaws, its air the life of souls, its soil the choicest of soils, the splendor of souls, the joy of God and men, the flowers of its garden like the stars in the heavens, its land the crocus of the Sharon, the lily of the valley. The spirit of desire caused me to ascend furrows and to traverse lakes and seas, so I journeyed through deserts and cleft open breakers and passed through fjords. I made Spain my destination from my own land. And when I arrived there and encamped within its borders, I inhaled the myrrh of its aloes among its tents. Praises seemed insufficient for her goodness, tongues inadequate for her attributes. I roamed through it from one end to the other, from city to city, and I passed through the land of Ishmaelites and from there I left for the land of the uncircumcised where the Israelites dwell. I came to the princely city, Toledo, city of the kingdom whose garment is the grace of dominion and refined culture its ornament to show the nations and princes its beauty, for there the tribes of God ascended.<sup>67</sup>

After describing several cities of Castile and Aragon (Toledo, Calatayud, Lerida, Barcelona), their inhabitants, intellectuals, poets and patrons, the protagonist goes on to describe several communities of Provence (Narbonne, Beaucaire, Marseille) and their dignitaries. From there, the protagonist journeys "by sea to the lands of the East," first to Alexandria and then to Cairo and Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, he continues to several cities within the borders of the land of Israel (Ashkelon, Acre, Safed), and then to Damascus, which occupies a long section of the narrative. From Damascus he journeys to Mount Zemarayim,<sup>68</sup> Ḥoms, and Aleppo, which also occupies a long section of the

<sup>66</sup>*maqāma* 18.

<sup>67</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 345

<sup>68</sup>Benjamin of Tudela states that Ḥamṣan (Emesa in Adler's translation) is a city of Zemarites. Emesa is a day's journey from Karjatēn, which is Kiryatayim, and from Hamah. Adler notes that Emesa is now called Ḥoms, p. 31 of English, p. 32 of Hebrew. Clearly there is some confusion, since Ḥoms would then appear twice, but the general location is apparent.

narrative. After Aleppo, the protagonist visits a few other cities of the East (Maraghah, Sarūj, Aram-Naharayim (Mesopotamia), Harran and Mosul), finally arriving in Baghdad, where the narrative ends.<sup>69</sup> There is no final exchange between the narrator and protagonist and no departure scene.

There is nothing illogical or inconsistent in the arrangement of geographical space. One might complete such a journey without backtracking or crisscrossing one's route: this itinerary may have even been al-Harīzi's own, although the author returned at some point to Aleppo where he died. Unlike Benjamin of Tudela's itinerary, there is virtually no topographical description. Accounts of city layout, landscape, architectural and engineering achievements are almost completely lacking within this chapter. Instead, al-Harīzi writes almost exclusively about individual leaders and men of learning, using the narrative as an opportunity to praise individuals of his age and lampoon others, "I mention their names in my book and engrave them in it with a pen of iron, so that the last generation will behold their deeds."<sup>70</sup>

Naturally, not every city gains the same amount of attention in the narrative. The general flow of the narrative involves a movement from West to East, from Andalusia, to Christian Spain, Southern France, the "proximate" East (Egypt, Palestine, Syria) and ultimately the "distant" East (Iraq). Movement flows from city to city, addressing small settlements briefly and giving extensive treatment to the largest communities of the day. There is almost no mention of any space except a city; nothing is said of the physical terrain between any two points apart from the sea traversed between Provence and Palestine, and the river that joins Alexandria and Cairo.

Like any narrative, the travelogue, or the fictitious travelogue, is created by an author who orders space, structuring it and infusing it with a unique perspective. The

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<sup>69</sup>the ending is logical since the characters are supposed to be somewhere between Baghdad and 'Elam when the story begins.

<sup>70</sup>*Tahkemont*, p. 366.

arrangement of space in this narrative corresponds to the perspective one might expect of al-Harīzi himself. Even if Hever ha-Qeni's journey is not identical with al-Harīzi's own personal itinerary,<sup>71</sup> it is a schematic, idealized version of his general movement. Still, the author and the protagonist should not be confused. Unlike al-Harīzi, Hever ha-Qeni was not born in Spain but began his journey from his own land, the land of wandering (*Ṣarānanim*), and came to Spain upon learning of its distinguished reputation. One of the most interesting points of the narrative is the protagonist's brief visit in Spain to "the land of the Ishmaelites." Unlike every other region in the narrative, there is no mention of specific cities or individuals. In al-Harīzi's day, of course, there were virtually no Jewish communities in the cities of Andalusia: Cordoba and Granada had largely been emptied of their Jews. But if there were no Jews to speak of, then why include Islamic Spain in the narrative, and why as the starting point of the journey (that is, after *Ṣarānanim*)? The author himself was not born in Islamic Spain and, for all we know, never even visited there. All we are told of Islamic Spain is what the protagonist learned in the days of his youth, that it was a delight to the eyes, the life of souls, a garden. In the *Tahkemoni*, Islamic Spain exists as a place of memory that is condensed and abridged, evoked but not described. Perhaps because of his own nostalgic longing or perhaps out of respect for the Andalusian tradition, al-Harīzi considered Andalusia important to include in his geographical representation.

The overall conception of space in the *Tahkemoni* is quite distinct from the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. In the *Itinerary*, the journey begins and ends in Christendom, thus enframing the Islamic world within the Christian world, the author's point of reference. The protagonist (i.e. Benjamin) leaves home, explores the distant and mysterious world of Islam, and returns a master of both worlds. Christian Spain somehow seems to border the Christian world only, even though a Muslim kingdom lay just to the

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<sup>71</sup>one imagines that the author may have backtracked, taken up residence, etc.

south of Benjamin's point of origin. Hever ha-Qeni's itinerary, in contrast, is a unidirectional journey from Islamdom (Andalusia) through Christendom (Christian Spain and Provence) and back to Islamdom (the East). If the representation of geography in the *Tahkemoni* stubbornly resists a center, it does have a vanishing point in the east

In fact, the movement from West to East is a repeating motif in the *Tahkemoni* and is helpful in understanding al-Harizi's perspective on cultural transition in the century following the decline of Andalusian Jewry. Although al-Harizi was born in Christendom, his cultural identity remained bound to Andalusia. Throughout his writings, one gains the sense that al-Harizi sought to recreate what was lost with the demise of Andalusian Jewry. The Islamic East provided the most viable site for cultural revitalization. When al-Harizi praises the Jews of Aleppo, *before* mentioning any of the indigenous dignitaries, he mentions Rabbi Joseph Ibn 'Aqnin, a leading figure in Maghrebi Judeo-Arabic thought who left the Maghreb for Aleppo, "Apart from the pleasant qualities of its [Aleppo's] community and the precious deeds of its leaders, the savior and master, the sage Rabbi Joseph the Maghrebi came to it some thirty years ago. His wisdom is as Ecclesiastes', his mind is like burning coal, his tongue a consuming flame"<sup>72</sup>

This movement of knowledge from West to East also underscores some of al-Harizi's narratives. In *maqāma* 5, the *maqāma* of the months of the year, Heman ha-Ezrahi witnesses a tournament of twelve poets each charged to improvise a poem on a month of the year. The setting is a palace garden in spring, the description of which includes endless cliches borrowed from Andalusian poetry.<sup>73</sup> The poets recite poems about the garden, its wine and watercourses, its lovely maidens and youths. Instead of concluding with a departure scene, the episode ends with the poems reaching Damascus,

And when these words were heard in Damascus, its congregation learned them as they learned the recitation of the *Shema*; they kept their commandments and were meticulous about their very letters, learning their laws by heart. Every day they rise

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<sup>72</sup>*Tahkemoni*, p. 317.

early to recite them in their palace gardens, before one can distinguish between blue and violet. They utter them in the morning service before their prayers and at night. Their sleep cannot be sweet until they recite them in bed. Everyone one of them learned them, from the meek to the mighty--they, their children and their children's children for ever and ever.<sup>74</sup>

This is an explicit expression concerning the arrival of Andalusian knowledge in the East and the zealotry with which the Easterners cultivated that knowledge. Andalusia is not mentioned explicitly, but the identity of the poetry's contents as Andalusian in origin is unmistakable.<sup>75</sup> Of course the scene is meant to be humorous and perhaps even a bit critical, the song that so enthralled the people of Damascus also became the song of drunkards. However, the movement of knowledge from West to East remains at the core of the narrative.

Regarding the status of culture in the Islamic East, al-Harāzi offers mixed messages. On one hand, wisdom is great in the East as it is in Spain, attributable to astronomical and geographical phenomena,

The border of Spain corresponds directly to the middle of the heavens, beneath the line of latitude.<sup>76</sup> The children of Babylonia are on the latitudinal line in the East while the children of Spain are on the line in the West. For this reason, wisdom disseminated in both of these extremes, for they are from the two sides of the sphere; they are the pillars upon which the house is set. In both of these places, the world became wondrous and mighty.<sup>77</sup>

At the same time, however, the quality of Eastern poetry (along with the poetry of France, Germany, and Greece), is held in low esteem,

There is no wisdom that they (the inhabitants of these countries) did not inherit and there is no good quality that they did not conquer; only the land of poetry did they behold from afar but not enter. They thought that they learned the art of rhyme, and held that they observed it, but poetry remained distant from them and did not approach, as the East is distant from the West.<sup>78</sup>

In *maqāma* 3, the *maqāma* of the poets, Ḥeṣer ha-Qeni appears at an Eastern aristocratic

<sup>73</sup> This episode was also discussed earlier in this chapter.

<sup>74</sup> *Tahkemoni*, p. 72-3.

<sup>75</sup> see further below.

<sup>76</sup> *ha-qav ha-shaveh* - literally meaning the equator. This is difficult since Spain clearly does not lie on the equator. The point is that Spain and Iraq are aligned.

<sup>77</sup> *Tahkemoni*, p. 182-3.



feast disguised as a gluttonous old man in tattered clothes. Throughout a semi-cultured conversation concerning the Andalusian poets, the protagonist sits silently, feigning ignorance. Ultimately, he interrupts the aristocrats' banter and rebukes their ignorance. "As for the poets you have mentioned, I was there when they fought their battles; I am come from the battlefield. My heart is a scroll for their themes, I am a book of remembrance for their poems." <sup>79</sup> After speaking eloquently about the poetry of the bygone age, Hever storms out of the feast, frustrated at his company of epigons. Hever ha-Qeni is a relic from a past era now condemned to wander the earth without an equal. He is the conduit of a lost, idyllic culture to the present. The present, however, is lacking a refined circle of luminaries as once existed in Andalusia. Al-Ḥarīzi portrays the East as a place where the Andalusian heritage is esteemed, perhaps the only place where an intellectual can find culture, even if that culture is ultimately unsatisfying.

Studying the representation of space in the *Tahkemoni* is essential for understanding al-Ḥarīzi's orientation in the thirteenth-century culture of transition. Although born in Christian Spain, al-Ḥarīzi portrays Andalusia as the cultural spring from which all creativity, including his own, flows. It is a quasi-mythic place of origin that is remembered and idealized. Although the narratives show a clear awareness of the Christian world and its Jewish communities, the focus remains on the Islamic world and issues arising with the transplanting of culture from West to East. In contrast with the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, the perspective remains one of an author of the Islamic world looking outward at the world of Christendom.

### **Geography in Ben El'azar**

Several episodes of *Sefer ha-meshalim* are set in cities of the Islamic world. In chapter seven, the protagonist Yashfe journeys from his home of *haṣar susa* to Cairo

<sup>78</sup>*Tahkemoni* p. 187.

where he encounters two women in a slave market, both of whom become his lovers. In chapter nine, the youth Sahar from *gat rimon* is shipwrecked in the city of *Şova*, probably Aleppo, “on the sea shore,”<sup>80</sup> where he falls in love with a princess. One might imagine that Ben El‘azar’s sources were Arabic because of the story settings. However, Romance authors also send characters on journeys to the Islamic world,<sup>81</sup> making the trail of influence more difficult to trace.<sup>82</sup> The question to consider is whether Islamic cities exist within the author’s world of experience or whether they are imagined as part of a distant and unfamiliar world. This is best approached by considering the stories’ frame of reference and the manner of city representation. Do characters who arrive at the cities of the Islamic world begin their journeys in Christendom or in Islamdom?

Chapter six, which never refers to a specific city in real geography, is instructive. The story opens with the “king of beauty” charging his ministers to find a male or female fawn (i.e. a beautiful boy or girl) “in all the territories of *Shefer*.”<sup>83</sup> The ministers quickly produce the thirteen year old boy Maskil, who is appointed royalty and seated upon a throne. At this point, Maskil’s advisers declare, “Behold we have heard that there are lovers in the land of the Arabs!” Maskil hitches his chariot, assembles his entourage of

<sup>80</sup>p. 43.

<sup>81</sup>the city, mentioned several times in the Bible (with slight variations, II Samuel 10:6; II Samuel 8:3; Psalm 60:2 and elsewhere), is identified with Aleppo in *Tahkemom* p. 358. If Ben El‘azar means Aleppo, then his geography is imprecise since Aleppo is approximately 75 miles from the sea. In any case, it is safe to locate *Şova* in Syria by the biblical associations.

<sup>82</sup>e.g., in *Aucassin and Nicolette*, the French lad Aucassin is in love with Nicolette from Carthage (North Africa), a captive bought from the Saracens and then baptized. Unable to realize their forbidden love, they both steal off to the forest where they reunite and then journey together by ship away from Beaucaire. Through a complex series of shipwrecks, Aucassin is returned to his native Beaucaire while Nicolette turns up in Carthage, the Muslim kingdom whence she was stolen as a child. Ultimately, Nicolette flees Carthage dressed as a minstrel and reunites with Aucassin in Beaucaire.

<sup>83</sup>although not mentioning the similarity with Romance in this context, Schirmann does suggest, “The lack of additional hints at Christian countries does not require the conclusion that the sources of *Sefer ha-meshalim* may be sought in Arabic literature only. It is possible, of course, that Ben El‘azar moved the scenes to the lands of the East so that his Jewish readers would not be surprised by the strange things that take place. These lands, being far away, could serve as a fitting setting for romantic and imaginative events.” J. Schirmann, “Ma‘aseh be-zaqen şavu‘a,” in *Le-toldot ha-shirah ve-ha-drama ha-ivrit*, idem. (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 378.

<sup>84</sup>a station in the wilderness (Numbers 33:23), and also meaning “beauty.”

soldiers and lovers and journeys all night *derekh ha-'arava*,<sup>84</sup> which may be translated "in the direction (lit. the way) of the Arabs." In the land of the Arabs, Maskil encounters the lovely Peninah who is immediately entranced by her suitor. Recognizing his origins in Christendom, she recites a poem "The face of the lover is ruddy (*'admu*). Because of this they are called 'Edomites' (*'adomyyim*, i.e. 'Christians.')." <sup>85</sup> This is a love story that unfolds across the border of the Christian and Islamic worlds with Christendom serving as the starting point of reference.<sup>86</sup> The conception of space seems more like Benjamin of Tudela's than al-Harīzi's.

As mentioned, in chapter seven, the handsome youth Yashfe sets out on a journey to Cairo after his home town, *haṣar susa*, falls into decline following the political ascent of *nevalim*, scoundrels. Of course, it is difficult to know exactly where *haṣar susa* is supposed to be: it is mentioned in Joshua 19:5 as part of Simeonite territory, although it seems unlikely that Ben El'azar had Palestine in mind. The town name literally means "village of the horse," which suggests some agricultural settlement, though it is unclear exactly where.<sup>87</sup> Yashfe joins a band of reckless brutes, wine drinkers and scoundrels (*nevalim*), and journeys with them through rivers and over mountains. Ultimately, he traverses the following places, which are transliterated here because of the striking phonetic effect.

*va-yelekh 'el eres meratayim 'el sha'arayim ve-'aditayim 'el 'aram naharayim be-*  
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<sup>84</sup>literally, "the road toward the 'Arava,' a place name in Palestine, as in II Samuel 2:29.

<sup>85</sup>One should consider whether the reader is meant to assume that Maskil is Jewish: *'adomyyim* most often means "Christians" but here might mean "Jews from Christendom."

<sup>86</sup>It is fitting to compare this story with *La Mort Aymery* in the *Chansons de Geste*. The Muslim *amir* seizing Narbonne sends his nephew to the land of *Femenie* to fetch his beloved so that she might enjoy the amenities of Narbonne as soon as the city is captured. The beloved is also to bring along 14,000 of her young girls. The fleet fetches them with song and drum and harp and viol, and so 14,000 girls get ready, 'some of the most courtly there were on earth'. For synopsis, see Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens...*, p. 72.

<sup>87</sup>There is some evidence that it exists in Christendom. There is a reference in chapter six that there is no horse like Maskil's in all the lands of Edom. Thus, there is some association between Christendom and horses in the book. Also, when Yashfe reaches Egypt, the mode of transportation is the mule rather than the horse. Thus, the "village of the horse" might be intended as a counterpoint to the land of the mules

*'eres tal'uvot u-mabu'ei mayim 'ad bo'o 'el 'eres mišrayim meqom ye-'orim raḥavei yadayim ve-'imo ha-'alpayim ve-ha-ma'atayim va-yeshev bein ha-ḥomotayim* <sup>88</sup>

(He went to the land of Maratayim,<sup>89</sup> to Sha'arayim<sup>90</sup> and 'Aditayim<sup>91</sup> and to Aram Naharayim,<sup>92</sup> in a land of drought<sup>93</sup> and springs of water until he came to the land of Egypt, the place of the broad rivers, thousands<sup>94</sup> accompanying him. He dwelt between the two walls...)

If we interpret all of the place names according to their known locations, then Yashfe would have journeyed from Palestine to Iraq, back to Palestine, and then back to Iraq before descending into Egypt. It seems unlikely that Ben El'azar actually meant all of these place names literally. Instead, they appear to be assembled here because of their shared phonetic quality of ending with the sound pattern of the dual form, *-ayim*, the rhyming sound of the passage. Because of the hammering effect of this sound repetition, the reader is constantly thinking of the number "two." Thinking grammatically, *Maratayim* might be understood as a dual form derived from *marat* or *mar'a*, meaning "woman" in Aramaic and Arabic respectively. Thus, the land of *Maratayim* might be rendered "the land of two ladies," appropriately foreshadowing the encounter of Yashfe and his two loves. Moreover, it might be a way of distinguishing between geographical regions, between the land of one lady and the land of two ladies, between the land of monogamy and the land of polygamy, between the domains of Christianity and Islam. Through this long string of dual sounds, Yashfe journeys across a great border between his home in Christendom and the new and exotic Islamic world where one can win the love of multiple slave girls. At the end of the narrative, Yashfe returns home a great

later on in the chapter.

<sup>88</sup>p. 57.

<sup>89</sup>Jeremiah 50:21, identified with Babylonia.

<sup>90</sup>either in Judea (Joshua 15:36, I Samuel 17:52) or in the Negev (I Chronicles 4:31).

<sup>91</sup>also in Judea, Joshua 15:36.

<sup>92</sup>Psalms 60:2, generally identified with 'Mesopotamia,' between Sarūj and Harran in the *Taḥkemoni*, p. 364.

<sup>93</sup>Hosca 13:5.

<sup>94</sup>literally "thousands and two hundred:" large numbers of people are sometimes listed as x thousand and two hundred in the Bible, e.g. Numbers 1:35, 2:21.

adventurer, having mastered the distant terrain.

While it cannot be proved that Yashfe's home town *ḥaṣar susa* is in Christendom, understanding Yashfe's journey as one to an exotic place is helpful. Let us consider the description of Cairo. Continuing the above passage, the city is described as follows.

He dwelt between the two walls and saw that its walls were whiter than chalk, that its stones were redder than coral, their forms like sapphire,<sup>95</sup> their tips like yellow jasper, stone that is black, red and hail-colored, possessing all precious ornaments.<sup>96</sup> One stone seemed to be two and each stone had seven eyes.<sup>97</sup> The building was made wondrous<sup>98</sup> with stones to such an extent that it seemed inlaid with jewels.

The description is hardly realistic. It is difficult to imagine that Ben El'azar is describing any real place in Cairo or that he is truly familiar with the city. After leaving this wondrous site, which certainly stuns Yashfe, we move directly to the "market of sweet young women" and then to an oriental palace whose architecture is described in detail. The representation of Cairo is idealized and inclines toward the wondrous and exotic; no contemporary Arab would have portrayed Cairo in similar terms. The description seems to be the fantasy of an author who never visited Cairo and who wished to design a mysterious place for the entertainment of his readers.

In chapter 9, Sahar leaves his home town of *Gat rimon*<sup>99</sup> and sets off to travel by sea when he is carried by a great storm to the sea of 'Arava<sup>100</sup> and to the city *Ṣova* "by the sea shore," likely meant to be Aleppo. Although we do not know that *Gat rimon* is necessarily in Christendom, it seems likely that the "sea of 'Arava" here signifies Arab territory, just as journeying *derekh ha-'Arava* signified "in the direction of the Arabs" in chapter six.<sup>101</sup> As in the case of Cairo, there is no real description of the city but only a

<sup>95</sup>cf. Lamentations 4:7, following Schirmann's reading rather than David's, "redder than sapphire."

<sup>96</sup>Isaiah 2:16 -while modern translations have suggested "ships," "vessels," and "standards," Ibn Janāḥ relates the word to *maskit*, all of which mean "ornament, decoration." He probably understands the word as derived from *skhh*, "to look out, gaze," thus "something that attracts a gaze."

<sup>97</sup>Zechariah 3:9.

<sup>98</sup>or "gravel;" Ibn Janāḥ has *hajāra*, "stone."

<sup>99</sup>mentioned in the Bible as a Levite city in the territory of Dan (Joshua 21:24).

<sup>100</sup>II Kings 14:25.

<sup>101</sup>The "sea of 'Arava" cannot refer to the place name in the Bible since it is another name for the Dead Sea

fantasy of its architectural marvels. Moving from one palace chamber to another and gradually approaching his beloved, Sahar is finally united with Kimah in an inner chamber.

They came into the palace and its doors were cypress inlaid with yellow jasper, the work of magicians. Its floor, walls and ceiling were made entirely of glass; the water formed a wall for them on their right and on their left.<sup>102</sup> When [he]<sup>103</sup> came to it (the water) at first and [marveled] at its wondrous construction, he stripped off his clothing and shoes in order to swim, for he thought it to be watercourses and brooks. When he saw the water flowing beneath the floor, he thought that he would be immersed in the water and drown...

This description readily reminds one of Benjamin of Tudela's description of the mosque of Damascus.

There is a glass wall made with the workmanship of magicians, apertures all around corresponding to the counting of days of the year. As the sun enters each of them (the apertures) on its [proper] day, it strikes it on twelve gradations corresponding to the hours of the day. In the palace are houses built of gold and glass such that when people walk around the wall they see one another whether one is inside or outside even though the wall is between them. There are pillars plaited with gold and silver, pillars of marble of all colors...<sup>104</sup>

To draw a parallel with Percy Adams' insightful point regarding the modern novel, authors of medieval fiction who send characters on journeys also borrow scenarios from contemporary travel writing.<sup>105</sup> Ben El'azar does not seem particularly familiar with the places in which his stories unfold, which also explains why the city of *Şova* is incorrectly located "by the sea." The point here is not to demonstrate that Ben El'azar plagiarized or failed to do his geography homework. Rather, it is to show that the Islamic world in *Sefer ha-meshalim* is a fantasy, a place imagined, perhaps known through literature, but not truly known. It is a place of fanciful architecture, slave markets and harems. Like the *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* and in contrast with the *Tahkemoni*, *Sefer ha-meshalim* reflects the perspective of an author from Christendom looking outward at the world of Islam.

(Joshua 3:19), which is hardly suitable for a great sea journey.

<sup>102</sup>cf. Exodus 14:29.

<sup>103</sup>correcting the text, which has "she."

<sup>104</sup>*Sefer masa'ot...*, p. 30-31 [Hebrew], p. 47 of original manuscript.

<sup>105</sup>see above, note 47.

Close study of the use of landscape and geography in the *Tahkemoni* and *Sefer ha-meshalim* highlights the extent to which these books are aligned with different literary traditions and world views. Although al-Harizi and Ben El'azar were born in similar circumstances and both valued the Andalusian Hebrew literary tradition and Arabic literature as well, they seem to be members of different cultural worlds. It would be an oversimplification to say that al-Harizi belonged solely to an Islamic environment and that Ben El'azar identified with Christendom only. Rather, they both negotiate their identities between the Christian and Islamic worlds. In adopting the geographical perspective of an author from Islamdom and expressing ideal space in an Andalusian style, al-Harizi held fast to an Andalusian cultural model. By portraying the Islamic world as foreign and by lampooning the Andalusian garden, turning to a new landscape based in the European tradition, Ben El'azar chose to leave the past behind and adopt new cultural ideals.

## CONCLUSION

These inquiries into medieval Hispano-Jewish letters have yielded valuable information for documenting Jewish transition between Muslim and Christian Spain. Inasmuch as it is clear that the two periods were never hermetically sealed off from one another, it is also clear that Jewish authors themselves generally did distinguish between Andalusian and post-Andalusian periods and between Muslim and Christian Spain. Jewish reactions to leaving Andalusia were manifold, ranging from the restless nostalgia of Moses Ibn Ezra, to the optimism of Abraham Ibn Daud, the fantasy of past glory of Judah al-Harizi, and the mixture of pride and resistance of Jacob Ben El'azar. As much as the Andalusian environment may have disappeared, its memory, whether explicitly or inexplicitly, remained with Jewish authors. In this sense, Islamic Spain continued (and continues) to exist within post-Andalusian Jewry.

The chapters of this dissertation have laid out categories of reading Hebrew letters that will hopefully be explored further in future investigations by myself and others. Imagery criticism has proved a useful tool, both to establish cohesive structures in poems that are often considered disjointed and to recognize dimensions of displacement in post-Andalusian poetry. In contrast with the conception that medieval Hebrew (and Arabic) poets used imagery indiscriminately as a form of ornamentation, the dissertation shows that poets employed patterns of imagery to produce novel effects, often emotional. The garden of medieval Hebrew poetry, although stable with respect to its physical accoutrements, is shown to be of a protean nature with respect to its broader themes. In his poetry of displacement and exile, Moses Ibn Ezra infuses the garden, once a locus of aristocratic delight, with fitting metaphors of wandering, danger, exposure and exhaustion.



The study of form, both in poetry and in prose, has aided us in situating literary works vis a vis other compositions, be they the various forms of Hebrew poetry or Arabic and Romance fiction. In poetry, an author's choice of form identifies his voice as a speaker within an imagined community. While Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra all composed poems in response to the decline of Andalusian Jewry, their unique responses reflect different experiences and intentions; Moses Ibn Ezra chose the *qaṣīda* form, speaking with the voice of a nostalgic Arab author, whereas Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra chose quasi-liturgical forms, locating political events within the framework of exile and redemption specific to Jewish collective memory. In the study of prose, form has proved a better topic than theme for situating Hebrew fiction between Arabic and Romance literature. Just as the study of philosophical and *halakhic* texts help us situate Jewish intellectuals between the competing Jewish traditions of Andalusia and Northern France, the study of the Hebrew rhymed prose narrative between the *maqāma* and the Romance narrative reveals the orientations of Jewish authors between the Arabic and European worlds. Although hailing from the same city at almost the same time, Judah al-Harīzi and Jacob Ben El'azar maintained contrasting cultural orientations; while al-Harīzi largely remained a faithful adherent of the Arabic *maqāma* form, Ben El'azar toyed with the conventions of the form, turning instead to a new literary ideal we may associate with Romance.

Considering landscape as a literary topic beyond the usual designation of "nature poetry" has produced invaluable information for reading the poetics of displacement. The pleasure garden in particular has run through this dissertation like a thread, from the Andalusian gardens of Dunash Ben Labrāt and Samuel ha-Nagid to the gardens of memory of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah al-Harīzi and the garden of moral rebuke of Jacob Ben El'azar. The garden surfaces in post-Andalusian literature not only as a vestige of a

literary fashion but as a subject of cultural meaning and fierce debate. The Andalusian style pleasure garden finds its counterpoints in the literary deserts inherited from Arabic poetry, the unruly forest of Christian Spain and Jacob Ben El'azar's pleasance and *hortus ludi*.

This dissertation has also reflected upon the scholarship treating Hebrew literature in Islamic and Christian Spain. It has shown that scholarship has most consistently viewed medieval Hispano-Jewish literature as an acculturation positive expression unique to Jewish culture in the Islamic world. Jewish studies has also been governed by a corollary thesis that Jews were seldom influenced by the intellectual trends of Christendom, where Jews were generally more insular and isolated. Imagining the roots of the Hebrew tradition to be in the Arabic tradition almost exclusively, scholars have seldom looked to the literature of Christian Europe as a source for Jewish writing. This dissertation has begun the work of rethinking the "hidden context" of Jewish writing in Christian Spain, recognizing numerous vectors of influence that came to compete with and complement one another. Beyond the hierarchical framework of ages of "gold" and "silver" judged according to degrees of Arabic classicism, we can now speak of the unique qualities of Andalusian and post-Andalusian literature. Post-Andalusian writing incorporates, reflects upon and reworks Andalusian writing in sophisticated ways, producing a new literature that is fresh and often ironic.

To conclude, I wish to introduce a final question that grows out of this dissertation that can be resolved only partially at present: Where was medieval Sepharad? Unlike Muslim and Christian kingdoms such as Granada, Castile and Aragon, Sepharad was a place without defined borders, never existing within natural or political boundaries. It existed wherever Jews imagined it to be and was defined by culture more than geography. Medieval Sepharad was intimately tied to the Sepharad in the biblical book of Obadiah--

the place where the exiles of Jerusalem, the ruling elite who preserved the Hebrew language in its purest form, settled after the Babylonian conquest. Its location approximated the Iberian Peninsula or the Roman province of *Hispania*, as the Targum identified Sepharad, but was not identical to it. Most importantly, it was the seat of a certain intellectual elitism and an urbane cultural model that could expand as proponents of that culture moved and resettled.

It is an interesting question whether the Jews of Christian Spain before the Reconquest considered themselves to be living in Sepharad. Moses Ibn Ezra almost certainly did not consider Castile and Navarre, the two destinations of his exile, to be Sepharad. He saw himself as one displaced from “a land more pleasant than all other lands,” now dwelling among a foreign folk with barbarous habits and stammering speech. After the Reconquest, the border of Sepharad moved northward in the minds of Jews of Andalusian descent. Abraham Ibn Daud saw that Andalusian Jewish culture could be replanted in the Christian north. Castile was the new Andalusia, and they were both Jewish Sefarad. Catalonia, however, just farther to the North, was beyond the author’s perception of Sepharad. Judah al-Harizi saw Sepharad as composed of two parts, the land of the Ishmaelites and the land of the uncircumcised, the latter reaching as far as the kingdom of Aragon. Thus, as time progressed, the concept of Sepharad was transformed. As those who saw themselves as descendants of the Jerusalem exiles became exiles themselves, the very location of Jewish Sepharad was reimagined. Only late in Iberian history did the whole of the Peninsula become Sepharad.

## APPENDIX A

### A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE HEBREW *QAŞĪDA*

Whereas the Arabic *qaşīda* has been the subject of many monographs and articles, a comprehensive history of the Hebrew *qaşīda* has unfortunately never been written. Even the basic spadework of collecting a corpus and studying general features is yet to be undertaken. This appendix is designed to complement the discussion of the Hebrew *qaşīda* in chapter four, which explores *qaşīdas* by Moses Ibn Ezra treating the poet's displacement from Andalusia. The appendix offers an extensive but skeletal overview of the form's history in Hebrew writing from its earliest appearance in Andalusia through some of its later incarnations in post-Andalusian environments.

Following a brief introduction to *qaşīda* form ("*Qaşīda Basics*"), the appendix will review scholarly literature on the Arabic and Hebrew *qaşīdas* and proceed to offer a study of the Hebrew *qaşīda* that is divided into three main parts: "*The Art of the Hebrew Qaşīda*" deals with genre definition, prosody, and thematic development; "*A Literary History of the Hebrew Qaşīda*" offers a brief overview of the Hebrew *qaşīda*'s evolution focusing on one aspect of the form's development, namely, the integration of its parts; "*The Qaşīda and the Poetics of Longing*" builds upon points made in chapter four concerning the use of the *qaşīda* as a medium for conveying emotions of loss and longing.

#### ***QAŞĪDA BASICS***

The *qaşīda* is a formal poetic structure originating in the pre-Islamic Arabic tradition that takes on various manifestations in subsequent periods of Arabic and non-Arabic letters.<sup>1</sup> For the sake of brief introduction, I will give a preliminary definition of

what a *qaṣīda* is, only to interrogate this definition in the discussion that follows. On the level of prosody, Arabic and Hebrew *qaṣīdas* conform to the standard requirements of classical Arabic verse--monorhyme and quantitative meter. In most modern scholarly literature, the *qaṣīda* involves a further requirement of being multithematic, usually binary or ternary, joining together disparate subjects by linking them in succession. Thematic choice and organization vary considerably from period to period, from poet to poet, and from poem to poem. Still, there do exist certain expectations to which a *qaṣīda* either conforms or against which it reacts. Following is the most famous (now notorious) medieval description of the Arabic *qaṣīda* by the critic Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). Although it is quoted often in the scholarship on the *qaṣīda*, both Hebrew and Arabic, it is included here for the uninitiated.

I heard a discriminating man of letters comment that the composer of odes began by mentioning the abandoned abodes, the decay, the ruins. Then he wept, complained and apostrophized the vernal camping grounds and bade his companion to halt, so as to turn this into an occasion for recollection of those who have lived there and then departed: for in their abiding and departing those dwelling under tent posts differ from sedentary villagers because of their migration from water source to water source in search of fresh pasture, following rainfall wherever it be.

To this end he linked the *nasīb*. Thus he wept over the vehemence of passion, at the pain of separation, the excess of love's ardor and longing so as to dispose favorably, attract attention, and exact a hearing--because rhapsodizing a beloved touches souls and clings onto the hearts...

Then, assured of being heard and listened to, he followed up, impressing his entitlements. Thus in his poetry he undertook journeys, complained of exertion, of sleepless vigils, of traversing the darkness of night and the heat of noontime, and of emaciating mount and camel.

At that point, knowing that he had thus duly obligated his patron to fulfill his claim and expectation and impressed upon him the adversities which he had borne on his journey, he commenced with the panegyric [*madīh*].<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Qutayba, who is describing the *qaṣīda* of the early Islamic period, understands the ternary thematic organization--a prelude comprised of nostalgic reminiscences over

<sup>1</sup>The broadest history of the *qaṣīda* in various languages is the collection of papers edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'arā'*, edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif bi Miṣr, 1966), vol. I, pp. 74-5, translation in Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993): p. 238, note 20.

dwellings and erotic encounters (*nasīb*), a journey section (*rahīl*) and a panegyric (*madīh*)--primarily as a rhetorical device. The poet utters words of lament and love to win the attention and approval of the listener, then embarks upon a (fictional) perilous journey that concludes at the feet of the *mamdūh*, the one praised. In Ibn Qutayba's view, it is the panegyric that is the ultimate purpose of the poem.<sup>3</sup> In critical literature, the verse that links the sections leading to the *madīh* with the *madīh* itself is known as the *takhalluṣ*.<sup>4</sup> Although Ibn Qutayba's description captures many of the *qasīda*'s salient elements, one is hard pressed to find a "textbook" example that follows this pattern precisely. In fact, a casual perusal of Arabic and Hebrew poems considered *qasīdas* will reveal that scholarship maintains a far looser notion of the *qasīda* as a multithematic poem.

## REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

### The Arabic *Qasīda*

Unlike the Hebrew *qasīda*, the Arabic *qasīda* has been the subject of much research in Western scholarship. Scholars have sought to unravel the mysteries of the form's origins,<sup>5</sup> to study its evolution throughout various historical periods and literary trends,<sup>6</sup> and to consider its formal organization and meaning from performative.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>note that Ibn Qutayba is describing the *qasīda* of the early Islamic period; the pre-Islamic *qasīda* is more likely to conclude with a personal or tribal boast, *fakhr*, or with invective, *hijā'*, against an individual or a tribe. The concept of a patron, often a *khalīfa* or some other state official, only emerges in the Islamic period.

<sup>4</sup>literally, "escaping." It is also sometimes called the *khulūs* or the *khurūj*. See G. J. H. van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), p. 227, index of Arabic terms under roots *khryj* and *khlyṣ*.

<sup>5</sup>Renate Jacobi, "The Origins of the Qasida Form," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackel (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 21-34.

<sup>6</sup>The literature is quite extensive here. In general, see: Renate Jacobi, "Qasīda," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 630-33; Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974). A select bibliography by period - Pre-Islamic: Renate Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qasīde* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1971); James E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qasīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997); Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell university press, 1993). Early Islamic: Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge:

structuralist and anthropological perspectives.<sup>8</sup> What emerges from this scholarship is a loose affiliation of poems dedicated to tribal values in one period, the power of Islamic kingship in the next and the triumph of urban glory in the next. The discreet themes (*nasīb*, *rahīl*, *madīh*) wax and wane in magnitude from one period to the next (e.g. the *fakhr*, boast, of pre-Islamic poetry gives way almost entirely to panegyric and invective in later periods, the *rahīl* is expanded upon during the ʿUmayyad period but practically vanishes in the ʿAbbāsīd period), intermingle with one another, are complemented with and replaced by innovative genres (e.g. *ghazal*, love poetry, *khamriyyāt*, wine poetry, *rawdīyyāt*, garden poetry), are transformed, parodied and romanticized. What remains at the core of the *qasīda*'s composition is a multithematic structure offering certain expectations and a repertory of stock phrases, motifs, themes and uses of language.

Some of the scholarly discussion on *qasīda* structure has read like a trial in which the aesthetic value of Arabic literature has stood awaiting judgment. The debate has focused on the question of "unity," i.e. whether Arabic poetry, and the *qasīda* in particular, exhibits features that bind the poem together creating a well-crafted whole. In its most extreme form, "unity" or "organic unity" involves the indispensability of every aspect of a poem in preserving meaning and integrity such that the slightest omission or variation would undermine the entire work.<sup>9</sup> The question itself reflects the aesthetic values of Western readers for whom unity has often been a requisite quality of great art. Thus, a negative verdict on the unity question would reinforce entrenched conceptions of

Cambridge University Press, 1989); ʿAbbāsīd: Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991); Andalusian: Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Beatrice Gruendler, "The Qasida," in *The Literature of al-Andalus*, eds María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 211-31. <sup>8</sup> James Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1972): pp. 1-53; M. Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1978). <sup>9</sup>see below on structuralist and anthropological perspectives. <sup>9</sup>On this term, see, Catherine Lord, "Organic Unity Reconsidered," in *Aesthetic Inquiry: Essays on Art Criticism and the Philosophy of Art*, edited by Monroe C. Beardsley and Herbert M. Schueller (Belmont, CA: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 82-89.

Arabic writing and culture while a positive response might vindicate an aesthetically undervalued segment of world literature.

As Van Gelder notes, "classical Arabic poems have been described as lacking 'unity' ever since Western critical standards were applied to them."<sup>10</sup> Nineteenth and much of twentieth century scholarship has considered the structure of Arabic poetry, including the multithematic *qasīda*, to be "molecular" or "atomic," meaning that the poem is a conglomeration of free-standing units (verses) whose arrangement is arbitrary or inconsequential to overall meaning and aesthetic quality. The reasons for this perception are numerous. First, medieval Arab critics have characterized poems as a "string of pearls beautifully strung," suggesting beauty but also, perhaps, looseness of structure. Western scholars have (over)extended the metaphor to mean that the order of lines in a poem is essentially arbitrary (just as the order of pearls, each independently beautiful, does not affect the appearance of the necklace).<sup>11</sup> Second, each line of an Arabic poem generally contains an independent, self-sufficient syntactic structure and only rarely does syntax carry over from one line to the next (enjambment). Because the commentaries of medieval critics and the actual practices of poets privileged the individual line over clusters of lines, Western scholars have sometimes denigrated the poetry as ununified. Third, the apparent disjuncture between themes of multithematic poems has left Western readers feeling tossed about, unable to discern any unity or logical progression within the poems. At times, the judgments of Western scholars have gone beyond literary issues and exploited poetry to denigrate Arab (and other Semitic) culture. For example, Alfred Bloch comments that the looseness of the *qasīda* stems from the short 'mental span' of the pre-Islamic Arabs;<sup>12</sup> R. A. Nicholson characterizes the Arab's lack of appreciation for unity as

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<sup>10</sup>van Gelder, *Beyond the Line...*, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup>see discussions, for example, in A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London and New York, 1957), pp. 15-16; H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature*, 2nd Revised Edition (Oxford, 1963), pp. 15-16; Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 76-78, 134, 288; Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (4th edition, London: Hutchinson and Co., 1966),



a deficiency of "racial endowment," "The Arab has no such passion for an ultimate principle of unity... He shares with other Semitic peoples an incapacity for harmonizing and unifying the particular facts of experience."<sup>13</sup>

Since the 1970s, numerous scholars have sought to vindicate the aesthetic appeal of Arabic literature and argued that the molecular theory of Arabic poetry is grossly overstated. Such scholars point to structural patterns embedded beneath the text's surface, which reveal poetic organization to be well-crafted and well-conceived. Modern criticism has noted the deficiencies of medieval critical models for exploring the interests of modern readers and has sought to move beyond such ways of reading.<sup>14</sup> One problem with the unity discussion is a lack of clarity regarding exactly what "unity" is. One modern literary critic, quite distant from the scene of Arabic studies, notes this problem with respect to the study of European literature,

Great art is unified, the theory goes, and the more diversity it includes and organizes, the greater the art. But even a brief look at the history of the term [unity] suggests that there is little agreement on the nature or even the desirability of unity. We need only think of the difference between the rather rigid concept of unity in some neoclassical critics like Boileau and Corneille--for whom unity meant following a set of rules about the arrangement of time, place, and action in a play--and the more fluid and organic notion of unity in the Romantics--for whom unity was achieved not by following rules but by infusing the materials of the work with the author's personality. In our century, the American New Critics transformed "unity" as a coercive reading strategy, requiring us to impose unity on texts--like Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*--that seem to be blasting to smithereens.<sup>15</sup>

In the body of scholarship on Arabic poetry, unity has taken on a number of meanings. Using various structuralist techniques, several scholars have considered elements that unify Arabic poetry.<sup>16</sup> Raymond Scheindlin, who studies structure in one Andalusian poet,

p. 142.

<sup>12</sup>van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*..... p. 16 note 62.

<sup>13</sup>quoted in Michael Sells, "The *Qasida* and the West: Self-Reflective Stereotype and Critical Encounter," *al-'Arabiyya* 20 (1987): p. 319.

<sup>14</sup>Wolflart Heinrichs, "Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency," in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, edited by Gustave von Grunbaum (Wiesbaden, 1973), pp. 19-69.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas McLaughlin, "Introduction" in Thomas McLaughlin and Frank Lentricchia, eds. *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 4.

focuses on morphological and syntactic patterning, progressing incrementally from the interrelation of hemistichs within the line, to groups of lines and finally whole poems.<sup>17</sup> Scheindlin concludes that certain techniques are utilized for opening and concluding poems, that the macro-structures of certain poems seem to be created consciously and that occasional comments of medieval critics show an interest in formal elements that extend beyond the individual line.<sup>18</sup>

Using the very different structuralist technique of myth analysis as detailed by Lévi-Strauss, Kamal Abu Deeb studies clusters and complexes of thematic classes in pre-Islamic poetry.<sup>19</sup> For example, in the *Murallaqa* of Labīd b. Rabī'a al-'Amīrī, Abu Deeb finds clusters of oppositions that point to binary vectors of meaning within the poem, one pointing toward life and renewal, the other toward death and decay. Change in the poem exhibits a contradictory and paradoxical nature ("change as a force of death and change as a force of life, destruction versus renewal and recreation") revealing the poet's fundamental binary conception of time and reality.<sup>20</sup> Unity, in Abu Deeb's view, is created through the repeating pattern of oppositions<sup>21</sup> throughout the poem.

Abu Deeb's pioneering study is critiqued along with other structuralist works in an article by S. P. Stetkevych,<sup>22</sup> who finds such methods forced and dubious. For

<sup>16</sup>In addition to the works mentioned explicitly, one should be aware of the following discussions: Mary Catherine Bateson, *Structural Continuity in Poetry: A Linguistic Study of Five Pre-Islamic Odes* (Paris: Mouton, 1970); Adnan Haydar, "The Mu'allāqa of Imru' al-Qays: Its Structure and Meaning, I," *Edebiyat* 2, no. 2 (1977): pp. 227-61; Adnan Haydar, "The Mu'allāqa of Imru' al-Qays: Its Structure and Meaning, II," *Edebiyat* 3 (1978): pp. 51-82; Kamal Abu-Deeb, "Studies in Arabic Literary Criticism: The Concept of Organic Unity," *Edebiyat* 3 (1977); Kamal Abu-Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1979), pp. 294-302. Such analyses and others are discussed by van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, pp. 14ff. and by Michael Sells, "The *Qasīda* and the West...".

<sup>17</sup>Raymond Scheindlin, *Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Mu'atamid ibn 'Abbād* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

<sup>18</sup>One should note that Scheindlin does not emphasize the *qasīda* since, as a patron himself, al-Mu'atamid had little occasion to compose panegyrics.

<sup>19</sup>Kamal Abu-Deeb, "Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (1975): pp. 148-84.

<sup>20</sup>*ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>21</sup>Abu Deeb notes that not all of the pairs to which he refers are "oppositions;" some are "dualities" (e.g. encampments and dwellings). Such dualities are also said to "contribute to the growth of the poem in the

Stetkevych, Abu Deeb artificially imposes a preconceived dialectic grounded in binary opposition that is bound and determined by a Hegelian logic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which does not necessarily underlie the structure of pre-Islamic poetry. For Stetkevych, the oppositions that Abu Deeb “sniffs out” do not imply the contrasts he claims and the supposed binary message is said to be a mere phantom. In fact, the very application of Lévi-Strauss’s technique of *myth* analysis to pre-Islamic *poetry* is considered ill-conceived. Instead, she turns to an anthropological model, linking the ternary structure of the *qasīda* to the three part scheme of the rite of passage as outlined by van Gennep:<sup>23</sup> separation, liminality, and incorporation. The *nasīb*, with its laments over ruined encampments and the departed women of the tribe, represents the essential separation and severance of the poet from society. The *rahīl*, or journey section, is identified with the liminal stage, a transitional state characterized by danger and fear that the “initiate” must endure. In the *qasīda*, this is expressed through the poet’s separation from the tribe enhanced by the setting of night, pangs of hunger and thirst and the extended metaphors of wild animals separated from herds. In the concluding *fakhr*,<sup>24</sup> or boastful self-praise, the poet evokes scenes of revelry, generosity and society; the fearsome dangers of the desert are replaced with emblems of companionship, reagggregation and incorporation. As a corollary of this theory, *ṣu’lūk*, or brigand, poetry is associated with the rite of passage *manqué*, a failed or aborted ritual. The poet elects solitude over tribal life and thus celebrates the anti-social tendencies of *rahīl*/liminality phase over the tribal social values of the *fakhr* reagggregation phase.<sup>25</sup> Stetkevych is hardly

context of this vision of reality as a two-faceted entity.” (p. 168)

<sup>22</sup> “Structuralist Interpretations of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Critique and New Directions.” *JNES* 42, no. 2 (1983): pp. 85-107.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (1909. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>24</sup>characteristic mostly of the pre-Islamic *qasīda*, being supplanted largely by *madīh*, panegyric, in later periods.

<sup>25</sup> Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. “The *Ṣu’lūk* and His Poem: A Paradigm of Passage *Manqué*.” *JOAS* 104, no. 4 (1984): pp. 661-78.

a molecularist; she allows a certain unity in pre-Islamic poetry, but it is based in the logical progression of themes rather than a pattern of binary oppositions.

Stetkevych's introduction of anthropological theory into the discourse on Arabic poetry is most welcome and allows her to propose readings that would be impossible otherwise. She is not altogether convincing, however, in her critique of the structuralist readings of Abu Deeb; while she might be correct on some points and offer better readings in light of her proposed theory, one should not conclude that the reading of oppositions is a bankrupt method of poetic analysis. Her proposed pattern of ritual initiation is certainly a structuralism of another sort, only it is based on a progressive process (separation/liminality/incorporation) rather than Hegelian logic (thesis/antithesis/synthesis). The two methods of reading are not mutually exclusive and there is no reason for which they cannot be used in harmony if applied in a measured, discriminating fashion.

Not long after S. P. Stetkevych's ground-breaking articles, Stefan Sperl published a monograph on the early Islamic *qasīda* that is firmly grounded in the structuralist tradition.<sup>26</sup> Sperl generally downplays the barriers Stetkevych sets between herself and Abu Deeb. Sperl sees the Islamic *qasīda* as a binary composition consisting of the sections preceding the panegyric, termed the "strophe," and the panegyric (*madīh*) itself, designated the "antistrophe."<sup>27</sup> Sperl shows that thematic, lexical, morphological, phonological and syntactic materials introduced in the strophe are developed and resumed in the antistrophe of the panegyric ode. The relationship between strophe and antistrophe is essentially antithetical, consisting of binary oppositions between concepts, motifs and imagery, phonetic and grammatical structures.<sup>28</sup> As an example of thematic opposition, Sperl contrasts the qualities applied to the beloved in the opening *nasīb* with those of the

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<sup>26</sup>*Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*...

<sup>27</sup>On the binary versus the ternary conception, see below, "How Many Parts Does a *Qasīda* Have?"

<sup>28</sup>*Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*.... p. 19.

ruler in the *madīh*:

<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Ruler</i>
Physical attributes	Moral attributes
Physical beauty	Moral beauty
Breaks her promises	Keeps his promises
Causes unhappiness	Brings happiness
Creates emaciation	Gives nourishment
Separation between her and her lover	Unification: he integrates society and his subjects are close to him

...<sup>29</sup>

Sperl's structuralist approach differs from Abu Deeb's in that it is concerned with oppositions that occur between the parts of the poem rather than understanding opposition itself to be the conceptual matrix undergirding every moment of the poem.

In 1982, the molecularist theory is revisited by van Gelder, albeit with renewed sophistication and devoid of the cultural prejudices of earlier scholars.<sup>30</sup> Van Gelder surveys the medieval Arabic critical literature that treats units of the poem, units of multiple lines and the sections of the *qaṣīda*. In doing so, he concludes that medieval critics generally did not study the ways in which one line or motif may follow another despite certain guidelines for opening and concluding poems and for the construction of the *takhalluṣ*, the transitional verse of the *qaṣīda*. In fact, the recommendation that a *takhalluṣ* be completed within one or two lines fits well with the molecularist vision in van Gelder's view.<sup>31</sup> The author reviews quotations by critics that have been taken by scholars as evidence of an interest in 'organic' unity (e.g. al-Ḥātimī's comparison of a *qaṣīda* with a human body) and concludes that medieval theorists did recognize a certain "coherence" (*iltihām* or *ilti'ām*), though this should not be confused with "unity" in the Coleridgian sense. It is not explained by the medieval critics exactly what this "coherence" is--loose affinity, a unity of atmosphere or careful patterning. Van Gelder

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<sup>29</sup>ibid., p. 20

<sup>30</sup>van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*.... In addition to my comments below, see some similar and related conclusions in a review article by James E. Montgomery, "On the Unity and Disunity of the *Qaṣīdah*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24 (1993): pp. 271-77.

holds that the coherence is more syntactic than thematic and does not involve all aspects of the poem.<sup>32</sup>

In his concluding peroration, van Gelder warns against “those who, in their enthusiasm for unity in poems, have misinterpreted a number of passages by Arab critics that seem to support their ideals.”<sup>33</sup> While blatant incoherence seems rare, “even in *jāhili* poetry,”<sup>34</sup> the molecularism of the native critics is sufficient as an explanatory tool for van Gelder, who sees the study of criticism as tantamount to the study of poetry itself. The author questions why Arab critics themselves should not be allowed to represent Arab thought.<sup>35</sup> Van Gelder thus seems dissatisfied with the Heinrichs’ appraisal of medieval literary theory’s deficiency in explaining matters of interest to modern scholars.<sup>36</sup>

Jaroslav Stetkevych’s extensive and penetrating book on the *qaṣīda* is concerned primarily with the *nasīb*, the *qaṣīda*’s amatory prelude.<sup>37</sup> Unlike most studies, this book considers the numerous periods and manifestations of *qaṣīda* development within a unified theory detailing the nostalgic registers of Arabic composition. The *qaṣīda* tradition, it is argued, is fragmented yet singular;<sup>38</sup> the *qaṣīda* is a basic and rigid form with associated motifs that survives great transitions--from pre-Islamic Arabia, to Islamic and courtly contexts, from tribal experience to ribald parody and an urban memory of delight--

<sup>31</sup>van Gelder, *Beyond the Line...*, p. 205.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., p. 108.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., p. 194.

<sup>34</sup>ibid., p. 207.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., p. 208.

<sup>36</sup>e.g. van Gelder’s statement “If, as I have argued, the ‘mode of existence’ of poetry is determined by the ways in which it is handled by authors and critics, whether contemporary with the poets or not, the boundaries between poetry and criticism are blurred to a large extent, and it becomes difficult to speak of the ‘efficiency’ or the ‘deficiencies’ of classical Arabic theory and criticism, unless one believes one’s own standards to be incontestably superior to those of the Arab critics and poets alike.” (p. 207) seems to take aim at W. Heinrichs’ article, “Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency”...

<sup>37</sup>Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd...*, mentioned above and discussed in the context of chapters three and four.

<sup>38</sup>Thus, despite apparent changes in the form, Stetkevych sees the development as continuous and not disjointed. For example, the incorporation of *ghazal* (love poetry) by al-Farazdak and ‘Umar Ibn Abi Rabī‘ah is seen as a “tangential complement” rather than an alternative (p. 56). Similarly, the travel companions of the pre-Islamic ode are said to resurface in the courtly Idyll as boon companions whom

revealing a “pattern of the mind” that speaks to Arabic culture as a whole.<sup>39</sup> The problem of unity is addressed in the first chapter of the book, characterizing three interdependent theories of the ternary structure, beginning with Ibn Qutaybah’s rhetorical/epideictic perspective, moving toward a theory in which the shifting mood scheme of the *qaṣīda* is analogized with the mood and tempo development of the sonata form (also ternary) in the Western musical tradition, and finally to the anthropological theory of separation, liminality and reaggregation as discussed by S. P. Stetkevych. Although the book is deeply cognizant of semantics, philology and syntactic structure, treatments of unity according to the methods of Abu Deeb or Sperl<sup>40</sup> are absent from the discussion. Stetkevych is relatively reticent in his treatment of unity, intimating the presence of a qualified unity based in logical progression while generally concurring with van Gelder’s theory of “cohesion.”<sup>41</sup>

### **How Many Parts Does a *Qaṣīda* Have?**

One problem that emerges from the scholarship on the Arabic *qaṣīda* is a certain amount of confusion regarding of how many parts a *qaṣīda* consists, the leading candidates being two or three. Why should there be confusion over such a seemingly basic point? As noted above, structuralist readings such as Sperl’s have divided the poem into two parts, strophe and anti-strophe, and proceeded to study the antithetical complex of parallels and contrasts created between the two sections. In contrast, the work of S. P.

“the poet remembers as part of the melancholy landscape of his soul.” (p. 64)

<sup>39</sup>*The Zephyrs of Najd*. . . p. 1

<sup>40</sup>Sperl’s method is not very relevant to such a study insofar as Stetkevych is only concerned with the *nasīb* as an independent unit, not read as a “strophe” in contradistinction to the “antistrophe” of the *madīh*.

<sup>41</sup>Consider a quote such as, “To al-Jāhiz, ‘the best achieved poetry should be a free-flowing, cohesive unit. This way one knows that it was also smelted and cast all in one.’ Abū al-Hātimī’s assertion that ‘the *qaṣīdah* is created like a human body’ engages the critical imagination with an even greater ease, but then, too, it no more than reflects its culturally idiosyncratic sense of form. The perfectly harmonious organism which in al-Hātimī’s mind is the *qaṣīdah* does not relinquish its irredentist structural characteristics as we know them or as a critic such as Ibn Qutaybah knew them--that is, as a sequential

Stetkevych and J. Stetkevych emphasizes the ternary structure described by Ibn Qutayba (*nasīb raḥīl madīh*) and associates it with the three parts of the initiation rite. One might wonder whether someone is forcing square pegs into round holes.

First, there are scholars who see a genuine historical progression from a ternary *qaṣīda* in the pre-Islamic, early Islamic and ʿUmayyad periods to a binary *qaṣīda* following the courtly panegyrics of al-Mutanabbī in the ʿAbbāsīd era.<sup>42</sup> Beyond this, most of the structuralists regard the *qaṣīda*'s (including pre-Islamic and early Islamic) structure as essentially binary. In an article treating a *qaṣīda* by Bashshār Ibn Burd, Julie Meisami writes that its "54 lines are divided *thematically* into three sections (*nasīb*, *raḥīl*, and *madīh*), *organizationally* into two (*nasīb - raḥīl - madīh*), in the strophe-antistrophe pattern identified by S. M. Sperl"<sup>43</sup> (my italics). Thus, one might even consider the *nasīb raḥīl madīh* cycle to be binary! In an article written some time after his initial theory of strophe and antistrophe, Sperl characterizes the *qaṣīda* as having a "beginning, middle and end." In the beginning, motifs, images, lexical items and grammatical patterns are introduced which will be resumed in the remainder of the poem. The middle "often marks a moment of catharsis." In the concluding section, there is a resumption of key lexical items, themes or images introduced in the beginning, often in a new context, highlighting a transformation. Following this description Sperl writes,

In my book *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* I tried to examine and illustrate this technique of composition through analyses of poems from the ninth and eleventh centuries AD. In order to point to the contrasting relationships that exist in many *qaṣīdas* of this period between the beginning of the poem and the remaining two sections<sup>44</sup> I have called them 'strophe' and 'antistrophe' respectively. However, even in *qaṣīdas* that follow such a bipartite pattern, the final section has a distinct function of the type outlined above. Such poems, therefore, also develop in three stages in a manner that appears to give

but for the most part drastically paratactic arrangement...". *The Zephyrs of Najd*, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup>R. Jacobi, "Qasīda"...: J. Stetkevych, op. cit., p. 238, note 20. Such a shift affects the view of the *qaṣīda* in criticism following al-Mutanabbī (e.g. al-Qarṭajannī).

<sup>43</sup>"The Uses of the *Qasīda*: Thematic and Structural Patterns in a Poem of Bashshār." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 16 (1985): p. 42, referring to Sperl's 1977 article, "Islamic Kingship and Arabic Panegyric Poetry in the Early 9th Century." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8: pp. 20-35

<sup>44</sup>Thus a division is made between the first section and the remaining two (e.g. *nasīb raḥīl - madīh*).



expression to what J. Stetkevych has termed the 'ternary archetype.'<sup>45</sup>

It seems that Sperl is trying to downplay the differences that exist between his vision of the *qasīda* and J. Stetkevych's. Counting the *qasīda*'s sections depends, at least in part, on the interpretive lens through which one reads. Structuralism, with its assumption of literature as an interplay between thesis and antithesis, requires a binary division in order to practice its craft. An anthropological model such as S. P. Stetkevych's, based on the logical progression of separation, liminality and reaggregation, needs a ternary division.

### **The Hebrew *Qasīda***

In terms of historical scope, the most inclusive study of the Hebrew *qasīda* is a short article by Scheindlin written for a conference on *qasīda* poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa.<sup>46</sup> Scheindlin gives an overview of the Hebrew *qasīda*, focusing on the Andalusian period and concluding with the derivative traditions of later authors outside of Andalusia such as El'azar ben Jacob in Iraq, Moses Dar'i and Joseph b. Tanhum Yerushalmi in Egypt, and Todros Abulafia in Christian Spain. Scheindlin notes that a true history of the genre remains to be written. In addition to the historical overview, Scheindlin's article offers translations and readings of two Hebrew *qasīdas*.

Despite the general paucity of scholarship on the Hebrew *qasīda*, a course of analysis similar to that on the Arabic *qasīda* is discernible, moving from a molecularist view to a conception of unity based in structuralist methodology. Traditionally, scholars have attached themselves to the molecularist model. David Yellin does not assume any connection between parts of the *qasīda* in his discussion of composite poems.<sup>47</sup> In fact, at

This would contradict the organizational arrangement suggested by Meisami.

<sup>45</sup> Stefan Sperl, "Qasida Form and Mystic Path in Thirteenth Century Egypt: A Poem by Ibn al-Fārid," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> Raymond Scheindlin, "The Hebrew Qasida in Spain," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 121-35.

<sup>47</sup> David Yellin, *Torat ha-shirah ha-sefardit* ((Third edition), Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), pp. 74-81.

one point, Yellin seems vexed by Ibn Gabirol's inability to "concentrate on a single theme to develop it" but rather the poet "begins with one theme and jumps to the next."<sup>48</sup>

Yellin's study is successful, however, in identifying numerous prosodic and thematic commonalities between Hebrew and Arabic *qaṣīdas*.

Israel Levin, writing as recently as 1994, sees the *qaṣīda* in rhetorical terms (after Ibn Qutayba), devoid of unifying elements,

... The purpose of the prelude, according to the authors of keen criticism, was in the service of the attention of the listeners, to focus their attention to create a bond between the poet and his audience.... It [the binary form of the *qaṣīda*] inclined toward pluralism, to the autonomous existence of its components. It is possible to say that every stanza in it [the poem] inclines toward "completeness," which stands on its own from a compositional standpoint, either in idea or image. More importantly, it is a quasi-sequence of autonomous "sections" each of which is largely capable of an independent existence, serving its own thematic or artistic purpose without being dependent on other "sections." There are many centers of the poem, like a chain of links each of which is a ring in and of itself. Or, to use a beloved image from the Middle Ages, like a necklace beautiful in its arrangement though each stone is beautiful and precious for its independent value.<sup>49</sup>

Schirmann's two-volume history of Hebrew literature in Muslim and Christian Spain<sup>50</sup> offers no specialized discussion of the *qaṣīda* although individual poems are discussed throughout. The only treatment of the integration of parts is found in a footnote<sup>51</sup> suggesting the total autonomy of poetic sections.

Dan Pagis studies the thematic organization of a great number of Moses Ibn Ezra's *qaṣīdas* with insightful attention paid to genre identification and poetic technique.<sup>52</sup> Pagis discusses certain structural elements as laid down in Ibn Ezra's work on poetics, generally limiting himself to the subjects Ibn Ezra discusses explicitly--beautiful opening (*ḥusn al-'ibtidā'*) and beautiful transition (*ḥusn al-takhalluṣ*).<sup>53</sup> The various sections of almost all

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 79; Yellin attributes this shortcoming to the poet's "stormy" personality rather than a condition of Jewish authors as a whole.

<sup>49</sup> Israel Levin, *Me'il tashbes* (Israel: Ha-Kibbuṣ ha-Meuhad, 1994), p. 17-18.

<sup>50</sup> Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shira ha-ivrit be-sefarad ha-muslemut*, edited, supplemented and annotated by Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995) and *Toldot ha-shira ha-ivrit be-sefarad ha-noṣrit u-be-darom ṣarfāt*, edited, supplemented and annotated by Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> vol I, p. 124, note 126; see also p. 348, note 14.

<sup>52</sup> Dan Pagis, *Shirat ha-ḥol ve-torat ha-shir le-Moshe Ibn 'Ezra u-benei doro* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik,

poems are considered independent and discreet,<sup>54</sup> although a certain mood or “unity of atmosphere” is said to pervade diverse sections of a limited number of poems.<sup>55</sup>

A number of authors have introduced structuralist methodologies in reading the Hebrew *qaṣīda* and have found elements that lend composite poems coherence and unity. Aaron Mirsky goes beyond Pagis and asserts that the medieval poets utilize a premeditated method of composition: the poet considers the characteristics of the *mamdūh*, to be mentioned explicitly in the second part of the poem, and infuses them into the first part, mediated through some other subject matter (woman, garden, etc.); thus, the “same spirit” that gives life to the first part is breathed into the second part as well.<sup>56</sup> In an article of 1979, David Segal analyzes composite war poems of Samuel ha-Nagid (consisting of diverse elements such as praise to God, personal boast and petition in addition to battle description) and finds cohesive elements based in semantic and motif repetition. Although Segal calls this cohesion “unity,” he is also explicit that this is not identical with

“organic unity”... *if* by such a term one means the shaping of all of a poem’s components by an underlying focus or dynamic, such that all progressions, all figures of speech, all words can be seen as being A) necessary outgrowths of such a conception or dynamic, and B) tightly determined by the other elements of the poem. Certainly no attempt has been made--nor could it succeed--to show that every phrase is indispensable to a poem’s message. On the other hand, it has been shown that there is operative a genuine and strong cohesion between segments within martial poems--a cohesion that has heretofore gone unnoticed.<sup>57</sup>

Significantly, Segal shows that elements of the introductory passage not only have an affinity for later aspects of the poem but sometimes prefigure them as well.

Ross Brann’s doctoral dissertation<sup>58</sup> studies elements of unity and integration

1970).

<sup>53</sup>i.e. sections 18 and 19 of chapter 8 of Moshe Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muhādara wa-l-mudhākara*, edited by A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 272 ff.

<sup>54</sup>see, for example, Pagis’ discussion, *Shirat ha-ḥol*... pp. 136ff.

<sup>55</sup>*Shirat ha-ḥol*... pp. 139-141 on integrative aspects of composition; p. 159. Pagis discusses the feeling of joy that characterizes various parts of *ha-reah mor* (Diwan p. 159, no. 160) and other wedding poems.

<sup>56</sup>A. Mirsky, “Ha-mivneh be-shirei ha-yedidut,” *Sinai* 81 (1977): pp. 105-14. The poems discussed are by Ibn Gabirol, Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra.

<sup>57</sup>“Observation on Three War Poems...” p. 190.

<sup>58</sup>“Structure and Meaning in the Secular Poetry of Moshe Ibn Ezra” (New York University, 1981). Also

based upon syntactic, conceptual and especially rhetorical structures in Moses Ibn Ezra's poetry. Unlike earlier studies, which rigidly assign poems to preconceived genres, Brann's study considers the limits of genre studies and explores "'when' and 'how' the convention is followed, abrogated, or altered, and to what effect"<sup>59</sup> Although Brann argues for an integrated interpretation of the composite poem, he does not insist on the indivisibility of its constituent elements or construe the compound structures as involving "organic unity."<sup>60</sup>

In 1987, i.e. in the midst of debates over unity in Arabic poetry, Ya'el Feldman published a monograph studying unifying elements in six poems by Moses Ibn Ezra.<sup>61</sup> Feldman is concerned with semantic levels of the poem (polysemy and homonymy, synonyms and antonyms), suggesting that the interplay of these devices is not merely ornamental but "constructs... the world of reality to which the poem refers." The method of analysis bears significant resemblances to Sperl's method, identifying contrasting pairs between sections of the poem (e.g. beloved and patron, physical qualities and moral qualities, etc.) and demonstrating how semantic and thematic repetition alert the reader to these contrasts. Feldman leaves the question of "organic unity" open to interpretation though she hypothesizes that "the medieval poets had perhaps sensed the need for organic cohesion which was verbalized by the Romantics only hundreds of years later."<sup>62</sup>

Most recently, a short article by Masha Itzhaki discusses various aspects of the *qasīda* and studies structural devices in one poem by Ibn Gabirol.<sup>63</sup> Itzhaki observes three types of Hebrew *qasīda* introductions: 1) *nasīb*, based on bedouin motifs; 2) "modern"

see Brann's article "The Functions of Rhetoric in the Medieval Hebrew Poem," in *Aharon Mirsky Jubilee Volume*, edited by Zvi Malachi (Lod: Habermann Institute, 1986), pp. 429-50.

<sup>59</sup>"Structure and Meaning..." p. 34.

<sup>60</sup>"Structure and Meaning..." p. 121-22.

<sup>61</sup> Ya'el Feldman, *Bein ha-qetavim le-qav ha-meshaveh - shirat yemei ha-beinavim: tavniyot semantiyot ba-shir ha-murkav* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 1987) : this work is an expansion of Feldman's M.A. thesis, "Le-ba'ayat ha-likud ha-shiri be-shirei shevah murkavim shel Ramba'" (Brookline, Ma: Hebrew College, 1976).

<sup>62</sup>*Bein ha-qetavim...*, p. 129.

descriptions of urban culture under the patronage of courts, following ‘Abbāsīd models; 3) personal, lyrical expositions, which are unique to Hebrew poetry. Itzhaki concludes that the *qaṣīda*’s introduction functions as an integral part of the poem, playing an “aesthetic role in the composition of the *qaṣīda* as a whole, either as an exposition of the main message of the poem or as an analogy which emphasizes it.”<sup>64</sup> The poem by Ibn Gabirol analyzed in the article is said to use “sophisticated and tantalizing devices of integration which are based mainly on ‘Unity of Atmosphere,’” using Pagis’ term.<sup>65</sup> In addition to semantic and motif repetition, noted already by earlier scholars, Itzhaki points to the “extension of the transition verse” and the “chiasmic parallelism of visual and vocal elements” between the two characters of the *qaṣīda* (the beloved and the patron) as unifying elements in the poem by Ibn Gabirol.<sup>66</sup>

In sum, only a limited number of Hebrew *qaṣīdas* have been studied by modern scholars. Most studies have been concerned with detailing classical Arabic elements of the poems or with the integrative elements of these composite works. Thus, many poems and scholarly approaches remain unexplored. The discussion below considers various aspects of the *qaṣīda*’s form and history. In the first section, prosodic and thematic elements are considered. The second section reviews the history of the *qaṣīda*’s development from the perspective of poetic unity focusing on structural elements such as semantic and thematic repetition. The third section expands upon the discussion of the *qaṣīda* as a form associated with nostalgic expression.

## **THE ART OF THE HEBREW *QAṢĪDA***

### **Defining the Hebrew *Qaṣīda* Corpus**

<sup>63</sup> “Poetic Integration in the Hebrew *Qaṣīda* in Medieval Spain.” *Hebrew Studies* 31 (1990): pp. 47-55.

<sup>64</sup> “Poetic Integration....” p. 49.

<sup>65</sup> because Itzhaki is speaking of shared semantic fields and other devices that are not recognized by Pagis, the use of Pagis’ term seems out of place.

<sup>66</sup> “Poetic Integration....” p. 54.

In scholarly discussions on literary form, it is often difficult to fix the borders of a form's definition such that the inclusion and exclusion of texts is a simple procedure met with a broad consensus. The term "*qaṣīda*" has been applied loosely with shifting usages in medieval and modern criticism. Van Gelder points out that the term is used variably in medieval Arabic criticism to mean any poem or a poem with a minimum length in addition to the more technical meaning of a multithematic poem.<sup>67</sup> In the case of Hebrew poetry, pre-modern scribal superscriptions identifying poems as *qaṣīdas* do not give the impression of a specific definition. In the *diwan* of Ibn Gabirol, "*qaṣīda*" is used to refer to poems that are multithematic<sup>68</sup> although it is used just as often to refer to poems that are not.<sup>69</sup> "*Qaṣīda*" is also used in the superscriptions of Moses Ibn Ezra's *diwan* to introduce multithematic<sup>70</sup> and other<sup>71</sup> poems. During later centuries in North Africa, "*qaṣīda*" takes on a definition diametrically opposed to the multithematic notion and is defined as a poem of a minimum number of lines (seven or ten) dedicated specifically to a *single* theme.<sup>72</sup> In modern scholarship, the term has been used most generally to mean "composite poem,"<sup>73</sup> but no more rigid definition has emerged. One might consider whether there should be other relevant criteria for considering a poem a *qaṣīda* or not. Is any poem consisting of two or more themes a *qaṣīda*? What exactly constitutes a change of theme? Does it matter what the themes are, how they are arranged or how they are integrated?

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<sup>67</sup>"Poetic Integration...." p. 23.

<sup>68</sup>e.g. Jarden p. 38 [20]; p. 72 [40]; p. 348 [194].

<sup>69</sup>e.g. Jarden, p. 9 [3]; p. 51 [26]; p. 117 [54].

<sup>70</sup>e.g. Brody, p. 156 [158]; p. 180 [181 and 9] (the superscription in this reference refers to both poems); p. 192 [193] (actually a response to a *qaṣīda* of Abu al-Ḥasn Ibn El'azar; the scribe is probably inferring that Ibn Ezra's poem is also a *qaṣīda*. Note also that the term appears occasionally in the *diwan* of Samuel ha-Nagid. In one case, it is written *qaṣīd*, without the final *ta marbūta* (ed. Jarden, p. 219 [74]). In the *Diwan* of Judah Halevi, the term is occasionally used, as in the superscription to Brody, II, pp. 222 [12], see p. 167 of commentary for superscription.

<sup>71</sup>e.g. p. 237 [234]; p. 226 [223]; see also Brann, "Form and Structure..." p. 121.

<sup>72</sup>see Efrayim Hazan, *Ha-shirah ha-ivrit bi-sefon afriqah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), p. 128; in some cases, "*qaṣīda*" even signifies a strophic form!

<sup>73</sup>e.g. Ya'el Feldman translates the term "*ha-shir ha-murkav*" as "*qaṣīda*" in the English title of her book.

Modern scholars of the Arabic *qaṣīda* have defined the *qaṣīda* broadly, giving little weight to early descriptions such as that of Ibn Qutayba. For example, Stefan Sperl writes,

What are, from a broad perspective, the characteristics of a classical Arabic *qaṣīda*? The standard thematic sequence inherited from pre-Islamic times with its movement from *naṣīb* and *raḥīl* to *madīḥ* cannot be the determining factor because there are numerous poems which dispense with any form of conventional introduction and yet are still reckoned to be *qaṣīdas*; also a *qaṣīda* is not necessarily a panegyric... The main criterion would seem to be... that the thematic development of the poem gives expression to a transformation of consciousness on the part of the poet which the listener is invited to share and identify with.<sup>74</sup>

The present study also defines the *qaṣīda* broadly, including any multithematic poem that joins together disparate themes using a transitional device while adhering to the prosodic requirements of quantitative meter and monorhyme. The question then becomes, “what exactly is the threshold for measuring the ‘disparateness’ of themes?” Why should a description of the night leading to praise of the *mamdūḥ* be considered a *qaṣīda* with disparate themes while a description of a garden leading to a description of wine should not? The answer is that certain themes belong to broader subject sets and the poet need not create synthetic transitions in order to join them in the same poem. For example, a description of wine, the wine pourer, the garden and the night sky may all appear in succession without breaking the general flow of the poem. The same is true about complaint against wandering, complaint against Time and complaint against contemporaries; the themes hang together naturally due to the logical and traditional association of their subject matters. Other themes are not logically associated, even though they often appear in succession in *qaṣīdas*, and must be joined through some transitional device.

Most Hebrew *qaṣīdas* are panegyrics, either dedicated to a proper patron or to a friend of a similar social standing. Hebrew *qaṣīdas* occasionally conclude with invective rather than praise, while others still omit mention of a patron or foe altogether, such as a

*qaṣīda* that opens with a garden description and concludes with a litany of complaint. Several types of poems may be viewed as variations on the theme of panegyric. Wedding poems, which become prevalent in the generation of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi, may be considered panegyrics wherein the groom, the couple, or their families, play the role of *mamdūh*. Some of the war poems of Samuel ha-Nagid are structured according to traditional *qaṣīda* conventions wherein God serves as the *mamdūh*. Some even open with traditional *nasīb* motifs, go on to describe the battle and then close with praise of God.<sup>75</sup> Such poems adhere to a ternary structure wherein the battle description takes the place of the traditional *rahīl*; this substitution is logical in that the battle and the desert journey both represent perilous undertakings. Although the warrior does not necessarily undertake his battle to reach God in the way that the desert traveler sets out in search of his patron, each is sustained, in a sense, by his *mamdūh*, be it God or the patron. However, the majority of war poems begin with praise of God, turn to battle description and then resume praise of God.<sup>76</sup> Since *qaṣīdas* generally do not open with praise and then turn to another theme, should such poems be excluded from the *qaṣīda* canon? For the purposes of creating a literary history of the *qaṣīda* form, such poems are also included in the corpus, especially insofar as they have already been discussed as *qaṣīdas* in scholarship.

### **Is Hebrew *Qaṣīda* Structure Binary or Ternary?**

Scholarship on the Hebrew *qaṣīda* has almost always conceived of the *qaṣīda* as a binary composition, consisting of the panegyric or invective section (sometimes called the “nucleus” of the poem) and the introductory material leading up to that section. Binary structure is assumed by Schirmann<sup>77</sup> and Pagis.<sup>78</sup> In discussing Ibn Qutayba, Itzhaki only

<sup>74</sup>“Qasida Form and Mystic Path...” p. 66.

<sup>75</sup>e.g. Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 103-108 [31].

<sup>76</sup> see David Segal, “Observations on Three War Poems...”.



quotes his famous passage selectively, glossing over the suggested ternary structure. Scheindlin critiques Itzhaki for forcing the war poems of Samuel ha-Nagid into the bipartite model of the “classical Arabic *qaṣīda*” as they generally consist of three parts, beginning and ending with praise and including battle description in the middle.<sup>79</sup> Scheindlin sees the poems by Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi analyzed in his article as consisting of two parts linked by a *takhalluṣ*. The only exceptions to the binary structure seem to be some war poems of Samuel ha-Nagid, either the variety that begin and end with praise inserting battle description in the middle, or that which opens with *nasīb* motifs and then shifts to battle description and finally the praise of God.<sup>80</sup> The dominance of binary form would be viewed most logically by recognizing the Hebrew *qaṣīda*’s immediate progenitor as the courtly *qaṣīda* of the ‘Abbāsīd and Andalusian eras (despite the inclusion of pre-Islamic themes) rather than the pre-Islamic and early Islamic odes. Still, reading *qaṣīdas* is an art, not an exercise in taxonomy, and each *qaṣīda* must be approached on its own terms.

### **The Hebrew *Qaṣīda* and *Rahīl* Motifs**

As mentioned in chapter four, Hebrew poetry utilizes a variety of desert motifs drawn from the Arabic *qaṣīdas* of the pre-Islamic period; among these is the famed motif of a desert journey by camel.<sup>81</sup> However, in no Hebrew *qaṣīda* does a character mount a camel or any other animal and embark on a journey toward the *mamdūh*; if Ibn Qutayba’s description of thematic development were adopted as a rigid definition, the vast majority of Arabic and Hebrew poems that have been designated *qaṣīdas* would have to be

<sup>77</sup>Toldot ha-shirah ha-ivrit...muslemit, p. 348 note 14.

<sup>78</sup>Shirat ha-hol..... p. 131.

<sup>79</sup>“The Hebrew Qasida....” p. 122 note 2, critiquing Itzhaki, “Poetic Integration....” p. 49. Scheindlin also notes that this structure resembles that of the war poems by al-Mutanabbī.

<sup>80</sup>of course, if one were counting sections in the organizational method of Meisami, these too might be considered binary.

<sup>81</sup>see also Neḥemia Allony, “ha-Ṣevi ve-ha-gamal be-shirat sefarad .” *Oṣar yehudei sefarad* 4, no. (

stripped of their classification. An approximate example of the Qutayban form is found in a *qasīda* of Samuel ha-Nagid,<sup>82</sup>

1. Must I journey and encamp every day like a vulture, dwelling in darkness by night.
2. When every morning wandering mocks my household and my eyes weep from wandering at evening?
3. Time hurls me from one place to another like a spear, dart and lance!
4. One day I am a friend to the fawn, but the next, I neighbor the kite.
5. I do not stay two days in a house, or rest two nights in a structure.
6. As if my legs were obligated to wander through every city and village!
7. I am the man who rushed through wastelands with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.
8. But in my city I had two companions, Yehoshu'a and Yahya ben Ahiyya...

The poet describes his wandering in the perilous desert, tossed about by Time, boasting of his generosity despite formidable dangers, and then turns to praise the *mamdūh*, in this case two friends. Still, there is no mention of a riding animal and the transition is not made through a journey toward the friends but through a memory of them in the former city. There are examples in which the poet journeys in search of the *mamdūh* such as Ibn Khalfūn's *asovev 'ir*, "I roam the town and wander the streets; I search and seek in the lands. Then, perhaps I will find my friends who, like honey, are sweet to the mouths of all."<sup>83</sup> However, this quotation marks the opening of the poem and does not involve a camel or the desert. In other poems, the desert environment is suggested in the journey of the poet or another character. In Judah Halevi's *dema' asher hayah ke-tal hermon*, the desert setting is an expression of the poet's sense of longing, "[I have] no friend, but in his stead wandering,<sup>84</sup> which turns the songs of my mouth into a lament of Hadardimon.<sup>85</sup> My heart is in so many pieces that I can disperse it like cumin powder. I weep in the deserts and anger the clouds...How long shall I drink the bitterness of wandering?"<sup>86</sup> In Ibn Hasdai's *ha-li-sebi hen*, the beloved boldly sets out across the desert though without a

1961): pp. 16-42.

<sup>82</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 155-6 [48].

<sup>83</sup>Diwan, ed. Mirsky, [37].

<sup>84</sup>Or, as Brody suggests, "No lover is without wandering, and this turns..."

<sup>85</sup>based on Zechariah 12:11.

<sup>86</sup>ed. Brody, II, p. 278 [55], lines 5-9, 19.

camel, and not explicitly in search of the *mamdūh*. “Has the gazelle the grace, boldness and might to wrap himself in a veil of darkness like a garment? To pasture the stars of twilight and wander in the desert wilderness, a dwelling of dread and fear?”<sup>87</sup> Also, Ibn Gabirol sets departing loved ones figuratively upon camel back, “When I saw them upon their camels, my heart turned, my strength stumbled and my succor was spent. How can I live after they have gone?...”<sup>88</sup> Despite the incorporation of such motifs, the Hebrew corpus is lacking a textbook example of a *rahīl* in the Ibn Qutayban sense. In this respect, the Hebrew *qasīda* most closely resembles the ‘Abbāsīd *qasīda* in which the *rahīl* is either omitted or only vaguely expressed.

### Thematic Development

Hebrew *qasīdas* import thematic material from various stages of the *qasīda*’s Arabic incarnations. There are many Hebrew poems that include standard *nasīb* motifs--the night phantom (*taif al-lail*), weeping over the ruins (*al-bukā’ alā al-atlāl*), the departure of women, pasturing stars, wandering deserts, etc.--known from pre-Islamic and subsequent periods of Arabic poetry. Just as often, Hebrew examples focus on “courtly” themes known from ‘Umayyad and ‘Abbasid poetry including garden description, wine poetry and love poetry.<sup>89</sup> Also common are introductory complaints about Time, wandering, old age, and the boorish practices of contemporaries. In other examples, Hebrew *qasīdas* explore atypical subjects as in Abraham Ibn Ezra’s *ḥadashim ma’asei ‘el*,<sup>90</sup> which opens with a debate (*munāzara*) between the limbs of the body and then turns to panegyric.

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<sup>87</sup>ed. Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 172 [54]. Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 202 [201], line 24 also refers to friends traveling through the desert “without legs” in a night vision to reach the poet’s dream.

<sup>88</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 45 [23], lines 11-12

<sup>89</sup>wine poetry, of course, is also found in pre-Islamic *qasīdas*, generally as part of the concluding *fakhr* (boast) section. The *nasīb* of pre-Islamic poetry also contains erotic elements, though this is not identical with the *ghazal* poems incorporated into *qasīdas* beginning in the ‘Umayyad period.

<sup>90</sup>Diwan, ed. Cahane I, pp. 60-63= Israel Levin, *Yalqut Avraham Ibn ‘Ezra* (Haifa, 1985), p. 116-18

Hebrew *qaṣīdas* exhibit a wide variety of thematic organizations. Some of these patterns are outlined below, based on a study of approximately ninety poems,<sup>91</sup> selected because of their clear binary form; while extensive, the study is not exhaustive. If one were to diagram the thematic development of a *qaṣīda* on a micro-level, most themes would break down into further sub-themes. Thus, Dan Pagis identifies a progression of no fewer than thirteen themes in mapping out a *qaṣīda* by Moses Ibn Ezra:<sup>92</sup>

- 1) impersonal statements concerning the treachery of days of youth,
- 2) personal boast on the poet's satisfaction with elder status, which gives him wisdom,
- 3) Time as a treacherous harlot,
- 4) personal complaint over the poet's fate with further subdivisions specifying
  - a) the world's deception, b) the death of friends, c) the poet's wandering in a foreign land, d) the departure of friend's tents, e) poet's satisfaction with wisdom, f) the poet's ambivalence toward pleasures and preference for the teachings of wise men of former epochs or g) a letter from the *mamdūh* (transitional verse),
- 5) panegyric,
- 6) dedication of poem.

If the thematic development of every Hebrew *qaṣīda* were diagrammed with such detail, an unwieldy cacophony of data would emerge. For this reason, I have reduced poems to the bare essentials of development. Some of the designations are somewhat subjective and reasonable minds might disagree over their classification; in some cases, I allow one theme to dominate when more than one theme is present (e.g. a *qaṣīda* opening with a garden description including a reference to an erotic wine pourer might be designated as "garden

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<sup>91</sup>all examples are drawn from Andalusian authors (here including Abraham Ibn Ezra and Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra, who can also be characterized as "post-Andalusian;" further, see introduction to the dissertation).

description” rather than “love poem” or “wine poem;” similarly, a poem of wandering including a complaint against Time might be designated “complaint against wandering” rather than “complaint against Time”). For cases in which two themes each carry sufficient weight that they cannot be reduced, they are both included in the designation. The poem described above by Pagis would be reduced to “complaint against Time/complaint against wandering/*madīh*.” Conclusions including dedications of poems or benedictions are not counted as discreet themes even though such rhetorical structures are significant.<sup>93</sup> The subheadings below--complaint (against Time, wandering, contemporaries), love poetry, nature poetry, etc.--refer to the topic in the introductory section of the poem and not to the so-called “nucleus” of the poem (praise, boast, invective), which is generally considered the poem’s true subject matter.

**COMPLAINT:** complaint vs. wandering<sup>94</sup>/*madīh*<sup>95</sup>; complaint vs. wandering/wine description *madīh*;<sup>96</sup> night description/complaint vs. wandering/*madīh*<sup>97</sup>; complaint vs. Time/*madīh*<sup>98</sup>; complaint vs. old age/*madīh*<sup>99</sup>; complaint vs. contemporaries/*madīh*<sup>100</sup>; complaint vs. Time/wandering/*madīh*<sup>101</sup>; complaint vs. love lost/*madīh*<sup>102</sup>;

<sup>92</sup>the poem is ed. Brody, p. 38 [40]; Pagis, op. cit., pp. 161ff.

<sup>93</sup> The structures of poetic introductions and conclusions are discussed by Brann, “Structure and Meaning ...” and Pagis, *Shirat ha-hol*....

<sup>94</sup>wandering may include the poet’s own wandering, the wandering of his loved ones or both.

<sup>95</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, 155-56 [48]. Solomon Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. pp. 45-47 [23]; 79-81 [43]; 164-66 [86]. Isaac Ibn Khalfūn, ed. Mirsky p. 110 [37]. Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, I, pp. 123-27 [87]; 137-141 [94]; I, pp. 151-54 [100]; I, pp. 95-97 [68]; I, pp. 154-57 [101]; II, pp. 278-80 [55]. Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody pp. 9 [7]; p. 18 [13]; p. 42 [42]; 49 [52]; 62 [64]; 64 [66]; 90 [91]; 109 [109]; 113 [112]; 195 [195].

<sup>96</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 123 [120]; 199 [199].

<sup>97</sup>Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, II, pp. 280-83 [56].

<sup>98</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 158-60 [50]; Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 31-36 [18]; pp. 31-36 [18]; pp. 137-39 [66]; Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, II, pp. 243-47 [24] (a variation on the theme: Time is indifferent, but the wise person will understand its ways); Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 22 [17]; p. 79 [78]; p. 81 [79]; p. 180 [181]; p. 175 [176] (with praise of poetry and concluding words of friendship added).

<sup>99</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 164-169 [51].

<sup>100</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 99-100, [48]; pp. 121-23 [55]; Judah Halevi, ed. Brody I, pp. 69-70 [52]; I, pp. 129-131 [89]; Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 20 [15].

wine/complaint vs. contemporaries *madīh*<sup>103</sup>.

**LOVE POETRY:** love *madīh*<sup>104</sup>; love/boast (*fakhr*)<sup>105</sup>; erotic vision of night phantom (*taif al-lail*)/*madīh*<sup>106</sup>; love/wine/poetry boast<sup>107</sup>.

**NATURE POETRY:** garden description/*madīh*<sup>108</sup>; garden description/invective (*hijā'*)<sup>109</sup>; description of land (i.e. not specifically the garden)/*madīh*<sup>110</sup>; night description/*madīh*<sup>111</sup>; night description/wandering/*madīh*<sup>112</sup>.

**WINE POETRY:** wine feast boast (*fakhr*)<sup>113</sup>; wine/*madīh*<sup>114</sup>; love/wine/poetry boast<sup>115</sup>; wine/complaint vs. contemporaries/*madīh*<sup>116</sup>.

**EXHORTATION:** ethical exhortation/*madīh*<sup>117</sup>; admonition vs. world's deceptive beauty/*madīh*<sup>118</sup>; praise of God/*madīh*<sup>119</sup>; praise of wisdom/*madīh*<sup>120</sup>; praise of God/Israel's exile/*madīh*/poetry boast<sup>121</sup>; old age/*madīh*<sup>122</sup>.

<sup>101</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 38 [40].

<sup>102</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 95-99 [47], concludes with praise of poetry.

<sup>103</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 29 [24].

<sup>104</sup>Isaac Ibn Khalfūn, ed. Mirsky, pp. 92-93 [20]; Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden p. 15-17 [4]; p. 27-29 [13]; pp. 101-02 [49] (really fear of love/praise); Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, I, pp. 14-15 [13]; I, pp. 99-102 [70] (more accurately, description of female singers instead of love, though they do play an erotic function); I, pp. 27-28 [20]; Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra, ed. Schmeltzer, p. 9 [2].

<sup>105</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 221-22 [75].

<sup>106</sup>Joseph Ibn Hasdai, ed. Schirrmann HHSP, p. 172-175 [54]; Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, I, p. 19 [15].

<sup>107</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 348-52 [190].

<sup>108</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, p. 68-72 [39]; Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, pp. 82-85 [60]; Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, II, pp. 258-260 [33] (actually opens with two lines addressing the poem to the addressee: the garden description begins in line 3); I, pp. 112-15 [78]; I, pp. 58-59 [43]; Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 170 [172].

<sup>109</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 255-57 [119].

<sup>110</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 158-9 [160] (this example is a wedding poem - the bride and groom are praised).

<sup>111</sup>e.g. Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, pp. 151-2 [45]; Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 36-38 [19]; pp. 76-77 [42].

<sup>112</sup>Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, II, pp. 280-83 [56].

<sup>113</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 280-83 [131].

<sup>114</sup>Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, I, pp. 21-22 [16].

<sup>115</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 348-52 [190].

<sup>116</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 29 [24].

<sup>117</sup>Dunash ben Labrāṭ, ed. Schirrmann, HHSP, p. 35-40 [5].

<sup>118</sup>Judah Halevi, II, pp. 222-26 [12].

<sup>119</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, p. 213-14 [70].

<sup>120</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 38-43 [20].

<sup>121</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 85-95 [46].

**ATYPICAL THEME OR ORGANIZATION:** poetry boast/*madīh*<sup>123</sup>; praise of God/battle description/praise of God<sup>124</sup>; night description/battle description/praise of God<sup>125</sup>; appreciation for a letter/complaint vs. wandering<sup>126</sup>; *madīh*/flower description/*madīh*<sup>127</sup>; wine party/complaint vs. contemporaries<sup>128</sup>; garden description/complaint vs. people of age<sup>129</sup>; debate poem/*madīh*<sup>130</sup>; *madīh*/complaint vs. illness/complaint vs. Time.<sup>131</sup>

Overall, Hebrew *qasīdas* treat most conventional introductions inherited from Arabic literature and conclude with the traditional themes of panegyric, boasting, or invective, although some exceptions are apparent. Virtually any theme may be preceded by any other theme. The question then becomes whether specific progressions (e.g. garden/*madīh* or garden/complaint, etc.) are arbitrary or whether they are arranged with some logical, perhaps psychological, association. In the view of most scholars, the auxiliary theme appended to the “nucleus of the poem” is considered a randomly selected choice among conventional themes, included for adornment and the exhibition of the poet’s prowess. However, it might be that the selection of auxiliary themes is not as casual as assumed and that there is meaning implicit in the thematic development

### **The Transitional Verse**<sup>132</sup>

<sup>122</sup>Judah Halevi, ed. Brody I, p. 77 [58].

<sup>123</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 107-16 [53].

<sup>124</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden pp. 4-14 [2]; 16-26 [4]; pp. 31-34 [7]. This is the most common organization of the Nagid’s martial poems. For a complete listing and a more detailed delineation, see David Segal, “Observations on Three War Poems...” pp. 169-70, notes 25-32. In addition, many martial poems also include *fakhr*, either in the form of a poetry boast or a boast over the poet’s accomplishments, as well as other elements.

<sup>125</sup>Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. Jarden, pp. 103-08 [31].

<sup>126</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 192 [193].

<sup>127</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, pp. 72-76 [40].

<sup>128</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody p. 72 [72].

<sup>129</sup>Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 156 [158].

<sup>130</sup>Jarden, p. 100 [30].

<sup>131</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden p. 25 [12].

<sup>132</sup>There is a limited discussion of this subject in David Yellin, *Torat ha-shira ha-sefardit...* pp. 74ff.

Perhaps the most complex moment of the *qasīda* with respect to the poet's skill is the transition between sections of the poem, particularly that which leads into the *mudūh*. It is not unlike the moment of a concerto when the listener waits for the soloist to conclude the flourish of the cadenza and reintegrate with the orchestra; it is known that the transition will occur, but it is unclear exactly how. Medieval Arabic critics give considerable attention to the way in which the transitional verse, or *takhalluṣ*, is constructed. They witness the existence of an "abrupt" or "cut-off" transition--either accomplished by simply changing themes or with a synthetic marker such as *dar dhā*, "desist from this"--but generally prefer transitions that logically connect the motifs of consecutive sections. Al-Āmidī, one among many critics to treat the topic, offers the following verses by al-Buḥturī as an example of an abrupt transition.

Your avoiding me was not an evil I heeded: to be with you was not a favor that I longed for.  
The sons of Thawāba are moons: when they rise the night's darkness soon vanishes.<sup>133</sup>

Al-Āmidī goes on to describe the integrated *takhalluṣ*, categorizing some basic organizational strategies used by poets to link sections of the poem. 1) Poems including a *raḥīl* might describe the camels on their way to the *mamduḥ*. 2) In a *nasīb* in which a woman is addressed, the farewell departure scene introduces the *mamduḥ*. 3) The poet and his companions might take an oath proclaiming the virtues of the *mamduḥ*. 4) A nature section might conclude by comparing rain showers or the garden with the *mamduḥ*.<sup>134</sup>

A discussion of the *takhalluṣ* in Hebrew poetry is included in Moses Ibn Ezra's book on Hebrew poetics. The subjects of "beautiful opening" and "beautiful transition" are treated in two chapters that are combined into a single discussion.<sup>135</sup> Unlike most critics, Ibn Ezra actually prescribes composing poems that begin directly with the

<sup>133</sup>quoted in van Gelder, *Beyond the Line...*, p. 72.

<sup>134</sup>see van Gelder, *Beyond the Line...*, p. 73.

<sup>135</sup>Moshe Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥādara wa-l-mudhākara*, edited by A. S. Halkin (Jerusalem, 1975), pp.



panegyric rather than introducing the poem with an amatory prelude (*tashbīb*) or other “extraneous” themes. Avoiding the prelude, in his theoretical opinion, allows the poet to arrive at his subject, praise of the patron, before “the charm of the poetry has disappeared.” In practice, as Pagis notes, Ibn Ezra only begins twenty-two panegyrics directly with *madīh* in comparison with approximately fifty that begin with some other theme (usually wine or complaint).<sup>136</sup> Also, in the chapter treating *madīh* in Ibn Ezra’s book of short homonymic poems, many of the examples exhibit a transition from another theme to *madīh*.<sup>137</sup>

Following his initial prescriptions and proscriptions, Ibn Ezra attacks the composition of erotic poetry (a subject that, he admits, occupied him in his youth but is now repugnant to him) and then discusses transitions from one theme to another. He generally downplays the importance of the *takhalluṣ* since it is only a remedy to a poem that is theoretically ill-conceived since it should have begun with praise in the first place. Still, his discussion is as follows.

As for the second subject, the transition (*takhalluṣ*) from one thing to another, the latter generations of Arab poets considered it beautiful and shining to behold;<sup>138</sup> they became so enamored with it that it became so common that we need not even cite an example,<sup>139</sup> though this [the inclusion of transitional verses] occurred little among the Jewish poets. An example of an outstanding *takhalluṣ* following a lengthy erotic prelude is the speech of the Nagid, may God be satisfied with him.

[Ask the Pleiades who knows his path, ask Libra for it is his companion,  
Ask the crescent, the half moon, and it will tell you his strength, ask the sun as  
it sets.]  
Ask Wisdom, but if it is beyond you, ask Rabbi Joseph whose sister is  
Wisdom...<sup>140</sup>

Ibn Gabirol, may God have mercy on him, executed this well (*ahsana*) when he wrote,  
Knowledge is the first among the paths of God, from the might of the Lord God

272-80. See also van Gelder’s discussion, *Beyond the Line*..., pp. 140-41.

<sup>136</sup>Pagis, *Shirat ha-ḥol*..., p. 157.

<sup>137</sup>Pagis, *Shirat ha-ḥol*..., p. 162.

<sup>138</sup>the Arabic is problematic here: the alternative reading cited by Halkin is somewhat helpful, in that it gives *fahuwwa* rather than the enigmatic *ḥr*, although it does not solve all of the problems. Perhaps it would be helpful to change *yanzur* to *al-naṣr*, to create a parallel with the phrase *ṣaqīl al-rai’*. The general sense seems clear though.

<sup>139</sup>my translation is rather fluid here: literally, “it became too many for presenting an example”

<sup>140</sup>Jarden, p. 159 [50], lines 15-17 (Ibn Ezra only quotes line 17; I include 15 and 16 in brackets to clarify

stored it up.  
And set it as a king over everything and wrote Yekutiel's name upon his  
standard.<sup>141</sup>

He also said, saturating the stanza in order to fulfill the [requirements of] the meter.  
I rage against the daughters of days and laugh when they shout. "What is it that  
subdues us?  
Do you push us though you are powerless or is it the hand of Yekutiel upon our  
necks?"<sup>142</sup>

... He also made a lovely transition from a description of a dark night and a cold  
cloud<sup>143</sup> to the censure of the poem.

Its coolness<sup>144</sup> is like the snow of Senir or like the poetry of Samuel ha-  
Qahati!<sup>145</sup>

First, it should be kept in mind that the use of transitional verses is far more prevalent than Ibn Ezra lets on and is extremely common in Ibn Ezra's own poetry. The examples given have a structural commonality, tacitly prescribing a requirement of a well-crafted transition. In each, the transition is accomplished within a single line, i.e. the first hemistich deals with the theme of the previous verses and the *mamdūh* is introduced in the second hemistich through some association. This type of transition is also the one favored by contemporary Arab critics who designate transition within the line "*huṣn al-takhalluṣ*" (beautiful transition).

Beyond this structural commonality, the examples utilize different rhetorical strategies.<sup>146</sup> In the first example, Joseph is ranked among and compared with Wisdom and the heavenly bodies by urging the reader to petition them all. This rhetorical structure might be expressed simply as "ask a, b, c or d" where the magnitudes of the four items are made equivalent by their association (hence a=b=c=d). In the second example, the poet zooms in from knowledge (a), to the three part metaphor of knowledge as a king (x) with

the context).

<sup>141</sup>Jarden, 38-43 [30], lines 18-9.

<sup>142</sup>Jarden, p. 36-38 [19], lines 9-10.

<sup>143</sup>reading *saḥāba* instead of *subāha*.

<sup>144</sup>Jarden has *meimeiha* (waters) instead of *sinnatah*.

<sup>145</sup>Jarden, p. 354 [195], line 11. It should also be noted that this is the final verse of the poem. A similar structure is observed in Ibn Gabirol's lament over his patron Yekutiel in *re'eh shemesh le-'et 'erev 'adumah*, Jarden, p. 301 [158].

<sup>146</sup>In the discussion that follows, a few symbols are used to describe relationships between items: = is equivalent to; ≠ is opposite; ~ is like; < is less than, inferior to; > is greater than, superior to.

a standard (y) upon which is written Yekutiel's name (z). Looking through the lens the other way, Yekutiel is made the epitome of knowledge by nesting items within each other (knowledge is the king above the paths of God, the standard is raised above the king, the name of the *mamdūh* is written upon the standard); hence  $a = (((z)y)x)$ . In the third example, Yekutiel (a) is made equivalent to the daughters of Time (b) by equating their power. In the final example, the transition to invective is accomplished through a simile, equating the coldness of Samuel ha-Qahati's poetry with the coldness of snow by comparing the coldness of the cloud (a) to the coldness of snow (x) or the poetry (y); hence "a ~ x or y".

Unfortunately, Ibn Ezra does not offer examples of what he considers a poorly crafted transition. He probably excludes examples from his own poetry because he proscribes composing poems that begin with one subject and then shift to another. Below is a broader discussion of transitional verses that aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. The examples are first listed according to the structural criterion of transition being completed over two lines or within one line. Within these categories, some of the rhetorical strategies used for creating the transition are discussed. All of the major Hebrew poets use both structural models and similar rhetorical strategies are apparent in each model.

## TRANSITION OVER THE LINE

Although transitions not completed within the confines of a single line are considered inferior in medieval criticism, they are quite prevalent in Hebrew verse. In one of the war poems by Samuel ha-Nagid, a transition is made from a *nasīb*, including a description of the night sky, to the description of a battle,

13. Tirelessly the zodiac runs to and fro while earth is suspended in the midst of the zodiac without a rope, yet does not sink low.

14. All these [heavenly bodies] are rightly ordered for those who turn from wrong and understand it [the zodiac], while the congregation of fools are good-heartedly at rest.

15. My son, walk the good path, for there is no good except upon the good and upright path.  
 16. And hear a wonder that God performed on a day when hateful foes spewed vain talk and incitement.<sup>147</sup>

The transition is first built up to by the shift in voice from the third person night description to the poet addressing his son (line 15). In his exhortation, the poet tells the son to hear the wonder of the battle's events. The technique of turning to address the son (and thus the listener) in order to introduce the battle is common in the author's war poems. The following is a more sophisticated transition from a war poem of the Nagid in which the transitional verse bridges the motifs of praising God and the description of the battle.

16. God has acted beneficently for me like one who loves me, whereas it [my heart] has acted like one who acts with enmity.  
 17. But I trust in Him who voluntarily offers goodness to pardon that which it [my heart] has committed sinfully and intentionally.  
 18. Joseph, take up your pen and set down straightly the writing on a smooth scroll.  
 19. Broadly compose each and every letter even as my God let me stride broadly in war.  
 20. Inscribe in it all that your God did for my soul and send it to Metiva...<sup>148</sup>

In line 18, the poet shifts from praise of God to Joseph's writing, only to shift again quickly to the theme of the battle, which will occupy the remainder of the poem. Line 19 forms the nucleus of the transition, bridging the writing with the battle by repeating the root *rhb* in both hemistichs. Each hemistich contains a subject (Joseph, God) who performs an action involving this root: the poet orders his son to write broadly (*harḥev*) and God broadens (*hirḥiv*) the poet's steps. The association is not dependent upon a specific hierarchy but is based on parallel syntax and word-play.

Another example by the Nagid, now suggesting a particular hierarchy of objects in the poem, is the following panegyric excerpt,

13. They [the inhabitants of the earth] all flee from the terror of death<sup>149</sup> like a dove chased by a falcon.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>147</sup>Jarden, p. 100 [30].

<sup>148</sup>Jarden, p. 68 [22].

<sup>149</sup>*hatat mavet*, probably a translation of the Arabic *saqr al-mawt*, common in the Qur'ān.

<sup>150</sup>*nes*, a bird of prey.

14. Inevitably, they will seem like a plate whose shards have broken to pieces.
15. As if the edge of the earth in the dusk of evening were a black woman, a black veil covering her.
16. And the sight of Rabbi David in his place were like the sun that illumines its ends.<sup>151</sup>

The *mamdūh*'s brightness (a) is like the sun (x) that contrasts with the darkness (y) (hence,  $a \sim x \neq y$ ). The standard hierarchical relationship of the patron being like or superior to the heavenly bodies in the hyperbole of panegyrics is sometimes inverted in invective poetry, as in the following example by Ibn Gabirol,

7. The turtle-dove, swift and crane arose to boast over the doves of the rills.
8. When they readied themselves to leap it seemed as though their feet were in shackles.
9. When the glory of the sun revealed itself upon them, necklaces covered their necks.
10. Speak up, you! Can you cover the light? Can you bring low the heavens?<sup>152</sup>

The sun (a) is greater than the birds (b) but the anti-*mamdūh* (c) is *not* greater than the sun; hence  $a > b$ ,  $a > c$ .

In Ibn Hasdai's well-known panegyric to Samuel ha-Nagid, the transition also crosses over the line, integrating the poet's erotic night-vision with the panegyric,

10. I took delight in my vision until I awoke but behold, there was naught!
11. Except for a scent that revives souls and flowing myrrh that restores the spirit.
12. Like the name of the unique Nagid Rabbi Samuel whom God called inside his Temple!<sup>153</sup>

This transition involves enjambment between lines 11 and 12. The poet awakes from his dream and finds only a scent (a) that is like the name of the *mamdūh* (b) (hence  $a \sim b$ ) allowing praise of the *mamdūh* to occupy the remainder of the poem. In the Nagid's response to this poem, the transition also involves enjambment over the line,

25. The advantage of eyes seeing while awake over those that are asleep
26. Is like the advantage of my friend, Rabbi Joseph, over everyone of my generation and my people in wisdom.

The poet creates two analogous comparisons; the seeing (a) have advantage over the blind (b) as the *mamdūh* (x) has advantage over everyone else (y). Thus,  $a > b$  ;  $x > y$ .

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<sup>151</sup>Jarden, p. 151-2 [45].

<sup>152</sup>Ibn Gabirol, ed. Jarden, p. 256 [119].

<sup>153</sup>Schirmann, HHSP, p. 173 [54].

The transitional type al-Āmidī would call “turning to the *mamdūh* following an address to a beautiful woman” is utilized in a panegyric of Ibn Gabirol<sup>154</sup> to Samuel ha-Nagid,

8. Where are you [the beautiful woman] heading, where? Day has nearly passed and see, the earth
9. Would be like darkness were it not for your light.
10. Her lips moved to answer me, as if she were pouring and oozing honey with them.
11. “To see Samuel the Seer<sup>155</sup> I travel, to attend and encompass his house.”
12. I answered her, “Don’t go, don’t! By your life you will never see him!”
13. Go to Samuel who has arisen in our land like the rising of Samuel at Ramah and Mispah!”

This transition makes use of a technique unique to Hebrew poetry by exploiting a reference to the *mamdūh*’s biblical namesake. The poet, or a character within the poem, yearns for a biblical character (A) and is then advised not to seek this character in vain, for he is deceased, but to seek his namesake (A’) of the current era, the *mamdūh* (hence, not A but A’). A similar example of this technique is the following by Judah Halevi, which immediately follows a night vision that the poet needs interpreted,

9. Whom do I have to interpret this dream of my beloved? Who will draw him to me with a thread of fraternity?
10. Whom else do I have but Rachel’s son?<sup>156</sup> He is no more! From whom shall I hear the interpretation of friendship?
11. I would ransom every pleasure for a good messenger who has come to give a pronouncement
12. Saying, “Behold, Joseph has been appointed in Joseph’s place to be gazelle of the West!”
13. He is the dream and its interpretation, he is the eye’s delight and desire...<sup>157</sup>

Halevi also uses transition over the line in the following panegyric to a noble in Egypt,

9. The maidens<sup>158</sup> wear clothes of green and red embroidery.
10. The wind of the sea blows them so that they seem to be bowing before God and

<sup>154</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 15-17 [4]. Other Ibn Gabirol poems with similar transitions include Jarden p. 101 [49], line 8; Jarden p. 114 [53], line 75; Jarden p. 137 [66], line 7. Similar transitions are used by Judah Halevi, e.g. ed. Brody, I p. 21-22 [16], line 17; Brody I, p. 27-28 [20], line 7; Brody II, p. 279 [55], line 27.

<sup>155</sup>i.e. the biblical prophet Samuel.

<sup>156</sup>i.e. Joseph.

<sup>157</sup>Brody, I, p. 19-20 [15], lines 18-27 (I have renumbered the lines); a similar pattern is found in Brody I, p. 123-25 [87], lines 25-35, also playing on the name Joseph.

thanking Him.

11. Just as those of fine culture bow before the prince whose words are all princely.
12. Before Rabbi Natan who made their comely place decorated<sup>159</sup> like a palace garden or a bridegroom's house...<sup>160</sup>

The motif of one thing bowing before another--in this case the maidens before God--being analogous to the bowing of a third object before the *mamdūh*, is a common one. The rhetoric of bowing sets up two parallel hierarchies, the maidens (a) are humbled before God (b) as cultured men (x) are humbled before the *mamdūh* (y); hence  $a < b$  .  $x < y$ .

In another poem, now in praise of Halevi's friend Moses Ibn Ezra, the poet uses a different rhetorical strategy,

1. Is it the scent of myrrh or the scent of wine, or the wind blowing the myrtles?
2. Is it the tears of fawns on their cheeks or dew drops on roses?
3. Is it a musician strumming a lyre or turtle-dove and swift behind the bough?
4. Or is it the name and mention of the lord Moses that fills the ends [of the earth] like the scent of myrrh.<sup>161</sup>

The strategy is quite simple. Through rhetorical questions, the poet lists numerous items that might fill the earth with delight (appealing to the senses of smell, sight and sound), and mentions the name of the *mamdūh* as the final alternative, equating all of the items in the string (hence  $a=b=c...$ ).

Moses Ibn Ezra, although showing a preference for transitions completed within the line, includes many examples of transition over the line in his own verse. In the following example, the poet makes a transition between a personal, lyrical lament over the departure of loved ones and a panegyric to Solomon, one of the departed,

10. Our joys went out after them<sup>162</sup> [friends], our souls captive in their hands.
11. How can we live without them when they were like spirits in our bodies?
12. Do I weep for my companions or for the departure of brothers or the appointed place of sisters?
13. Or do I grieve for the separation of Solomon, whose love was like honeycomb to mouths?<sup>163</sup>

<sup>158</sup>literally "statures," i.e. their statures like palm trees.

<sup>159</sup>literally "studded," based on Song of Songs 1:11.

<sup>160</sup>Brody, I, p. 112-13 [78], lines 17-24.

<sup>161</sup>Brody, I, p. 58 [43], lines 1-8.

<sup>162</sup>literally, "at their feet," based on Judges 4:10.

<sup>163</sup>Brody, p. 91 [91]; other examples by Moses Ibn Ezra of transition over the line: p. 196 [195], line 27; p.

The use of rhetorical questions is not identical to its use in the previous example by Halevi. Here Ibn Ezra asks whether he is weeping for his departed friends collectively (A) or for one member of that set (x of A); hence A or x of A. It would seem that he was weeping for both. A final example of transition over the line, also by Moses Ibn Ezra, makes use of the theme of bowing before the *mamdūh*,

30. A breeze blows the myrtles, their heads swaying to the voice of the bird.  
 31. Without wine they reel like a drunkard, by the wind they stagger, bent over<sup>164</sup>  
 32. As if they heard the mention of Joseph and hurried to bow down to the earth...<sup>165</sup>

Whereas Halevi's verse set up an actual analogy between maidens bowing before God and men of culture bowing before the *mamdūh*, this example evokes the motif of supplication through a simile paired with visual imagery wherein the myrtles (a) resemble drunkards (b), bent over, as if they were bowing prostrate before the *mamdūh* (c); hence a~b<c.

#### TRANSITION WITHIN THE LINE

Transitions completed within a single line seem to be more rare, probably because they must adhere to more stringent formal requirements. In the following example, Ibn Gabirol makes a transition from the world's (deceptive) beauty to praise of the patron Yekutiel. The deceptive nature of beauty should be temporarily suspended for the transition to succeed.

8. Men make it [the world] a show-piece but she is not gold, though she is decorated<sup>166</sup> in gold.  
 9. The world is very lovely as if Yekutiel were a golden crown upon her head.  
 10. He is friendship's crown and diadem, its beauty, the light of its sun and moon.<sup>167</sup>

The first hemistich of line 9 addresses the world's (a) beauty while the second half ties the patron (b) into that image by making him the apogee of its beauty, the crown upon its

29 [24], line 15; p. 41 [40], line 61; p. 45 [45], line 14; p. 80 [78], line 20-21; p. 82 [79], lines 15-16; p. 91 [91], lines 13-14; p. 159 [160], lines 14-15.

<sup>164</sup>*ne'etafim* - or "faint, weary." "bent over" is based on the Arabic cognate *'atf*, "to incline, bend" as suggested in numerous verses cited by Ibn Janāh.

<sup>165</sup>ed. Brody, p. 185-88 [185].

<sup>166</sup>following Jarden, based on Ibn Janāh's reading of II Chronicles 9:18.

<sup>167</sup>Jarden, p.31-36 [18].



head (i.e. b is the greatest part of a, or a<sup>b</sup>). The transition is made especially smooth by projecting the motifs of the crown, beauty and heavenly bodies into verse 10.

The motif of bowing prostrate before the *mamdūh* is used again by Halevi, now condensing the progression within the confines of a single line,

18. A myrtle branch rises and doubles over while a palm tree claps its hands and birds sing.

19. Waving and bowing prostrate before the face of Isaac while the earth laughs with his name.<sup>168</sup>

The first hemistich of line 17 continues the theme of the myrtle branch (a) doubling over, hence bowing before the *mamdūh* (b); hence a<b. The completion of the *takhalluṣ* is also emphasized by the play on the *mamdūh*'s name; the earth laughs *ṣoḥequet* with Isaac's name (*yish'aaq*), from the root meaning "to laugh." Halevi also uses the device of the beautiful woman of the *nasīb* making a transition into praise of the *mamdūh*,

11. She began to recite poetry about departure, speaking with a fair voice<sup>169</sup> her kidneys nearly poured out for her tears.

12. She spilled beryl with her tears until my eyes scattered their stored up corals, red flashes.<sup>170</sup>

13. What is the matter with the gazelle that she weeps as if the lord Shelomo who had wandered was counted among those who wandered from her.<sup>171</sup>

Here the transition is completed within the line, with the first hemistich of line 25 continuing the lament of the woman, who weeps as if she were lamenting the lamentable cause *par excellence*, the departure of the *mamdūh*. A similar device is apparent in the following example by Halevi, in which the poet makes a transition from darkness to lamenting the departure of the *mamdūh*,

12. All food is salubrious in my mouth like honey, while honey in the mouth of the ill is broom-wood.

13. For the worrier--lights will be dark in his eyes, he will not see them and they are hidden for him.

14. Like the day when a cloud dwells upon them and they pour down torrents for the departure of Moses.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 454-6.

<sup>169</sup>based on Proverbs 26:25. note that it has a connotation of dissembling. "Though he be fair-spoken do not trust him."

<sup>170</sup>see Brody's comment, p. 29 of the commentary.

The departure of the *mamdūh* is the cause of lament *par excellence* for which nature itself breaks down weeping.

In the following example, Halevi affects a transition from a garden description to *madīh* by describing a bird carrying a poem from the *mamdūh*'s pen. There is neither comparison nor analogy. The motif is not entirely fictional since the poet is responding to a letter received (possibly by carrier-pigeon) from the *mamdūh*.

24. Winged creatures chirp and a far-off dove, a stammerer, speaks to me eloquently!
25. She sprinkles a shower of grace and sends down<sup>173</sup> love's dew like manna when she shakes the dew of night from her wings.
26. She offers frankincense and opens up a bundle of myrrh; behold, the poetry of Solomon is affixed in her pinions.<sup>174</sup>

Not surprisingly, Moses Ibn Ezra also composes numerous transitional verses containing the relationship between parts of the poem within the single line. In a panegyric to Abū Ibrahīm ben Barūn, the poet creates an equivalence through a rhetorical question.

15. The skirts of joy were trained on high in the days of youth, when the wine of love was imbibed.
16. Was it [the wine] fashioned from flowing myrrh or created solely from the spices of the deeds of Ben Joseph?<sup>175</sup>

Similarly, Ibn Ezra writes the following in another panegyric,

19. They (the sons of the vine, i.e. wine) went out unarmed to summon distress to battle and they presented the bread of joy to the wanderer.
20. Does their sweetness derive from milk and honey or from the pleasant love of the sons Jacob to the mouths of tasters?<sup>176</sup>

In both examples, the poet poses a question "is it a or b?" where a is some sweet and pleasurable drink and b is the *mamdūh* or some quality thereof, implying their equation (a=b). As demonstrated above, similar devices are used in the transitions comprising more than one line. In the following example, Ibn Ezra makes a transition from the world's distress to the *mamdūh* by making the *mamdūh* the poet's savior from the earth's

<sup>171</sup>Brody, I p. 15 [13], lines 21-26.

<sup>172</sup>Brody, I, p. 155 [101], lines 17-28.

<sup>173</sup>literally, "lays."

<sup>174</sup>Brody, I p. 137-41 [94], lines 47-52.

<sup>175</sup>Brody, p. 9 [7].

distress.

11. The gates of distress were opened for us even as the gates of joy closed behind us.
12. The ends of the earth became terribly narrow to such an extent that the hand of Solomon grabbed hold of us.<sup>177</sup>

In the first hemistich, the poet continues the theme of the earth's distress and presents the *mamdūh* as a remedy for that problem in the second hemistich. Ibn Ezra shifts subjects several times in this final example, concluding with transition within the line,

8. How long must he measure the face of the earth, how long will his belt and sash loosen [from hunger]?
9. His brethren stood by to sneer and every friend abandoned the covenant.
10. With a malicious hand they spilled his blood; how could they think to cover it when it is on a smooth rock?
11. Yet God, seeing that his might<sup>178</sup> had expired, established the prince to protect him<sup>179</sup>...<sup>180</sup>

The poet shifts from his loneliness and oppression (describing himself as a wanderer in the third person, his blood spilled by former companions) to praise of the *mamdūh* through the pivotal employment of God. In God's compassion for the poet, the *mamdūh* was established as a savior.

## A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE HEBREW *QAṢĪDA*

Now that the main elements of *qaṣīda* construction have been discussed, we are ready to begin documenting the literary history of the form in Hebrew letters. The following discussion does not claim to be a comprehensive history of the form with respect to all of its formal, prosodic and thematic developments. Such a story would be bound up with a much broader history treating the evolution of medieval Hebrew literature in general. Rather, the discussion traces the trajectory of the single subject of

<sup>176</sup>Brody, p. 123 [120].

<sup>177</sup>Brody, p. 49 [52]. Other examples of transitions within line by Moses Ibn Ezra: Brody, p. 63 [64], line 14; p. 180 [181], line 6; p. 176 [176], line 14.

<sup>178</sup>literally, "his right hand."

<sup>179</sup>literally, "to screen him in" or "hedge him about." based on Job 3:23.

poetic unity since it has occupied scholarship concerning the Arabic *qaṣīda* and has penetrated discussions of Hebrew literature. As discussed in the review of scholarly literature above, numerous scholars have studied integrative elements of Hebrew composite poems, from Pagis' broad concept of "Unity of Atmosphere" to the precise formulations of Mirsky, Segal, Brann, Feldman and Itzhaki based on repeating patterns of roots, motifs, syntax and rhetoric. The patterns observed by these scholars apply to more Hebrew *qaṣīdas* in both the Andalusian and post-Andalusian periods.

No attempt is made to show that every line of a given *qaṣīda* is directed toward poetic unity nor that every *qaṣīda* involves a strong integration of its two parts. Rather, a wide selection of *qaṣīdas* by authors from the Andalusian and post-Andalusian environments are analyzed with an eye directed toward the subject of unity, showing that *qaṣīdas* involve different methods and levels of integration and that some degree of unity is usually apparent. The selection of poems is also intended to demonstrate the broad variety of Hebrew *qaṣīdas* and the persistence of the form. *Qaṣīdas* are generally presented in their entirety though some excerpts are also discussed. Throughout Hebrew literature's evolution in different places and periods, the basic structure of a binary poem utilizing a transitional device remains in tact, even as the Arabic context that inspired the form recedes into the distant past. Still, it seems that the form remains more stable within Arabic environments outside of Andalusia than it would in Christian Spain where several innovations are apparent.

### **Andalusian *Qaṣīdas***

The oldest Hebrew poem to be referred to as a *qaṣīda* in modern scholarship is Dunāsh Ben Labrāt's *de'eh libi hokhmah*,<sup>181</sup> composed as the introduction to the author's

<sup>181</sup>Brody, p. 64 [66].

polemic against the grammatical composition of Menahem Ben Sarūq and dedicated to the patron Ḥasdai Ibn Shaprūt. The poem opens with words of ethical exhortation directed toward the poet's heart and continues with panegyric,

1. Know wisdom, my heart, knowledge and thought, guard the ways of wisdom, adhere to ethical teachings.
2. Seek righteousness and be not perverse<sup>182</sup> so that you will not become ensnared like the hearts of the wayward.
3. Always purify<sup>183</sup> [your speech] to offer answers that are prepared, refined, tested and smelted like gold in a crucible.
4. Always be alert and alive, rebuke desires for you are the gate-keeper of flesh and spirit.
5. Do not crave mature wine, its bouquet not poured [from vessel to vessel], resting on the lees.<sup>184</sup>
6. [Do not crave] drinking it pridefully in golden cups, to see it burn in sapphire cups.
7. [Do not crave] heavy foods or all types of delicacies in the shade of garden plants surrounding rivers.
8. [Do not crave] henna<sup>185</sup> and choice gifts of nature<sup>186</sup> like the pomegranate, almond, olive and date trees, which are of pleasant appearance.
9. [Do not crave] palaces or maidens<sup>187</sup> spiced with cassia, aromatic cane with myrrh.
10. [Do not crave] enclosed<sup>188</sup> springs, pools and canals, upon them rams like the rams of the wild;
11. In every season and without respite<sup>189</sup> they cry [for water]<sup>190</sup> to give drink to the garden beds with flowing water.
12. To sprout buds, black and white, and blossoms like scarlet in the tree-tops.
- 13 Behold, this is the vanity [that leads to] ruin and destruction! Its joy is mourning, its sweetness is bitter.
14. Though its beginning is rest, its end is groaning, complaint, crying out, roaring and shattering.
15. Therefore, do not deal badly with one who neglects morality, who sows winds bearing [only] whirlwinds as fruit.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>181</sup>The poem is found in Schirmann, HHSP, p. 35-40 [5]; it is called the oldest *qaṣīda* in Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...muslemit...*, p. 124, note 126.

<sup>182</sup>based on Psalm 101:4, *levav 'iqqesh*, "perverse thoughts" or "crooked heart."

<sup>183</sup>*hageh*, "remove" as in "remove dross from silver" (Proverbs 25:4), which seems most fitting here.

<sup>184</sup>images of well-aged wine, see Jeremiah 48:11.

<sup>185</sup>see Ibn Janāh, root *kfr*.

<sup>186</sup>or simply "choice things," though usually associated with gifts of nature, e.g. Deuteronomy 33:13 or Song of Songs 4:13.

<sup>187</sup>*shida ve-shidot*, occurring only once in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 2:8), the meaning is uncertain. Ibn Janāh associates the phrase with women, though praised for their intelligence more than their beauty, (from the root *shdd*), *'azīza - 'azā'iz*, *karīma - karā'im* (precious, high-minded, virtuous, generous women). Physical appearance seems to fit the tone of the poem better.

<sup>188</sup>based on Song of Songs 4:12, "a barred garden." Alternatively, as Schirmann suggests following one of Ibn Janāh's understandings of the root *n'l*, "full."

<sup>189</sup>based on Lamentations 3:49.

<sup>190</sup>based on Psalm 42:2.

16. Do not be vexed<sup>192</sup> by one who does evil, but do not choose his way; tonight he is here, but tomorrow he is snatched in the grave.
17. But strive with fear and act zealously to teach the law of the Creator and the upright course.
18. Thank the Former of hearts, the Protector of souls, who reins in mighty winds.
19. With innovative, metered and distinguished poems, with expressions that are measured, refined and well-conceived.
20. And set a song of praise for the prince, the *rosh kallah*<sup>193</sup> who utterly ruined foreign troops.
21. He put on wonder and glory and wore the victory<sup>194</sup> of God and conquered ten fortifications of the insolent.
22. He increased the pruning of thorns and spurs and led Ben Radmir<sup>195</sup> and the idol-priest ministers.<sup>196</sup>
23. He took the mighty warrior king like an [ordinary] traveler, a repairer of a district,<sup>197</sup> to the nation of his enemies.
24. He drew the foolish woman, his elder, Toda, who wore majesty like men.
25. With the strength of his wisdom and the might of his cunning, all his devices and smooth speech.
26. Nations hurry in alarm and peoples quake; those who thought themselves mighty grew weak for fear of him.
27. [Before him] every king trembles and descends from his throne and sends gifts to him in Sefarad.
28. Advisers<sup>198</sup> are in anger and rage, thunder in their faces, and so are the noble ones.
29. With the might of his advice he ruined them, with his intellect he made them fall, he sent them down to Sheol like empty ones, lacking.
30. His name is great in the East and in the West; the houses of Esau and 'Arav converse about his goodness.
31. He seeks good for his people and expels their opponents, he destroys the maker of evil<sup>199</sup> and cuts off the aggressors.
32. He is friend to many, forgiving their transgressions, passing sentence<sup>200</sup> [while] sitting at the gate.<sup>201</sup>
33. To the poor he is like a father to children, his palms are like clouds to poets.
34. Like gold, beryl and jacinth, giving rain in the autumn and showers in the summer.
35. To the sons of Torah he is light and salvation; he sends his wealth to Sura for books.
36. To satiate<sup>202</sup> them [the sons of Torah] with statutes like sweet nectar, rulings that are sound, clear and direct.

<sup>191</sup>based on Hosca 8:7.

<sup>192</sup>or "heat yourself in vexation," Proverbs 24:19.

<sup>193</sup>an honorary title in Diaspora communities.

<sup>194</sup>based on Psalm 20:7; alternatively, "the salvation of God," as in Psalm 50:23.

<sup>195</sup>i.e. Sancho the son of Ramiro II, king of Leon. For the following events, see Eliahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 3 vols. in 2 with a new introduction and bibliography by D. J. Wasserstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992), pp. 177ff.

<sup>196</sup>i.e. Christian ministers.

<sup>197</sup>as in Nehemiah 3:9.

<sup>198</sup>literally, "those who give advice," based on Proverbs 26:16.

<sup>199</sup>as in Isaiah 45:16 - *horesh sirim*, "maker of idols" (literally "carver of idols").

<sup>200</sup>literally "speaks while lowering [his arm]," perhaps related to Isaiah 30:30, "For the Lord will make His majestic voice heard and display the lowering of his arm in raging wrath" (i.e. in judgment).

<sup>201</sup>as chieftains make judgments while sitting at the gate.

<sup>202</sup>figurative use of "to saturate with water."

37. When I behold his delight in the law of God and his fear of Him. I, the student<sup>203</sup> of all teachers, am thankful for his kindness.
38. I sent him a book in poetic style<sup>204</sup> concerning interpretation [that will] supersede<sup>205</sup> all beautiful speech.
39. At the beginning is my poem to him, concerning a modicum of his praise, kindness and greatness above all other ministers.
40. It<sup>206</sup> is the crown of my book, which establishes my interpretation and exalts my name above all other poets.
41. And after this poem, which I presently sing, [I will] open and straighten closed-up paths.

The poem may be divided into two main parts, self-exhortation and praise, with various subthemes in each part:

- I. Self-exhortation (1-19)
  - concerning morality and speech (1-3)
  - concerning the avoidance of opulence and indulgence (4-16)
  - concerning the praise of God (17-19)
- II. Panegyric (20-41)
  - praise of the patron (20-37)
  - dedication of book and poetry boast (38-41)

The setup for the *takhallus* begins in line 17 and is concluded in line 20 using a simple device, making a transition from the praise of God (an instruction for the heart) in one line to praise of the patron (another instruction for the heart) in the next. This transition flags the significance of the relationship between the patron and God, one of several relationships that the poet calls attention to by repeating words and themes. Let us consider the several relationships that exist within the poem:

**Poet and Patron:** The poet's presence is felt in the poem through the self-exhortation, in which he implores his heart to seek moral paths and rebuke indulgence. Notably, the poet implores his heart to exercise wisdom (*hokhmah*) and cunning/wisdom (*'armah*) and to speak eloquently (1). These qualities are already possessed by the patron, who brought the Christian monarchs to Muslim Spain with his wisdom (*hokhmah*), cunning/wisdom (*'armah*) and smooth speech (25). The patron is thus an actualized

<sup>203</sup>literally "youth," a sign of modesty.

<sup>204</sup>literally "composed words," *nehbarim*, like *mehubar*, signifies "metered verse" in the medieval lexicon.

<sup>205</sup>literally "annul," as in Isaiah 44:25.

<sup>206</sup>contra Schirmann, who reads the *hu'* as the patron; concluding with a poetry boast is common and fits

version of what the poet hopes to become. The hierarchical relationship between poet and patron is further accented by the repetition of the word "gold" in the two sections; while the poet longs to make his speech pure like "gold in a crucible" (3), the patron is already like gold (34). Also, while the poet urges his heart to strive with fear (of heaven) to teach God's law (17), the patron already fears heaven (37) and sponsors teaching (35). The repetition of these themes and words amplifies the portrayal of the patron as an ideal man who has already reached perfection, which the poet can only strive to attain. In this way, the poet emphasizes his humble station beneath the patron.

**Garden and Patron:** The garden, with its tantalizing food, drink and maidens, is the model of vanity in the poem; its pleasures are ephemeral and fleeting. The patron, in contrast, is enduring and dependable, his offerings real, not illusory. Again, the contrast is emphasized through the repetition of words and themes. Whereas the animal statues give drink (*le-ravvot*) to the garden beds (11), the patron brings books from Sura in order to satiate (*le-harvot*) students with legal teachings (35-36). The waters in the garden pools and rills stand against the patron's generous waters, for he is rainfall in winter and summer (34) and his palms are clouds for poets (33). Also, whereas the poet exhorts his heart not to drink from golden cups (6), the patron, as mentioned above, is like gold (34).<sup>207</sup> Through these contrasts, the poet urges his heart to trust in the enduring patron over the ephemeral pleasure of the garden.

**Patron and God:** One of the most striking aspects of the poem is the parallelism set up between the patron and God. In the *takhalluṣ*, in almost the same breath, the poet implores his heart to give thanks to God through poetry and to offer panegyrics to the patron (18-20). In fact, one might say that God is simply "used" as a stepping stone, a pivotal device for making the transition between the two parts of the poem. The fact that

the context better.

<sup>207</sup>thus the theme of gold works on three levels: the poet's desire for "golden speech," the illusory temptation of "golden cups" in the garden, and the patron who is "like gold"



God's qualities are restricted to two lines while the patron's qualities occupy nineteen lines. This imbalance imbues the poem with a whiff of irreverence. In fact, the patron is ascribed qualities traditionally associated with God in the Hebrew Bible. He wears God's victory, dresses in wonder and glory (21, compare Psalm 104:1). He passes judgment with the lowering of his arm (32, compare Isaiah 30:30). He protects his people and destroys their enemies; foreign nations hurry off and tremble before him (26, compare Psalm 104:7, Psalm 99:1). Of course, the poet would not go so far as to suggest the patron's superiority to God: in fact, he explicitly denies this in line 37, calling attention to the patron's fear of God and his humility before His law. Still, the hyperbole and close relationship between the patron and God serve to amplify the effect of praising the patron.

In sum, the relationships set up among parts of the poem configure and accentuate the meaning of the poem as a whole. The poet does not merely shift from self-exhortation to garden description to praise in a haphazard and disjointed fashion; the elements in the poem work in concert to create a complex of hierarchies and contrasts that are directed toward the goal of praising the patron.

Isaac Ibn Khalfūn is considered the first Hebrew poet to earn a living by dedicating poems to numerous patrons. He is also viewed as a transitional figure between the poets working under Hasdai Ibn Shaprūt and Samuel ha-Nagid.<sup>208</sup> The poet's *holi libi ve-gam marbū yegonai*<sup>209</sup> opens with a love poem, describing the beautiful gazelle (*ṣebi*), and makes a transition to *madīh*,

1. My heart's illness and manifold distresses, its oppression, pain and sorrow.
2. Are on account of the eyes of beauty's perfection, a lovely gazelle who is my strength, who has no pain in his eyes.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>208</sup>In general on Ibn Khalfūn, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-shirah...muslemut...*, pp. 173ff.

<sup>209</sup>ed. Mirsky, p. 92 [20], lines 5-14. In addition to this poem, it is tempting to view Ibn Khalfūn's *'asovev 'ir* as a *qaṣīda* since it begins with the poet's wandering in search of loved ones and leads to *madīh*. Ezra Fleischer does not count this among the poet's *qaṣīdas*, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toidot ha-shirah...muslemut...*, p. 180, note 173 (the note is by Fleischer). I agree that this poem is not a *qaṣīda* since it does not involve a clear distinction between sections even though the poem bears similarities to the *qaṣīda* thematically.

3. A gazelle who makes long the nights of those whom he oppresses while he sleeps upon his lodging bed.
4. A gazelle whose eyes and neck are like a fawn's though he has not its horns.
5. When he is pleased, he makes with them [his eyes and neck] the joy of my heart, though he causes its harm when he is angry.
6. Will my heart be healed of its ailment when the seer of his lord's eyes<sup>211</sup> is ill?
7. To David, my soul's friend, I will go to heal my heart of its misery.
8. To a ruler, generous of heart, who set the people of my nation as rulers over other nations.
9. Whose clouds pour down gems of bdellium, whose clouds rain down the gold of Ophir.
10. An elder of my people, respected for his knowledge; though he is young, he has already shamed the [other] elders [with his wisdom].
11. For this reason, his Lord has made him a candle to light their [his people's] paths even as He placed the sun in the heavens.<sup>212</sup>
12. All distant lands know him as if they were his neighbors.
13. His name is great and his mention grand; whoever does not see his form [imagines] his image before him.
14. Possessor of culture, whose lance is wisdom, his gear<sup>213</sup> the inkwell and pen.
15. I, and every prince of my people, will be ransom for a man who furnishes his favor to every petitioner.

The poem divides easily into two parts: love poem (1-6) and *madīh* (7-15) with the *takhalluṣ* occurring over the line (6-7). The structure of the transition alerts the reader to the contrasting positions of the beloved and the patron; the beloved is the sickness, the patron is the cure. It is this relationship of contrast that links the two parts of the poem. Unlike Ben Labrāṭ's poem, unity is not created through repeating words or roots between the two parts of the poem, although there is repetition within each section. Instead, the unifying elements are thematic and far more generalized. Whereas the gazelle is characterized by beauty (2,4), the patron is characterized by wisdom (10, 14). While the gazelle wounds with his beautiful eyes (1-2), the patron's weapons are wisdom and writing (14). The gazelle brings joy with his beauty when he is in a good mood but causes distress when he is angry (5). In contrast, the patron's generosity is unwavering, always granting favor to the petitioner (8, 9, 15). This pattern of contrast is very similar to the pattern documented by Sperl with respect to Arabic poems of the early Islamic period.

<sup>210</sup>i.e. the poet is distressed by the boy's beauty while the boy is indifferent.

<sup>211</sup>the gazelle.

<sup>212</sup>literally, "His dwelling."

While Samuel ha-Nagid does not dedicate panegyrics to patrons, as such, he does address *qaṣīdas* to friends using complaint, love and wine as introductory themes. In the spirit of the pre-Islamic ode, the Nagid finds ample opportunity in the *qaṣīda* for boasting. He is also the only Hebrew poet to compose war poems,<sup>214</sup> some of which utilize aspects of the classical *qaṣīda*. In the following poem,<sup>215</sup> the poet opens with a nature description and makes a transition to *madīḥ*,

1. It is upon you, sons of Torah and its graspers, it is upon you to reveal its hidden stores.
2. For human beings are [lost] in dark regions of the earth,<sup>216</sup> while you are its [Torah's] protectors.
3. I look toward the heavens and its stars, I behold the earth, its creeping things,
4. And understand in my heart that their creation is a wise creation.
5. See the sky like a dome, its hooks sewn together with its loops.
6. The crescent moon and its stars are like a shepherd girl extending<sup>217</sup> reeds<sup>218</sup> against her sheep.
7. As if the moon amidst the high-borne clouds were a ship amidst its sails.
8. And a cloud were like a maiden walking about her garden watering its myrtles.
9. And a dew-cloud was like a girl shaking out droplets from her hair upon the ground.
10. And the sea was like a drunk woman, her wine-merchants rivers, their waters her wine.
11. Men warring in the earth, hastening to feed their mouths like its [the earth's] horses.
12. And inhabitants - like a beast inclined to sleep, their courtyards its feeding-trough.
13. They all flee from the terror of death<sup>219</sup> like a dove chased by a falcon.<sup>220</sup>
14. Inevitably, they will seem like a plate whose shards have broken to pieces.
15. As if the edge of the earth in the dusk of evening were a black woman, a black veil covering her.
16. And the sight of Rabbi David in his place were like the sun that illumines its [the earth's] ends.
17. As if the difficulty of Torah were valley and level ground when he rides its rough places.
18. Why do you dwell at the end of the earth [as if] your soul resembled its refuse?
19. You abhor the wine of government though government desires to give you drink from its cups.
20. And to place a crown of gold upon your head and give you its riches as a gift!
21. Go up to Zion, the praise of every land, and adjudicate its location-bound fines.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>213</sup>Deuteronomy 23:14.

<sup>214</sup>David Segal suggests that he was imitated by his son Yehosef, "who wrote a few poems touching on martial valor," though these have not come down to us; see "Observations on Three War Poems...." p. 166.

<sup>215</sup>Jarden, p. 151-2, [45].

<sup>216</sup>see Isaiah 42:16.

<sup>217</sup>as in "extending the branch," Ezekiel 8:17, apparently meaning "to goad."

<sup>218</sup>Job 8:11.

<sup>219</sup>*hatat mavet*, probably a translation of Arabic *saqr al-mawt*, common in the Qur'an.

22. Know, David, that you have a place to sit in its inner sanctum like David's son<sup>222</sup> in its thrones.
23. For you have erected walls strong for law and made its rafters sturdy.
24. And laid its foundations in sapphire and rebuilt its ruins.
25. You made her [law] your sister, or like your mother's daughter, and made her kin your own.
26. Put on a tunic superior to every tunic, its chequered design dyed.<sup>223</sup>
27. Woven like your soul or like my soul whose joy is magnified by your mention.
28. Utterly renewed, ruling over plaited tree-tops and the couches of its beds.
29. Glorious, precious in its making, every poet who despises it will emulate it!
30. Just as it brings glory to its object of praise, so it brings glory to its maker.

The poem divides into two main parts, each of which occupies half of the poem:

- I. Nature description (1-15)
  - call to Torah (1-2)
  - nature description (3-15)
- II. Panegyric (16-30)
  - praise of *mamdīh* (1-25)
  - concluding dedication of the poem (26-30)

The *takhalluṣ*, occurring over lines 15 and 16, defines the relationship between the subject matters in the two parts of the poem; the patron occupies the place of the sun above all aspects of the nature description and the relationship between the two parts of the poem may be said to be hierarchical. The theme of studying Torah, which opens the poem, also initiates the *madīh*. Here, as in Ben Labrāt's *de'eh libi hokhmah*, the poet emphasizes the *mamdīh*'s greatness by ascribing him the qualities that others are charged to acquire; while the listeners at the beginning of the poem are urged to reveal the hidden stores of Torah, the patron already supports Torah study (23-25) and treads smoothly over the rough ground of learning (17). Of course, the patron also displays humility, for which the poet chidingly chastises him (18).

Nature plays a dual and contradictory role in the poem. At first, the earth appears as the well-crafted object of contemplation that testifies to God's wisdom (3-4). Later, the imagery turns dark; the world is the mundane realm of vicissitudes that drives men to

<sup>220</sup>*nes* - a bird of prey.

<sup>221</sup>a kind of fine that can only be adjudicated in the Land of Israel (Baba Qama 27b. 84b).

<sup>222</sup>i.e. Solomon.

<sup>223</sup>based on Proverbs 7:16. To put on the tunic here means to accept the poet's composition.

futile competition and destruction (10-14). In the middle is the striking series of images through which several female characters emerge (6-10, 15). Not only feminine nouns (*levannah*) are likened to women but masculine nouns (*sahar*, *anan*, *yam*, *gevil*) are as well. The moon is a shepherdess, the cloud a maiden in her garden, the dew-cloud a girl drying her hair, the sea a drunk woman, the edge of the earth a black woman behind a dark veil. The imagery is so overpowering that the reader imagines a picture of women possibly even more than a picture of nature.<sup>224</sup> Against this entourage of women stands the *mamdūh*, their superior; this gender dynamic is essential for understanding the poem's hierarchical structure. Despite the poet's appreciation for the wisely created world (4), its feminine nature (i.e. base and crude<sup>225</sup>) also makes it the locus of mundane vicissitudes (11-14). The patron, of course, stands above such matters. Whereas the sea is a drunk woman (10), the patron resists the temptation of the "wine of government," even though government desires to give him drink and decorate him with a crown (19-20). The integration of this poem is less obvious than that of some other poems. There is only a generalized hierarchical relationship between nature and the patron; more important than semantic or even thematic repetition is the striking gender dynamic that mediates the hierarchy.

As mentioned in the review of scholarship, the subject of unity in the war poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid has been addressed by David Segal. Beyond the rather loose notions of unity that dominate most scholarly discussions, Segal shows that the opening imagery of the night description actually *prefigures* the subsequent battle description in one poem<sup>226</sup> by the Nagid. The night description (in Segal's translation) is as follows,

8. I view the heavens over my head and the stars / unfolding like a flower bed with buds.
9. Like flowers colored like cups of wine / most bright, having the fragrance of a spiced

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<sup>224</sup>see chapter two of this dissertation on imagery.

<sup>225</sup>see Tova Rosen-Moqed, "On Tongues Bound and Let Loose: Women in Medieval Hebrew Literature," *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): p. 76.

<sup>226</sup>ed. Jarden, pp. 103-108 [31]; the section translated below is from Segal, "Observations on Three War

bundle of myrrh.

10. Orion as he rests in his chambers by himself looks like a rebellious / and foolish son turning aside from tribe and family.

11. And the Great Bear with her cubs looks like a woman cloaking / her daughters with compassion, and resting in a peaceful habitation.

12. Swiftly and without legs the Pleiades circle the heaven's / compass daily, like a hind dispatched.<sup>227</sup>

13. Tirelessly the zodiac runs to and fro while earth is suspended in the midst of the zodiac without a rope, yet does not sink low.

14. All these [heavenly bodies] are rightly ordered for those who turn from wrong and understand it [the zodiac], / while the congregation of fools are good-heartedly at rest.

The poet actually invites the listener to play the role of astrologer and interpret the constellations whose arrangement portends the victorious outcome of the battle about to be described. Segal notes that the rebelliousness of Orion (10) prefigures the description of the foe who despises the obligations of legal treaties ("Thus every violator of a covenant shall withdraw by day for they rejected what was statute, they forgot and abandoned law," line 48); the flight of the Pleiades like a hind (12) prefigures the haughty behavior of the enemy who "went up the mountain like stags and skipped" (23). To Segal's observations we might add that the likeness of the Great Bear to a woman cloaking her young with compassion in a peaceful habitation (11) provides a stark contrast with the fate of the foe's wives in the poem: "Come, we will make your wives weep silently and increase within your tents lacerated women with heads made bald" (27) and "we will fill your wives' mouths, [once] filled with laughter, with keening and shouting" (38). It is true that such effects give coherence to the poem. However, as Segal rightly points out, the poet's goal is not the creation of "unity" for its own sake but rather the creation of meaning.

Like Ibn Khalfūn, Ibn Gabirol made his living by composing panegyric poems, first in honor of Samuel ha-Nagid and later for his most enduring patron, Yekuti'el Ibn Qabrūn. One of the poet's most famous *qaṣīdas*, *lekha re'i ve-re'a ha-me'orim*<sup>228</sup> has attracted

Poems," p. 200ff.

<sup>227</sup>or "set free."

<sup>228</sup>Schirmann, HHSP, I., p. 223-35 [84].

significant attention in past years, most recently meriting the esteemed position as the introductory text to *The Literature of al-Andalus*<sup>229</sup> volume in the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature series. One of the most striking aspects of the poem is its *takhalluṣ*; the poet opens with a description of a palace garden, describing its chambers, windows, pools, fountains, etc. When the poet describes the flowers, a debate ensues among objects in the garden: the flowers boast over their beauty, followed by the doves and then the bucks (stone fountains) until finally the poet emerges and silences them all, praising the *mamdūh* who is above them. Ibn Gabirol utilizes an extended transitional device, which reaches its climax with the intrusion of the poet's own voice as he silences the cacophony of the garden furnishings' dispute. Because this exquisite poem has been treated from several perspectives, including the perspective of unity, the reader should consult the studies by Itzhaki and Scheindlin.<sup>230</sup> Itzhaki makes a strong case for the integration of the garden prelude and the *madīh* on semantic and structural levels.

The poem analyzed below, also by Ibn Gabirol,<sup>231</sup> opens with a different sort of prelude involving an argument between the poet and a speaker. The speaker rebukes the poet for his overzealous pursuit of wisdom, urging him to limit himself to wisdom's best part. The poet responds apologetically and then makes a transition to *madīh*,

1. "Choose the choice front-band from the ornaments: one drop of the morning cloud will be enough for you.
2. Know that there is not enough time to grasp the after-growth of your harvest.<sup>232</sup> let alone what springs from that!<sup>233</sup>
3. Tell me, the vineyard you plant, who can say that you will live long enough to drink its wine?
4. You run like a gazelle on the mountain of thought as a mighty one rides his horse through the lowland.
5. In a place unknown to the bird of bare mountain tops, untread by the feet of men.
6. The scent of your breath reaches the boundaries of the land as if it were the carrion vulture and the bearded vulture.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>229</sup>translation by Raymond Scheindlin, Maria Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells, eds. *The Literature of al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>230</sup>Itzhaki, "Poetic Integration in the Hebrew *Qasīda*..."; Scheindlin, "The Hebrew Qasida in Spain..."

<sup>231</sup>ed. Jarden, pp. 38-43 [20].

<sup>232</sup>Leviticus 25:5, that which grows accidentally from kernels poured out.

7. You are like an osprey of Azazel<sup>235</sup> and seem a jackdaw<sup>236</sup> or desert owl.
8. Write wisdom a bill of divorce. unfasten the hooks of wisdom from its loops.”
9. I answered him. “You possess no valuables more precious than wisdom” and I hated my heart for its hatred.
10. How can I not instruct its (my heart’s) deeds when its iniquity is my responsibility. not another’s.
11. I console myself when I see my heart. like a wine drinker whose cup is empty of wine.
12. Behind me. Time lifts up its feet as if it were a snail moving through its slimy residual path.
13. And while I live I run to call wisdom as the sun and its circuit run (through the sky).<sup>237</sup>
14. Know that man cannot acquire wisdom as he acquires a bit of cash in his pocket.
15. There are men who fill their innards with wisdom while others fill their bellies with the dust of the earth.
16. How can man’s heart be satisfied by foolishness when a whisper of wisdom is his (only) hope and shelter?
17. He is like the ox who (only) knows his master. or worse. like an ass who (only) knows his trough.
18. Wisdom is at the head of God’s paths. and God stored it up from the light of his power.
19. And set it like a king over all and wrote the name “Yekutiel” upon its banner.
20. (God) made him like an ensign above kings. and spread him like the heavens above the earth.
21. Broad like the sea. though humble.<sup>238</sup> high like a mountain. though his load is a fingernail.<sup>239</sup>
22. He rules over hearts with his heart while he (also) makes earthen pots. works of a potter.<sup>240</sup>
23. Before the petitioner he is (acts like) a petitioner though if he (the real petitioner) refuses. he grabs him with a mighty hand.
24. By his cupped hand waters of the deep gather on high. flames are fueled by the fire of his brush wood.
25. (He is) a flourishing garden that restores my soul; I delight in the good scent of his myrtle.
26. Yesterday you were a fortress to my soul. though today I see that Time destroyed it.
27. Have you grown angry with loved ones. my friend. as the sated soul disdains honey?
28. If the swift and swallow could bear the fruit of the lips. their words would be like mine.
29. A stone cries out from a wall with me and a rafter answers with me from the woodwork.

<sup>233</sup>based on Isaiah 37:30.

<sup>234</sup>birds of prey in Leviticus 11:13-18. apparently able to traverse great distances.

<sup>235</sup>i.e. of the desert.

<sup>236</sup>a desert bird. associated with inhabiting ruins (Isaiah 34:11. Zephaniah 2:14). and with loneliness (Psalm 102:7).

<sup>237</sup>i.e. in my pursuit of wisdom I am so fast that Time. which always pursues men quickly. seems as slow as a snail.

<sup>238</sup>lit. “small in his (own) eyes.”

<sup>239</sup>apparently a sign of humbleness.

<sup>240</sup>i.e. despite his greatness. he is humble enough to perform common work. Earthen pots are lowly as in Lam. 4:2 “Once valued as gold--las. they are accounted as earthen pots. work of a potter’s hands.”



30. True, there is none like you in the world. Is there a poem apart from mine or one like it?
31. Were my footsteps estranged from you long ago out of fear or did your heart, O prince, cause them to flee?
32. My heart shakes its hands at you,<sup>241</sup> though it has not stripped bare the tree of love.
33. It (my heart) desires to see the fire of your eyes to such an extent that a blinding light could strike it.
34. And if you ask "whose is this (poem) or whose product<sup>242</sup> is it?" Solomon the son of Judah<sup>243</sup> is its band (of companions).
35. Who made his heart pure for you, O prince, and cleansed it as with natron and lye.<sup>244</sup>
36. And though his years (equal) the age of Pharaoh's viceroy when he was sold as a slave to his (Pharaoh's) courtier.<sup>245</sup>
37. He has come and arrived at the innermost parts<sup>246</sup> of wisdom, revealing one chamber after another.
38. So'an and Shin'ar spoke of his kindness and Hanes desired to see him.<sup>247</sup>
39. Orion and the Pleiades envied his soul, even the creepers and crawlers of the earth.
40. His heart recoils before none, though your discernment<sup>248</sup> causes it to flee.
41. You are his hope and delight, his cup and portion!

The poem divides into two main parts, each of which divides into further sections.

- I. Praise of Wisdom (1-18)
  - friend's speech (1-8)
  - poet's speech (9-18)
- II. Panegyric (19-41)
  - praise of patron (19-25)
  - poet's frustration for lack of recognition (26-35)
  - poetry boast/dedication of poem (36-41)

The *takhallus*<sup>249</sup> occurs in line 19, making a transition from the praise of wisdom to praise of the patron, for God made the *mamdūh* the epitome of wisdom.<sup>250</sup> As with the poem above by the Nagid, there is little semantic repetition that may be said to unify the poem. The words that repeat with any frequency are few: **"Heart"** (*lev*) - the poet despises his heart for its emotional response of hatred (9) and consoles himself when he sees his heart

<sup>241</sup>based on Isaiah 33:15 "waves away a bribe instead of grasping it." Thus, my heart prefers to have nothing before profit from you.

<sup>242</sup>literally, "son."

<sup>243</sup>i.e. Ibn Gabirol.

<sup>244</sup>cleaning agents in Jeremiah 2:22.

<sup>245</sup>i.e. the age of Joseph when he was sold to Potiphar, seventeen.

<sup>246</sup>as in I Samuel 24:4; Amos 6:10 and elsewhere.

<sup>247</sup>So'an - Egypt (Numbers 13:23); Shin'ar - Babylonia (Gen. 10:10); Hanes - Lower Egypt (Isaiah 30:4).

<sup>248</sup>literally, "the breadth of your heart"

<sup>249</sup>discussed above in detail in the section on transitional verses.

<sup>250</sup>the construction of this *takhallus* is discussed above in the section on the transitional verse.

empty (11); in contrast, the *mamdūh* rules over hearts (22). “**Mountain**” (*har*) - the poet runs after wisdom like a gazelle on mountains (4) while the *mamdūh* is high like a mountain. Such occurrences are so infrequent that they hardly seem significant, let alone deliberate. More striking is the use of animals as a structural device throughout the poem. The speaker in the beginning of the poem identifies the poet with many desert animals, simultaneously praising his wisdom and rebuking his self-imposed isolation; though he has attained a height of wisdom unknown to the mountain-nesting birds (5) and his “breath” (his teaching) roams far and wide like birds of prey (6), he is isolated and mournful like desert animals (7). In his response, the poet identifies those lacking wisdom with the ox and ass (17). In the panegyric, the poet states that if the swift and swallow, birds of the pleasure garden, could speak, they would reiterate his own words of praise (28). Each type of animal (desert, domesticated, garden) is appropriate for each section of the poem. The resurfacing of animals, particularly in pairs, helps structure the poem, though the organization remains fairly loose.

The most significant structural device is the sets of parallel relationships in the two sections of the poem, each involving some disagreement between two characters. In the prelude, the poet contests with an anonymous disputant who tries to dissuade the poet from his obsessive pursuit of wisdom. In the panegyric, despite the lavish praise of lines 19-25, the poet alludes to a conflict with the *mamdūh* who has been neglectful of the poet. There is a certain symmetry of structure, leading from dispute to boast and then from praise back to dispute. There are two hierarchical relationships. The poet is more sophisticated than his friend and, despite the poet’s boasting over his own wisdom, he yields to the superiority of the *mamdūh*’s discernment (40). On a scale between highly unified and disjointed poems, this example by Ibn Gabirol falls somewhere in the middle. Although, as mentioned, the poet is capable of utilizing semantic repetition extensively in

other poems, this poem exhibits some general structural features only with a minimal use of semantic or thematic patterning.

The *qasīda* form remains very popular during the generation of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi, despite the widespread fashion of using the *muwashshah* form for poems of friendship (as well as other secular and liturgical genres). During this period, the relationship between poet and recipient is more often a relationship between equals than a patron-poet hierarchy. Neither Ibn Ezra nor Halevi composed poetry as a source of livelihood. Still, the lavish hyperbole of the panegyric section remains intact, as do poet's claims to humbleness and inferiority before the *mamdūh*. Poems are included in letters between distant friends, are composed to give thanks for gifts and in praise of individuals for life-cycle events. Although these poets did not initiate any of the Hebrew *qasīda*'s thematic topics, apart, it seems, from panegyrics in praise of bridegrooms, their poems are more sophisticated in their development and linguistic register. The practice of structuring poems with semantic and thematic repetition becomes more common and consistent.

Apart from Segal's observation on prefiguring in one war poem by Samuel ha-Nagid, little attention has been given to the effect of integrative elements of *qasīda* composition beyond creating a sense of unity. Moses Ibn Ezra's *ha-reaḥ mor me 'aḥez ha-'afasim*,<sup>251</sup> a poem that has already attracted some attention in scholarly literature,<sup>252</sup> may serve as a further example of prefiguring. The *qasīda* is an epithalamium, a wedding poem, dedicated to Abu al-Hasn Ben Māṭar,

1. Is it the scent of myrrh that reaches the [earth's] ends or the wind blowing the myrtles?
2. Is it a cloud or the smoke of cassia and calamus?<sup>253</sup> Is it lightning or the gleam of wine cups?
3. Do clouds pour down spices or are the dew drops from myrtle tips?
4. Without a mouth the mountains break forth in song, or is it turtle-doves and swallows amid branches?
5. The earth, her dress is embroidered with golden thread.<sup>254</sup> her garments silken and

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<sup>251</sup>ed. Brody, pp. 159-161 [160].

<sup>252</sup>see discussions of Pagis and Feldman below.

chequered.

6. All of her paths became plains for one treading, the ridges became valleys.
7. Houses sing with joy and a rock from a wall, beams from timber, answer.
8. And raging faces put on exultation, the distressed [put on] joy and gladness.
9. The lips of stammerers speak eloquently to restore the ruined houses of mirth.
10. The hidden wonders that were shut up in the heart of Time are revealed!
11. The tent of preciousness is joined together with loops of praise fitted with clasps.<sup>255</sup>
12. The days have united bone and bone, flesh and flesh have cleaved together.
13. Like banners, joys are raised high on mountains of myrrh, hills of frankincense.
14. A voice heralds the earth [riding] upon wings of dawn, not on basket-saddle and horse.
15. "Have Shelomo's relatives<sup>256</sup> betrothed him to a noble woman<sup>257</sup> or is the betrothed couple the sun and moon?"
16. His steps walk upon paths of intelligence, his feet treading and marching upon refined culture.
17. Since youth his thoughts have been turned toward the heavens, his ideas borne above the Great Bear.
18. His station above the people of his age is like the rank of human beings above beasts and creeping things.
19. His deeds are more precious than theirs even as pearls are more precious than potsherds.
20. They race to catch the dust of his feet but how can an [ordinary] bird be the pursuer of eagles.<sup>258</sup>
21. Answer me! Could Orion encounter the Pleiades on earth without one summoning them or putting them [together]?
22. And if they are not [Orion and Pleiades], behold the wings of their [the constellations] splendor have spread over their praiseworthy faces!
23. How did they purloin their light? Have people ever been seen spoiling and plundering [luminaries' lights]?<sup>259</sup>
24. Friends,<sup>260</sup> hurry today to the wine of friendship! Drink from the basin of joy!
25. Moreover, make plans to double joys and break open granaries of rejoicing!
26. The goblets are like frozen water, within them melted embers.

<sup>253</sup>based on Ezekiel 8:11, of incense.

<sup>254</sup>Psalm 45:14.

<sup>255</sup>loops and clasps, part of the Tabernacle architecture in Exodus 26:11.

<sup>256</sup>understanding the collective noun as derived from the rare usage of *dodah* as aunt (Leviticus 18:14, 20:20, Exodus 6:20). Alternatively, the verse might be rendered "Has Shelomo betrothed a noble woman with his love..."

<sup>257</sup>*kevudah* - the word appears in Psalm 45:14 and its exact meaning is unclear. The whole verse reads *kol kevudah bat-melekh penimah mi-mishbasot zahav levushah*. The JPS translation actually takes "*kol kevudah*" as the conclusion of the previous verse, "... will court your favor with gifts, goods of all sort." Others have taken it to mean "the beauty of every princess is within" or "the respected place of every princess is inside." Most significantly, Rabbinic literature and Maimonides have used the verse as a prooftext to support the cloistering of women; Maimonides writes, "there is nothing more beautiful for a wife than sitting in the corner of her house, as it is written, 'The most honored place for a princess is inside.'" (*Mishneh Torah*, "Code of Women, Marriage" 13:11). Thus, *kevudah* in the poem might mean a woman kept inside.

<sup>258</sup>*perasim*, Ibn Janah, *uqāb*, "eagle."

<sup>259</sup>i.e. How did the bride and groom steal the light of the constellations, which themselves seemed like people spoiling and plundering the light of heaven?

<sup>260</sup>literally, "his friends."

27. Drink! For he has ordered that drinking in his palace should follow the law "so that you will not be constrained!"<sup>261</sup>
28. Rejoice. O youth, in a fawn of love and you will both ring out joyously!
29. Take pleasure in her lovely form, like a palm tree in stature yet quivering like branches of myrtle.
30. Do not fear the sound of jewels on her neck nor the clank of finery at the hour of twilight!
31. And do not fear her dove-like eyes, drunk with the wine of passion!
32. Be courageous in embracing arms adorned in bracelets and the beauty of bangles.
33. Do not flee from the asps of locks upon the face bathed in blushes!
34. For they have come out to greet you in peace although they veil and hide the glory of her face.
35. The pomegranates in the rose garden are encased with tips of spiced studs.<sup>262</sup>
36. When your hands pass over their surface, they slowly squeeze and caress them.
37. Know that Time is a slave to your will and its sons are assembled for your every whim.
38. They hurry to draw near your requests and to drive off whatever vexes your heart.
39. This is the poem of a friend whose heart rejoices in you, whose thoughts flourish and fly to you.
40. A mantle of glory that will never wither as long as the foundations of the earth endure.
41. The waters of my friendship are like pure, pure snow, untrodden by feet.
42. Should they hide themselves from you in my heart, they will be exposed by the candles of your wisdom.
43. Pearls are for people of understanding but fattened sheep for the fatuous.
44. The pure of heart long for words while fools desire plump geese.
45. Probity's son, live with this noble girl, tranquil and sheltered in God's shade!

On a micro-level, the thematic organization of the poem is as follows: nature description (1-14); praise of groom (15-20); praise of bride and groom together (21-23); wine (24-27); description of bride<sup>263</sup> (28-38); concluding dedication (39-45). If the poem were divided into two parts, it would consist of the nature description (1-14) and panegyric (15-45) with the *takhallus* occurring over lines 14 and 15. This poem is studied by Pagis and by Feldman, both of whom note unifying elements.<sup>264</sup> For Pagis, this is one of the few poems that exhibit a "Unity of Atmosphere" since emotions of joy permeate every section of the poem, appropriate given the poem's occasion. Feldman's careful analysis reveals many unifying elements. The use of the rhetorical question indicating

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<sup>261</sup>based on Esther 1:8.

<sup>262</sup>i.e. her breasts and nipples.

<sup>263</sup>This is what the section has been designated in previous scholarship, but see below. In general, the division I have given is slightly different from Feldman's.

<sup>264</sup>Pagis, *Shirat ha-hol ve-torat ha-shir*... pp. 159; Feldman, *Bein ha-qetavim* ... pp. 52ff.

astonishment in the opening stanzas (1-2) is repeated in praising the bride and groom (20-23). The theme of wine, introduced explicitly (24-27) and echoing in the description of the bride's eyes (31) is prefigured in the poem's introduction (2). The relationship between the bride and groom is both complementary and antithetical; while they are both objects of praise, the bride is praised for her physical beauty whereas the groom is praised for his moral and intellectual qualities. The bride is linked with the earth and the groom is linked with the heavens; his thoughts are upon the heavens, his ideas borne above the Great Bear.<sup>265</sup>

Most significantly, Feldman notes the intimate link between the description of nature and the description of the bride. Both are described according to physical characteristics: the earth is clad in ornamented garments (5) and the bride is dressed in finery and jewels (30, 32). The description of the earth and clouds (1-3) is focused on scent and spice and the bride's breasts are spiced pomegranates (35). In addition, the suggestion of winds moving through myrtles (1) is echoed in the description of the bride as a palm tree quivering like branches of myrtle (29) (emphasized by the repetition of the word *hadasim*).

To these fine observations, we might add that the poet makes the link between the earth and the bride even more pronounced by using a biblical verse as an intertextual medium. Verse 5 directly evokes Psalm 45:14, "The king's daughter is all glorious within (*kol kevudah*<sup>266</sup> *bat-melekh penimah*), her dress inlaid with golden thread," thus, when one reads line 5, the word *kevudah* immediately comes to mind; it is anticipated but not yet manifest. The tension is resolved in verse 15 with the introduction of the bride, a *kevudah* (translated here as "proper woman").

This poem is not merely a wedding poem but is written, according to the scribe's Arabic superscription, for the *consummation* of Abu al-Hasn's of marriage (*ind*

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<sup>265</sup>though she, of course, is also referred to by a constellation (line 21).

*ibtinā'ihī*). The imagery, not surprisingly, is sexually charged in manners appropriate for consummation. The sexual act that is evoked so explicitly in lines 28-37 is prefigured in lines 11 and 12--the linking of loops and clasps, the joining of flesh and bones--transforming Tabernacle architecture and Ezekiel's language of national reconciliation<sup>267</sup> into metaphors of consummation. Such is the poem's subtle rhetoric of sexuality.

Moreover, the poem's imagery alludes to consummation as a rite of passage by which the bride and groom become full participants in society. The poem is not only about joy and celebration but is also about this transformative event. The parallelism between the earth and the bride is not limited to their mutual beauty and ornamentation, but is also conveyed in their similar *accessibility*. The earth's passages that were once impenetrable are now plains for treading, its inaccessible ridges are now open valleys (6), the earth's hidden wonders, shut up in the heart of Time, are now revealed (10). These images of the earth's transformation toward accessibility are suggestive of the bride's transition from her status as a forbidden virgin to that of an appropriate, i.e. penetrable, sexual partner. In this way, the poet is able to say about the earth what he cannot say explicitly about the bride. The metaphor of accessible pathways is completed in line 16 in which the bridegroom is portrayed as one who treads on paths (albeit paths of intellect). Lines 6 and 16 are linked through the repetition of the word *netiv*, path, and the usage of the semantically approximate verbs *š'd*, *ashr*, and *drkh*, all meaning to step or tread. One should also bear in mind that the Arabic root *wṭ'*, meaning to tread, also carries a sexual valence, meaning "to have sexual intercourse."<sup>268</sup> The bridegroom is the one who will tread upon paths, who will penetrate the ready bride.

Lines 28-38, containing the so-called "description of the bride," is more of a pep-talk for a nervous groom. In this respect, the poem offers a rare cultural artifact

<sup>266</sup>on the interpretation of *kevudah*, see note 258 above.

<sup>267</sup>the famous "dry bones" prophecy, Ezekiel 37.

<sup>268</sup> see Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Standard Arabic*, edited by J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca: NY,

addressing the anxiety experienced by bridegrooms on the night of consummation. The transformation from the bride and groom as inexperienced, incapable lovers to mature sexual beings as husband and wife is further prefigured in the poem's prelude. Distressed faces put on exultation, stammerers learn to speak eloquently, and hidden wonders are revealed (6-10). These oppositions between negative and positive do more than add to the joyous tone of the poem. They all mimic and prefigure the transformation that is about to take place between bride and groom: the sexually inexperienced bridegroom (a stammerer) will become a mature sexual partner (an eloquent speaker); the bride's latent sexuality (hidden wonders) will become actualized (revealed).

Clearly this poem is well integrated, and it is difficult to imagine that the poet did not intend this integration. The description of nature with which the poem opens is essential for understanding the poem as a whole. While the complex of parallels and oppositions studied by Feldman is a useful tool, it should not be an end in itself. It is possible that overemphasizing oppositions within the poem has actually impeded the recognition of sexual language so essential for interpreting the poem's meaning. The imagery selected for the nature section of the poem is not haphazard but is carefully constructed to prefigure the rest of the poem and to allude to the act of consummation with its social significance outside the poem.

Judah Halevi's *'ereh zeman roqed negdi ve-sameah*<sup>269</sup> is a relatively short and simple *qaṣīda* dedicated to Abū al-Rabi'a Shelomo bar Qerishpīn,

1. I see Time dancing and rejoicing before me. sweet wines have begun to give fragrance.
2. And a gazelle with a cup of wine in his hand. when he drinks it I see the semblance of the sun kissing the moon.
3. When he sings he slashes the pericardium. or when he winks his eyes he splits the liver.
4. He drinks and sings to Solomon a song of love. he undoes the heart of his listener when he speaks fairly.<sup>270</sup>

1961). p. 1262.

<sup>269</sup>cd. Brody, I, pp. 27-28 [20].



5. The prince who rises as the light of morn by day and by night, whereas the sun rises and sets!<sup>271</sup>
6. [He is] a vine whose clusters produce myrrh, its splendid branches reaching the sea.
7. The earth is perfumed with myrrh and cinnamon, yet Solomon's name is what gives it moisture and scent!
8. The sun seeks his face and thanks him, the moon praises the goodness of his name.<sup>272</sup>
9. He raised the standard of freedom over the heads of the exiles, he removed the yoke of servitude from the burdened.
10. Seeing the glory of his face is like seeing the face of God.<sup>273</sup> and every man rejoices when he meets him.
11. I find the chambers of my heart rejoicing for him: one sounds peace, another conducts song.
12. He is a native of Glory, which he inherited from his ancestors, while everyone else is but a guest.
13. May God extend his days and bequeath to his descendants plenty and abundance.
14. [May God] announce to Solomon peace from the Lord, may he be moist and flourishing in old age.

The poem divides easily into two parts: a short prelude consisting of a wine poem (1-4) and a *madīh* (4-14). The *takhalluṣ* is completed within the line (4); the gazelle, the subject from lines 2 and 3, takes a drink and sings a song of love to the *mamdūh*. A high degree of patterning is apparent in this poem, both between the two sections of the poem and within the panegyric. The pattern of opposition between the beloved and the *mamdūh* fits well with the patterns documented by Sperl and Feldman. The thematic and semantic oppositions are considered below.

**Speaking and the heart:** Many subjects speak and sing throughout the poem, generally utilizing the roots *'nh* and *shyr*. The first character to sing (*ṣṛaneh*) is the gazelle whose singing slashes the membrane of the heart (3). In line 4, the gazelle's fair speech causes the hearer's heart to come undone. These verses provide a sharp contrast with verse 11, in which the poet's heart rejoices in the *mamdūh*, sounding (*ṣṛaneh*) peace and conducting song. In the concluding benediction, the poet hopes that God will

<sup>270</sup>the reference to Proverbs 26:25 also suggests the continuation of the verse, "Though he be fair-spoken, do not trust him, for there are seven abominations in his heart."

<sup>271</sup>literally, "the sun hastens [to its place] and rises," based on Ecclesiastes 1:5, "The sun rises, and then sun sets, and hastens back to where it rises." i.e. the *mamdūh* is greater than the sun for he shines day and night whereas the sun can only shine by day.

<sup>272</sup>literally, "his mention."

<sup>273</sup>based on Genesis 33:10.

announce (*yā'aneh*) peace unto the *mamdūh*. Thus, the effect of this verb is precisely the opposite in the two parts of the poem.

**The sun and the moon:** The gazelle drinking from his cup resembles the sun kissing the moon (2). In the hyperbole of the panegyric, the *mamdūh* is set above the sun and moon: he is superior to the sun for the sun rises by day and sets at night whereas the *mamdūh* shines constantly (5). Furthermore, the sun seeks the *mamdūh* in order to thank him (8), perhaps for lending it some of his light. The moon also praises the *mamdūh* and is also inferior to him for it is ranked below the sun (8).

**Wine and scent:** In line 1 of the prelude, sweet wines give fragrance. The motif of wine and its scent is suggested again in the panegyric (6); it is from Solomon's name that wine and the earth as a whole receive their scent and moisture (*raṭov*, i.e. freshness, youth) (7). The wish for the *mamdūh*'s enduring moisture (*raṭov*) is also included in the concluding benediction (14).

**Other root repetition:** In addition to the examples of motif and root repetition above, other root repetitions knit the poem tightly together. *zrh*: The *mamdūh* rises (*yizrah*) like the light of morning (5) and is also a native ('*ezrah*, "one who rises from the soil") of Glory while others are merely guests (14). *smh*: Time is joyful (*sameah*) in the opening verse; men rejoice (*yesameah*) upon meeting the patron (10) and the chambers of the poet's heart are also rejoicing (*semehim*) (11).

In comparison with other poems considered thus far, the semantic and thematic patterning in Halevi's poem is quite dense. The brief introduction of the beloved in the poem's prelude allows for a contrasting relationship with the *mamdūh*. In some cases, the repetition of roots alerts the reader to the contrasting relationship between beloved and patron; in other cases, the patterning helps create a tight structure in a more general way.

Before continuing with the post-Andalusian period, it should also be noted that the thematic pattern of the *qaṣīda* came to permeate other literary forms, including the *muwashshah* and the epistle. Several *muwashshahs* by Judah Halevi<sup>274</sup> and Moses Ibn Ezra<sup>275</sup> are panegyrics that open with another theme (usually wine), include a transitional verse and then shift to *madīh*. These poems may be considered *muwashshah-qaṣīda* hybrids, distinguished from *qaṣīdas* only by their prosodic features. Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra<sup>276</sup> composed a letter to Rav Avraham, head of the Yeshiva in Damascus,<sup>277</sup> which begins with a garden description and progresses to the description of a female singer who is singing a love song about none other than the addressee, the *mamlūh*, and his family.

### **Post-Andalusian *Qaṣīdas***

Although this appendix focuses on the history of the Hebrew *qaṣīda* in Andalusia,<sup>278</sup> a few remarks concerning the post-Andalusian *qaṣīda* are in order. The discussion is only a brief sketch of what is a much larger topic; its intent is to demonstrate continuity and innovation in the *qaṣīda* form as it moves into different contexts. *Qaṣīda* form persists for many generations in Hebrew poetry following the Andalusian period in Egypt, North Africa, Sicily,<sup>279</sup> the Islamic East, and Christian Spain. In Spain, the form would remain one of the most clear-cut testimonies to the survival of the Arabic literary culture of the past even as it transformed many of the *qaṣīda*'s themes.

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Abraham Ibn Ezra has been categorized alternatively as an Andalusian or a post-Andalusian author; both views are justifiable. Most importantly, he should be viewed as a transitional figure. For the present

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<sup>274</sup>e.g. Brody I, p. 149-50 [98].

<sup>275</sup>e.g. ed. Brody, p. 274 [258]; p. 278 [260].

<sup>276</sup>listed below as a "post-Andalusian" author though he spent much of his life in Andalusia.

<sup>277</sup>see Diwan, ed. Schmeltzer, pp. 3-8.

<sup>278</sup>only Andalusian *qaṣīdas* are discussed in the "Art of the *Qaṣīda*" section, although Abraham Ibn Ezra and his son are included there also.

<sup>279</sup>one poem included in S. M. Stern's study of Anatoli ben Yosef is a *qaṣīda*, see "A Twelfth-Century

discussion, he is included in the post-Andalusian section because he generally does not favor the *qaṣīda* form, composing most of his panegyrics in strophic form, and because his only poem to adhere to *qaṣīda* form is highly atypical. His *ḥadashim ma'asei 'ef*<sup>280</sup> opens with a debate among limbs of the body and makes a transition to *madīh*,

1. The works of the Lord are new every morning. his thoughts are precious to intellectuals.
2. He created lips and made the mouth and formed man's eye to behold created beings.
3. He set the ear planted and stationary so that all words would come to it.
4. I was asleep but my heart was awake and behold. my limbs took positions to fight like enemies.
5. The eye rose up against the ear and the tongue. it opened its mouth wide to shout and raised its voice.
6. The eye spoke. "I see and behold. I search for that which is in the innermost chambers.
7. In one instant I travel<sup>281</sup> the heavens and the earth without taking a single step.
8. At once I behold different forms even if they are vast or infinitesimal.
9. I distinguish between distant and proximate and differentiate between black and white.
10. By virtue of me. geometricians became wise and went up to known<sup>282</sup> constellations and stars.
11. I move at every instant without limbs. by virtue of me the work of all men is established."
12. The ear said to the eye. "Be silent. what are you capable of when you are dependent upon light?"
13. You can only see what is in front of you whereas I have dominion in all six directions.
14. If a screen is before you. you are like a blind man whereas I can hear from behind walls and mountains.
15. I listen to the teaching of God day and night whereas your gates (eyelids) are shut at night.
16. Poets and musicians sing for my sake and I can tell male from female."
17. The tongue said to the eye and the ear. "Do you think yourselves rulers over the body?"
18. I am like a king dwelling in a palace while you are my devoted servants.
19. Life and death are in my hand: I sweeten and embitter.<sup>283</sup>
20. I am unique and have no equals as you do: I alone am a man of words.
21. I am a truthful interpreter<sup>284</sup> between hearts and I reveal hidden things with my wisdom.
22. I turn food to help the teeth and it [the food] breaks into pieces."
23. I awoke and battles were within me. camps against each other equipped for war.

Circle of Hebrew Poets in Sicily - I." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (1954): pp. 66-67.

<sup>280</sup> Israel Levin. *Yalqut Avraham Ibn 'Ezra* (Haifa. 1985). pp. 116-18.

<sup>281</sup> as in Isaiah 57:9. see also Ibn Janāḥ on this verse (under root *shwr*) where it is linked with its Arabic cognate *syr*. "to travel." The meaning is compounded by the root's other meaning. "to see."

<sup>282</sup> literally. "counted"

<sup>283</sup> the tongue. which can taste sweet and bitter. can also sweeten and embitter with its speech.

24. The heavens sent down a voice. "Why do you fight? Go and choose an honest way of resolving your dispute!
25. Go to Rabbi Menahem, who brings comfort to souls so that he returns them to bodies.
26. Happy is the eye of he who beholds his splendor and the ear that hears the speech of his mouth.
27. Every tongue speaks his praise and books fail to encompass them.
28. His eye beholds the wonders of his God and his ears hear the heavenly voice as his forefathers did.
29. His tongue speaks words of teaching,<sup>285</sup> the six orders [of the Mishnah] are arranged in his mouth.
30. His eye minds the wealthy and poor as a shepherd seeks out<sup>286</sup> the flock.
31. His ear is blocked from hearing falsehood and through his mouth and speech [come] lives of bodies.
32. If every man who understands wisdom has a single gate, one hundred gates are open before him.
33. His hands flow rains of generosity such that there are rivers where once there were parched lands.
34. My prayer to the Hearer of prayers, my wish and the wish of all men.
35. [Is that] Rabbi [Menahem] and his son Rabbi Moses will live until the establishment of the hidden Redeemer.
36. And that they will ascend to God's Temple together with Judah, Benjamin and Israel.

The usage of a debate among non-human actors in the prelude has only one possible antecedent in the medieval Hebrew corpus, namely Ibn Gabirol's *lekha re'i ve-re'a ha-me'orim*, which includes a debate among animals of the garden leading to *madīḥ*. Still, Ibn Ezra's debate seems unique in that it treats a subject entirely removed from the standard subjects of the prelude whereas Ibn Gabirol's debate is still about a garden. In Arabic prose preceding Ibn Ezra, debate literature is not uncommon, particularly in an author such as al-Jāhiz (d. 868 or 869) who had a distinct predilection for using the comparison of object A and object B as a springboard for literary exploration. Ibn Ezra composed several free-standing debate poems, including such competitions as water versus wine, spring versus fall, man versus beast, etc. As noted by previous scholars, Ibn Ezra's debate poems may have provided inspiration for the debate genre in rhymed prose narratives by Hebrew authors in Christian Spain.<sup>287</sup> To cite but one parallel from prose writing, Ibn

<sup>284</sup>as in Genesis 42:23; also possible. "ambassador." as in II Chronicles 32:31.

<sup>285</sup>*te'udah*, i.e. Torah.

Shabbetai's *Milhemet ha-hokhmah ve-ha-oshet* (the War of Wisdom and Wealth) concludes with an argument between two disputants, one wise and one wealthy, each laying claim to an inheritance by virtue of his attributes; unable to resolve their dispute, the two submit to the judgment of the patron, Todros Halevi, who possesses both wealth and wisdom.<sup>288</sup> Ibn Ezra's poem is not only atypical but may have formed a link in the transmission and transmutation of Andalusian writing in Christian Spain.

The poem divides into two main parts: I. Poet's dream of debate among limbs of the body (1-24), II. Praise for Rabbi Menahem and his son Moses (25-36). The *takhallus* is set up from line 23, when the poet awakens from his dream and is instructed by a heavenly voice to seek Rabbi Menahem to resolve the dispute between the limbs (completed in line 25). The elements that unify this poem are quite pronounced and revolve around the constant repetition of body parts. In the opening lines (2-3), God is praised as the creator of the mouth (i.e. the tongue), eyes and ears, which are about to be personified in the prelude (4-22). As soon as the *mamdūh* is introduced following the *takhallus*, the poet returns to the language of the limbs, which are now used in service of praise, "Happy is the *eye* of he who beholds his splendor and the *ear* that hears the speech of his mouth; every *tongue* speaks his praise..." (26-27). Turning to the *mamdūh*'s particular attributes, the poet focuses on his limbs, which appear in the same order, "His *eye* beholds the wonders of his God and his *ears* hear the heavenly voice as his forefathers did; his *tongue* speaks words of teaching" (28-29). Thus, the limbs repeat in almost the same order four times throughout the poem.

When we compare the specific qualities of the *mamdūh*'s limbs with those of which the poet's limbs boast in the prelude, a rough pattern of contrast emerges between the material and the spiritual. Whereas the poet's eye perceives distance, size and color

<sup>286</sup>i.e. to care for them, as in Ezekiel 34:11.

<sup>287</sup>Jefim Schrimann, *Toldot ha-shirah...sarfat...*, pp. 42ff.

<sup>288</sup>ibid., pp. 141ff.

(7-9), the *mamdūh*'s eye perceives the wonders of God (28) and watches over the rich and poor (30). While the poet's tongue wields power over mundane matters (19, 21), the *mamdūh*'s tongue teaches Torah (19). The only limb that does not fit the pattern clearly is the ear, though it does not necessarily contradict the pattern either. The poet's ear boasts that it hears the teaching of God day and night (15) and the *mamdūh*'s ear is blocked up from hearing falsehood (31). When the poet awakes, he is able to hear a voice from heaven (23) while the *mamdūh*'s ear hears a *bat qol*, a heavenly voice of old (28). Although there may be a hierarchy whereby the *bat qol* is superior to what the poet hears, the pattern of the heavenly and holy over the mundane is not as clear as it is in the cases of the eye and tongue.

A number of other roots repeat in the parts of the poem, highlighting the contrast between poet and patron. Whereas the ear boasts that it can perceive sound coming from all *six* directions, (13), the patron is praised for his mastery over the *six* orders of the *Mishnah* (29), a metonymy for rabbinic learning in general. While the eye boasts that, by virtue of it, men of wisdom were able to ascend (*alu*) to the stars, the poet prays in his concluding benediction that Menahem and Moses ascend (*alu*) to God's Temple. Whereas the ear insults the eye that its "gates are shut" at night, the *mamdūh* has a hundred *gates* open before him (32). It is difficult to imagine that the high degree of patterning exhibited in this poem is not created intentionally.

*Qasīda* form is utilized by Abraham Ibn Ezra's son Isaac, who left Andalusia for the Islamic East, executing the form in a conventional style. The poet uses semantic and thematic repetition as integrative devices. The following poem is an example,<sup>289</sup>

1. Ask the lovely gazelle for his sleep.<sup>290</sup> perhaps I will see his image in a dream.

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<sup>289</sup>ed. Schmeltzer, pp. 9-10 [2]: we do not know where the poet was when he wrote the poem.

<sup>290</sup>the idea, as Schmeltzer suggests, is that the gazelle has stolen the sleep of the poet with his beauty and that the poet is now seeking to have his sleep returned so that he might behold the gazelle in a dream. However, the exact meaning of the Hebrew, "Ask (second person plural) the gazelle for his sleep," is problematic. The easiest solution, which would not alter the meter, would be to change *shenato* (his

2. I would give my soul and spirit as ransom for him and give the years of my life for his release.
3. His love descended into the chambers of hearts. his love struck<sup>291</sup> souls.
4. [A gazelle] who dragged my heart according to his will: truly my desire is desire of him.
5. A cherub from whose cheeks spark lightning bolts while his lips flow milk and honey.
6. I conceal my love-sickness within me: this letter of my heart hopes
7. To ransom myself [so that he will] come<sup>292</sup> quickly and not be [rebellious] like Qorah and his community.
8. And fill a cup that renews my soul and give my heart drink in order to make it live.
9. My cup is my portion<sup>293</sup> for benefit reaches me when it is raised [to drink]
10. This alone is the plunder from my wealth. my portion from the time I eat and drink.
11. My heart. how precious is its portion today. how good and lovely its estate.
12. When the clouds open up their treasures and Time shows its treasure house.
13. The light of his<sup>294</sup> amber shines higher than the heavens so that<sup>295</sup> the sun withholds its brightness when he comes out.
14. Like<sup>296</sup> Abraham who rose like the sun so that the luminaries were astonished when they saw him.
15. As long as his glory and the light of his face endure. Time will revert to pleasure after its withering.<sup>297</sup>
16. Perceptive.<sup>298</sup> Torah and dominion shall be his portion as long as he lives.
17. A man of words puts his hand to his mouth when the “king’s” order and edict are proclaimed.
18. [He is] a river of kindness that surrounds seas. the border drawn<sup>299</sup> around the land of bdellium.
19. A sea of wisdom whose edge is intellect. a river of understanding whose bank is culture.
20. A great man who has no brother or peer in his age.<sup>300</sup> his companions are righteousness and culture.
21. Child of knowledge. father of Kalkol and Darda.<sup>301</sup> brother of wisdom. his sister is understanding.
22. He grasped wisdom’s furthest reaches: he is her (wisdom’s) portion while she. even she. is his portion.

sleep) to *shenati* (my sleep). in which case that poet would be asking his listeners to retrieve his own sleep from the gazelle.

<sup>291</sup>in the sense of “harmed.” as in Psalm 105:15. I Chronicles 16:22. Alternatively, one might translate “touched.”

<sup>292</sup>literally, “go.”

<sup>293</sup>literally, “cup.” based on Psalm 16:5.

<sup>294</sup>i.e. the gazelle’s. Although Schmeltzer believes that the poet is already referring to the *mamdūh*, the conventions of the *qaṣīda* would suggest that the subject is still the gazelle and is about to shift to the *mamdūh*.

<sup>295</sup>reading the *vav* like the Arabic *fa*, which is causative.

<sup>296</sup>Schmeltzer has *be*, “when.” If I am correct in thinking that this verse is the *takhalluṣ*, then *ke*, “like” would be more logical. This would conform best with the conventions of the *qaṣīda* form.

<sup>297</sup>this reference to Sarah from Genesis 18:12 is particularly relevant because the *mamdūh*’s name is Abraham.

<sup>298</sup>literally, “broad of heart.”

<sup>299</sup>*ta’avato*, based on Numbers 34:7, “Draw a line (*teta’u*) from the Great Sea to Mount Hor...”

<sup>300</sup>literally, “time.”

<sup>301</sup>wise men in I Kings 5:11.



23. The Lord gave him a sign for his age, and the people of his generation believed in his sign.
24. In his days, the land was untroubled and therefore Time governed his household as long as he lived.
25. Through his might, he exalts and esteems Truth, his majesty raises its (Truth's) majesty.
26. Luminaries<sup>302</sup> set aside his light and therefore high places learned of his station.
27. A cherub whose place is among cherubs though his dwelling is among the earth's occupants.
28. Who bequeaths possessions to wise men with his glory and guides men of intelligence with his counsel.
29. Perceptive, his thoughts encompass what the ends [of the earth] fail to bear.
30. From his [vantage point in] time, he comprehends his end and knows tomorrow the day before.
31. By the word of God he possessed the covenant that God made with Abraham.

The poem divides neatly into two parts: love poem (1-13) and panegyric (14-31). The *takhalluṣ* occurs over lines 13 and 14, shifting from the beauty of the beloved to the glory of the *mamdūh*. The poet opens with the traditional theme of the beautiful youth, in this case a wine pourer, who has stolen the poet's sleep with his beauty. The poet is trying to regain his sleep so that he might behold the boy in a night vision. Wishing that the boy would come and pour him wine, the poet reflects upon wine as his portion. The panegyric focuses on the subject of the *mamdūh*'s wisdom with occasional references to the *mamdūh*'s forerunner, the biblical Abraham.

Thematic and semantic repetitions unify the poem, focusing on the relationships between the gazelle, the poet and the *mamdūh*. In general, we find the expected contrasting relationship between the beloved and the patron as suggested by Sperl and Feldman. The beloved is praised for his beauty but condemned for his treachery; he inflicts suffering through his beauty. The patron is praised for his wisdom and culture; he is the champion of truth, the master of Time. On the semantic level, both beloved and patron are referred to as cherubs; whereas the boy is a cherub on account of his beauty (5), the patron is a cherub who belongs among holy cherubs (22), the real cherubs of the Tabernacle (e.g. Exodus 25:19). The poet makes a very clever play on the word *ta'avato*,

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<sup>302</sup>literally, "bright things."

appearing in lines 4 and 18 with very different meanings. In 4, it refers to the gazelle's desire, fitting into the prelude's overall theme of worldly passions. In 18, it means "his boundary," referring to the *mamdūh* as the border of the land of bdellium, just as he is the river of kindness surrounding seas. The repetition of the word calls attention to the contrasting parts of the poem.

An oppositional relationship is also drawn between the poet and the patron. The poet portrays himself as caught, or at least dwelling, in the world of desires; he is entranced by the young boy and has wine as his portion. The patron, in contrast, is concerned with pursuing wisdom and upholding truth. Central is the theme of one's "portion" (using several words, *manah*, *cos*, *heleq*). While the poet's portion is drink (9), the patron's is Torah, dominion and wisdom (16, 22). The poet, happy with his lot, recognizes that his portion is fleeting and dependent upon the generosity of Time (10-13). The patron's portion, in contrast, is dependent on him alone; he is the master of Time, which returns to a pleasurable state as long as the patron endures (15). These contrasting relationships help unify the poem and magnify the praise of the *mamdūh*.

In the poetry of El'azar ben Ya'aqov ha-Bavli (Iraq, 1195-1250),<sup>303</sup> *qaṣīda* form is utilized in a number of panegyrics, though most of the poet's panegyrics begin directly with praise of the *mamdūh*. Of the panegyrics that open with an introductory passage, the theme of the introduction is almost always love for a *ṣebi* or a *ṣebiya*, leading to praise of the *mamdūh* through a simple *takhalluṣ*.<sup>304</sup> The following is one such poem,<sup>305</sup> which closely adheres to the Andalusian style,

1. A beautiful woman, born to men though her face and the sun above are twins!
2. She shoots at hearts with an eye like a sharpened arrow and also enchants.

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<sup>303</sup>The poet's Judeo-Arabic book on poetics (the only such work apart from Moses Ibn Ezra's *Kitāb al-muḥādara wa-l-mudhākara*) is the subject of a recent book by Yosef Yahalom, *Peraqim be-torat ha-shir le-'Elazar ben Ya'aqov ha-bavli* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2001). The poet's oeuvre has been largely neglected otherwise.

<sup>304</sup>e.g. diwan, ed. Brody, p. 9 [7]; p. 41 [119]; p. 68 [182]; p. 74 [189]; p. 78 [195]; p. 85 [203]; p. 93 [210]; p. 105 [224]; p. 105 [225]; p. 138 [321].

3. The saliva of her mouth is like leben and honey, or spiced wine mixed with perfume.
4. For every heart she sets a trap of love and spreads nets for every soul.
5. [She has] circlets of gold upon her cheeks, earrings in her ears and a ring in her nose.
6. She [receives] more shouts of "Beauty, beauty!" than gazelles yet [instills] more fear than lions!
7. She dwells in a spacious house of cedar, its windows recessed and latticed.<sup>305</sup>
8. Valleys were covered with the weaving of buds that were embroidered by the hands of the heaven's rain.
9. Pomegranates like the breasts of virgins hanging upon vineyard branches.
10. The wine pourer attends the companions with bowls of red and green.
11. The palace garden: within the garden is a pool whose banks languish<sup>307</sup> before the heavens.
12. Its waters are like oil, flowing myrrh, or the name of Moshe the prince of all living things.
13. Who rose to the stations of prophecy, the foundations of faith are stamped with his signet ring.
14. His qualities are like those of the righteous, others have the qualities of the people of Sodom.
15. A lord whose hand is [generous] like the Qishon or Pishon rivers, his right hand like an ancient river.
16. May he live forever and be exalted, his throne spread upon the high places of heaven.
17. As long as vapor rises to the heavens and falls to the earth to water furrows.

The poet opens with the love theme (1-9) complemented with garden description (10-12) and leads to *madīh* (12-17) through a typical *takhalluṣ* completed within the line (12). On the subject of unity, there is a certain cohesion between the parts of the poem; like the beloved, whose face is the sun's twin (1), the patron's place is in the heavens (16). Also, the theme of water is evoked throughout the poem, the heavens rain upon the garden (8); the garden-pool's banks languish before the heavens (11); the patron's hands are generous like rivers (15), much like the hands of the heaven's rain that embroidered the garden (8); in the concluding benediction, the poet wishes that the patron's life will endure as long as water evaporates and precipitates. There is little remarkable about this poem except that it faithfully preserves the conventional themes and development of the Andalusian Hebrew *qaṣīda* and exhibits some basic patterning.

In Egypt, the *qaṣīda* form is occasionally utilized by the Karaite poet Moses Darī.

<sup>305</sup>p. 9 [7].

<sup>306</sup>I Kings 6:4.

<sup>307</sup>based on Ezekiel 31:15.

In addition to the poem discussed below, two of Darī's epithalamia open with other themes. One opens with a description of nature, wine and singing girls who are singing with joy over the marriage of the couple,<sup>308</sup> the other includes a more general nature description and then shifts abruptly to praise of the couple.<sup>309</sup> Apart from these three examples, Darī's panegyrics seem to be exclusively monothematic.<sup>310</sup> The following *qaṣīda* evokes several stock topics of the Andalusian period and makes a transition to *madīḥ* through a somewhat atypical *takhalluṣ*.

1. Tell Time to gather friends and loved ones and to keep wandering at bay.
2. [and tell] the cup to blow forth its spices, to fly to everyone so to make rebels tranquil.
3. [and tell] the wilderness to bring forth from its grasses henna and nard for the beholder's eye.
4. [and tell] the garden that the boughs of its trees should raise every beauty of its sundry delicacies.
5. [and tell] the garden bed on the mount of spices to reveal the roses among its flowers.
6. [and tell] the maidens to remove their arms from covering<sup>311</sup> the musical instruments
7. [and tell] the turtle-doves, doves and swifts to ascend and descend upon a river.
8. [and tell] the friend's dwelling to be spacious<sup>312</sup> and to gather there its precious fawns.
9. And to cause the dainty ones to dwell upon the couch of love, stripped of clothing.
10. Joined, clinging and cleaving to one another in the bed of beauty, becoming as one.
11. The moon in its orbit is like a king while the stars on high are like flaming torches.
12. It [Time] envies everyone who views and beholds; it deadens them and makes them lost for eternity.
13. Even if Time would set all of this<sup>313</sup> before me for eternity.
14. And [even if] the choice parts of its delicacies' pleasures would be joys<sup>314</sup> to my heart at every moment.
15. I could only think that Time would act upright and perform good and righteous deeds
16. Because I approached and reached the company of the unique one of the generation, the prince of all princes.

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<sup>308</sup> Moshe bar Avraham Darī, *Jewish Poet in Muslim Egypt: Moses Darī's Hebrew Collection*, critical edition with introduction and commentary by Leon J. Weinberger (Leiden; Boston, Ma: E. J. Brill, 2000), p. 380 [342], significantly titled *ha-reyah mor*, likely alluding to the title of Moses Ibn Ezra's epithalamium discussed above. Halevi also composed a poem with this title but it is a panegyric to Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody I, p. 58ff [42].

<sup>309</sup>ed. Weinberger, p. 383 [243].

<sup>310</sup>The editor of the *diwān* defines a *qaṣīda* prosodically as a "metrically balanced monorhyme hymn in hemistichs" as distinct from the strophic form of a *muwashshah* and thus labels many of Darī's monothematic poems as *qaṣīdas*. If a *qaṣīda* is understood as a multithematic poem as it is in most scholarly literature, only a few of Darī's poems qualify.

<sup>311</sup>*ṣamidim*, plural of *ṣamid*, a cover for a vessel in Numbers 19:15.

<sup>312</sup>literally, "wide and long."

<sup>313</sup>literally "that and those," i.e. all of these pleasures.

17. To whose wisdom and intelligence all possessors of wisdom and intelligence testify.
18. While awake, they bow their heads, bend low and prostrate themselves before the sheaf of his wisdom.<sup>315</sup>
19. The sons of Mahol<sup>317</sup> entreat the glory of his face, they gather teaching from him and learn.
20. The ears of jurists are pierced at his doorposts like slaves.<sup>318</sup>
21. To serve him they desired to remain standing in attendance<sup>319</sup> and girding might.
22. Among the Jews, his family is respected and known by every good name.
23. His parents were anointed to be kings, appointed to pasture the people of Israel.
24. They are kings and their children are destined for majesty in their place.
25. The pious of their generation are like shame and vanity while they are the pious ones.
26. With the generosity of their gifts they brought wealth to all the impoverished and the wretched poor.
27. [He is] the one who restores the lonely,<sup>320</sup> who pours mercy and compassion upon their bodies and souls.
28. A fruitful bough,<sup>321</sup> a shoot of grace, who is the perfection of beauty and is completely praiseworthy.
29. May [God] make him live and not perish until the Great Bear is swept away along with the circuit of Jupiter and Mars.

The poem divides into two main parts, each of which occupies approximately one half of the poem: I. Prelude on Andalusian themes (1-15) II Panegyric (16-29). The buildup to the *takhalluṣ* is initiated in line 13 where the poet emerges, stating that all the pleasures mentioned would be of little benefit for him unless he could be in the presence of the *mamdūh*; the *takhalluṣ* is completed in line 16.

The prelude of the poem is a bit difficult to classify. Because it touches on most of the conventions of the Andalusian garden poem (wine, drinking companions, trees and flowers, singing-girls, birds, beautiful boys, sky), I have simply designated it “Andalusian,” a term that can only exist in the post-Andalusian context. Weinberger calls it a “love poem,” privileging the content of lines 8-10 over the other themes; it might have been

<sup>314</sup>*mehaddim*, derived, it would seem, from the root *hdh*, as in Psalm 21:7.

<sup>315</sup>based on Genesis 37:10, where Joseph reports his dream in which his brothers’ sheaves prostrate themselves before his sheaf.

<sup>316</sup>Diwan, ed. Weinberger, p. 347 [287].

<sup>317</sup>wise men in I Kings 5:11.

<sup>318</sup>based on Exodus 21:6.

<sup>319</sup>as in Deuteronomy 10:8.

<sup>320</sup>based on Psalm 68:7. “God restores the lonely ones to their homes.”

<sup>321</sup>as Weinberger suggests, the reference to Genesis 49:22 might imply that the *mamdūh*’s name is Joseph.

called a “wine poem” or “garden poem” just as easily. The Andalusian themes are mentioned in a list like fashion (Tell X to do Y) and figurative imagery is limited to the night description (11). It is worth considering whether the themes of the garden soiree reflect a social reality for poets in late twelfth/early thirteenth century Egypt or whether poets only utilize them as literary topoi. While more research should be done concerning this question, Andalusian themes become a fixed and conventional aspect of post-Andalusian poetry and need not reflect a social reality.

The courtly subjects of the introduction are presented as a type in order to create a contrast with the moral and intellectual excellencies of the *mamdūh* in the second part of the poem. In contrast with the sensuality of the opening themes (scent, sound, sight, sex), the *mamdūh* represents intelligence, generosity, humility and communal leadership. The relationship between the opening themes and the panegyric is defined by the *takhalluṣ*; the poet recognizes the limited value of worldly pleasures in comparison with standing before the wise and powerful *mamdūh*. The poem exhibits some semantic repetition, though the effects are not as pronounced as observed in some earlier poems. In line 2, wine is the subduer of rebels (*meradim*) while in line 26, the *mamdūh* brings wealth to the wretched (*merudim*) poor. In line 10, the cleaving lovers are described “as one” (*aḥadim*) while the patron is unique (*veḥid*) in his generation (16) and, more significantly, restores the lonely (*veḥidim*) (27). In line 15, the poet expresses his doubt over Time performing righteous deeds (*ḥasadim*), while line 25 involves a play on the same root, repeating it three times; those who are considered the pious ones (*ḥasdei-*) of the generation are really shame (*ḥesed*) while the truly pious ones (*ḥasadim*) are the *mamdūh* and his family. Line 8 mentions precious (*ḥamudim*) fawns and in line 28, the *mamdūh* is described as completely praiseworthy (*maḥamadim*). In addition, though not involving a semantic play, both parts of the poem make mention of heavenly bodies. The moon is like a king

and the stars like torches (11); the poet prays that the *mamdūh* will endure as long as the planets and stars (29). These features integrate the poem, though only the first two examples emphasize a clear contrast between the patron and the sensuous pleasures.

The greatest innovations in *qasīda* composition took place in Christian Spain. As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, the period has been seen almost exclusively as epigonic, a “Silver Age” after the “Golden Age,” a period of neoclassical imitation and decline. By focusing on the *qasīda*, possibly Hebrew poetry’s most classical form, it becomes apparent just how innovative the poets actually are. While they are certainly neoclassical and never give birth to a new poetic form as would happen in Italy, the “epigones” of Christian Spain met the demands of working within the constraints of a defined literary system without leaving that system completely stagnant.

The poets of Christian Spain exhibit aesthetic independence even as they identify with their Andalusian predecessors as literati and social models. In addition to occasional changes in the transitional section of the *qasīda*, a number of other formal features change. First, preludes on traditional *qasīda* themes occasionally become introductions for subjects not associated with the *qasīda* in Andalusia. For example, Meshulam Da Piera introduces a poem in favor of amassing wealth with a highly classical introduction replete with Arabian deserts, departed companions and wandering camels,<sup>322</sup>

1. Scouts of Arabian paths ask, “When will you cry out<sup>323</sup> for loved ones?”
2. They scout at Teima’ and the paths of Dedan<sup>324</sup> saying, “Are the bannered camps well?”
3. They appointed us a fixed (meeting) time but when<sup>325</sup> wandering was prolonged,<sup>326</sup> hearts almost hoped to wander.
4. Perhaps their camels were unable to carry the load of their treasures and were overburdened.
5. [Perhaps] there was no end to the preparation and therefore they went slowly and

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<sup>322</sup> Haim Brody, “Shirei Meshulam Ben Shelomo DaPiera,” *Yedi’ot ha-makhon le-heqer ha-shirah ha-ivrit* 4 (1938): pp. 36-39.

<sup>323</sup> i.e. in desire, based on Jeremiah 5:10, “They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing (crying out) at another’s wife.”

<sup>324</sup> Dedan and Teima’ are both associated with the Arabian peninsula.

<sup>325</sup> as in Genesis 19:17.

journeyed gradually.

6. Where are friends who have departed from their tents? Where are the dwellings of companions? Where have they encamped?

7. A fawn who has moved his dwelling away from loved ones, how can his lovers endure separation?

8. When they looked to me for consolation, my eyes already hoped all would be good for them.

9. I call out to brethren and men of the covenant, fine men who toil for achievement.

10. All lovers of lineage held in<sup>327</sup> the eye of my heart, included within the community<sup>328</sup> of love.

11. "Come with a row of embroidery and byssus merchants, traders who trade in agate."<sup>329</sup>

12. Attain property, become wealthy, let your hand trade the finest spices produced in Sheba.."

Already in the Andalusian period, of course, the desert is toyed with by poets since it is known through literary reference only, though it also signifies true longing in some cases according to the conventions of Arabic literature.<sup>330</sup> In Christian Spain, the topos is removed one step further: not only the desert environment but also the Arabic literary context has partially dissolved. Classical *qaṣīda* themes become pure play.

A second formal feature to change in the Christian environment is what may be called the inclusion of a "return verse," the practice of evoking the poem's initial line in its concluding line (usually the first hemistich of the poem is echoed in the final hemistich of the poem, but sometimes the second hemistich is evoked). Already traceable within the Andalusian period,<sup>331</sup> this practice became widespread in the thirteenth century and became almost a requisite device in the fifteenth century school of Saragossa. In addition to reflecting a different aesthetic conception of the conclusion, the rise of the return verse marks an important moment in the history of the *qaṣīda* in that it provides an absolute link between the two parts of the poem. It means that the poet has already conceived the

<sup>320</sup>literally, "became great."

<sup>327</sup>literally, "ascribed to."

<sup>328</sup>*kelal*, rabbinic usage, as in BT Berakhot 49b.

<sup>329</sup>a precious stone in Exodus 28:19.

<sup>330</sup>see chapter three of this dissertation and further below.

<sup>331</sup>examples from the secular verse of the Andalusian period include Ibn Gabirol, ed. Schirmann, HHSP I, 96-201 [67]; Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody p. 3 [1]; 62-3 [64]; Judah Halevi, ed., Brody II, pp. 93-99 [12]; II, pp. 273-76 [53].



poem's end in constructing its beginning, or alternatively, he begins a poem and then keeps that beginning in mind throughout the poem's development. The expectation of a return verse also affects the reader, who is consciously searching for a way to link the second part of the poem back to its beginning. A third formal feature specific to the *qaṣīda* in the Christian environment is that panegyric poems come to be couched within a series of shorter poems, making up a sort of poetic suite or package of poems;<sup>332</sup> although poems were certainly sent in conjunction with letters in the Andalusian period,<sup>333</sup> the grouping of couplets and short poems before *qaṣīdas* is unique to the Christian period.

One poet to utilize *qaṣīda* form consistently after the Andalusian school is Todros ben Judah Halevi Abulafia (1247-1298). The author associated with a circle of intellectuals in the service of Alfonso X, king of Castile. Not born an aristocrat, Todros gained his position among Jewish magnates through his intelligence and skillful social maneuvering, both of which are reflected in his extensive corpus. Among his countless panegyrics to patrons and friends are a fair number of *qaṣīdas*, which make use of many typical Andalusian themes: self-exhortation,<sup>334</sup> desire for a *ṣebi* or *ṣebiyya*,<sup>335</sup> separation from friends,<sup>336</sup> and garden description.<sup>337</sup> The persistence of these themes may be attributed to the poet's self-identification with the poets of the Andalusian school. Still, it

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<sup>332</sup>Tirza Vardi uses the Hebrew term *ṣever*, meaning "pile, heap." "Ḥatuna be-Agramont - 'al shirei ha-hatuna shel Shelomo Bonafed." *Mehqarei yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 14 (1993): pp. 169-96.

<sup>333</sup>several of the letters of the major poets are known to have been accompanied by poems, some of them proper *qaṣīdas* (see e.g. Halevi's poem to Solomon Ibn Ghiyat (ed. Brody, I, pp. 137-41 [94]) or Moses Ibn Ezra, ed. Brody, p. 11 [9]); in the Islamic world in general, the insertion of poetic quotations or original whole poems was an important aspect of Jewish letter writing, which was really an art unto itself. Halevi's letter to Samuel ha-Nagid (ed. Brody, I, p. 21 ff.) opens with a poem and includes another poetic insertion. Letters often open with a Hebrew salutation, followed with a Hebrew poem in praise of the addressee and then switch to Judeo-Arabic. See for example the letter to Sar Shalom Gaon, Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, with an introduction by Gerson D. Cohen (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1972), p. 300 and the discussion in S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967-93) vol. 5, p. 285ff., 422 (see also "poetry" in the index volume compiled by Paula Sanders).

<sup>334</sup>e.g. vol. I, p. 120-21 [391].

<sup>335</sup>vol. I, pp. 164-5 [419] (includes a return verse); I, pp. 185-7 [432]; and see also below.

<sup>336</sup>e.g. vol. I, p. 115-16 [389] (includes a return verse).

<sup>337</sup>see below.

would be insufficient to dismiss the poet as an epigon; many of his poems exhibit original features and succeed in developing and expanding traditional motifs. One of Abulafia's *qaṣīdas*<sup>338</sup> opens with a garden description that includes a boasting match among the flowers reminiscent of the debate among garden animals in Ibn Gabirol's *lekha re'i ve-re'a ha-me'orim* and the debate among body limbs in Abraham Ibn Ezra's *ḥadashim ma'aseh 'el*. The poem is dedicated to the sons of Shoshan who had arrived from Marrakesh; the *takhalluṣ* involves a play on the name Shoshan, meaning "lily,"

1. Distresses fled and relief came, lights rose upon faces that had formerly set.
2. The face of the earth was embroidered with flowers as if set with ornaments or neck-pendants.
3. A swift sang upon branch and bud so that they danced and clapped before him.
4. The flowers went out like kings and they boasted one to another without mouths.
5. A rose arose to boast and swagger, his lips brimming with laughter, mocking.
6. "I am thought a king amongst his troops when the flowers are marshalled as a troop.
7. When lovers recite poetry to them (their beloveds), they compare their beloveds' cheeks to my appearance."<sup>339</sup>
8. A crocus responded. "Silence, there are many things more wondrous than you!
9. If they likened you to a cheek, behold they gazed at me and were unable to speak of my glorious beauty.
10. There is none in existence to conceal the advantage of my flowers over all other flowers.
11. They only turned red because they were embarrassed because of me, by your life they are astonished and gaze at me in wonder!
12. Your leaves turned green only because they envied my pleasant appearance!"
13. A lily (*shoshan*) answered, before him a multitude making a ruckus of pride and fierceness.
14. "My soul is not prideful of silly vanities in the way that you brag and crow over empty things.
15. Why should I boast when it is enough that the sons of Shoshan are named after me!"
16. They are the ones who were formed according to their own desire, created in time according to their will.
17. They look like men, not rams, yet lions fear the pride of their might at the time of battle.
18. Rescued from their enemies, they reproach the righteous and crush oppressors.
19. On a day of battle they find death sweet and on a day of generosity they despise possession.<sup>340</sup>
20. You, O community of poets, if you exalt the name of another, you will sin against Time.
21. Sing to them all, choose from among them the prince whose deeds are all wondrous.
22. He is the [healing] sun of righteousness:<sup>341</sup> lo, his waters will flow gold eternally and

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<sup>338</sup>vol. II, p. 64-65 [569].

<sup>339</sup>i.e. I am red like people blushing.

<sup>340</sup>i.e. they are ready to give away their possessions in generosity.

will not be held back.

23. Waters like clouds or the eyes of lovers over the tents of beloveds that have become desolate.

24. Those who assign a limit to his status are thought like those who set a border for the sea and mark it out.

25. Were it not for his honor and existence in Time,<sup>342</sup> the earth would vomit out its inhabitants.

26. He covers Time, beneath his wings his loved ones are concealed from the vicissitudes of Time.

27. They hide and Time does not know their whereabouts, they see Time but do not fear it.

28. By virtue of his humility, he chose to dwell on the earth though he has stations borne above Orion and the Great Bear.

29. He illumines the face of the earth as if his parents prophesied when they gave him the name, "Meir"<sup>343</sup>

30. Take, O outstretched cherub,<sup>344</sup> the ornamented work of an artist, as if it were weighed against gold and jasper.

31. Your name is like flowing myrrh that reaches every region, like your mention, (my words) dart like eagles.

32. Your kindness wearies men,<sup>345</sup> they [always] find space to sing your praises.

33. [When they praise] you, they tell the truth, but when they praise a prince other than you, each and every one of them fabricates lies and falsehood.

34. My soul thirsts for you, for souls of honor always thirst for the souls of potentates.

35. My soul and heart grew ill when you departed, but they were healed when they beheld your glory:

36. When you came to dwell in their midst, they drew (themselves) out of the body, they went out to petition your kindness.

As mentioned, a boasting match among fixtures of the garden is also known from Ibn Gabirol's poem, in which the poet steps into the debate and silences the participants. In Abraham Ibn Ezra's debate *qaṣīda*, the debate between the limbs takes place within a dream from which the poet awakes to the sound of a heavenly voice, directing him to seek out the *mamdūh* as judge. In this example, the lily (*shoshan*) actually wins the debate because the praiseworthy Shoshan family is named after it. As discussed above in the section on the *takhalluṣ*, mediating transitions through a name play is not uncommon. The shift from praise of the Shoshan family to Meir (he who illumines) in particular also involves a name play that is hinted at in the poem's opening line, "light rose upon faces

<sup>341</sup>based on Malakhi 3:20.

<sup>342</sup>i.e. in his age, generation.

<sup>343</sup>meaning "he who illumines."

<sup>344</sup>or "anointed cherub," based on Ezekiel 28:14.

that had formerly set.” Already the reader is thinking of light, the source of which is ultimately the *mamdūh*, Meir, who illumines the earth (29). Thus a chiasmic pattern between reference and object referred to may be observed: Light - Lily / Shoshan - Meir.

Other semantic patterns may also be observed. One root that repeats many times is *g'h*, to be proud or boastful; the root is connected with the flowers (4, 5, 13, 14) and then with the *mamdūhs*, from whom lions flee fearing the “pride of their might” (*ge'on uzam*) (17). Line 17 particularly echoes line 13, in which the lily speaks before the multitude making a ruckus of “fierceness and pride” (*b'oz u-ve-ga'avah*). While the flowers' pride is only vanity, the Shoshan family possesses real pride and glory. Similarly, in the crocus' boast, it claims that lovers fail (*la'u*) to speak of its glorious beauty, while the poet remarks that the patron's kindness wearies (*hel'ah*) men. While the crocus is only aggrandizing itself, the patron is truly beyond all praise. This contrast is emphasized again by the repetition of the root *hll*, to praise (9, 32-33). Also, while the flowers go out (*yas'u*) to praise themselves (4), the poet's heart and soul go out (*yas'u*) to publicize the *mamdūh*'s kindness (36). In addition to these significant semantic repetitions, other roots repeat with less clear purposes. In line 2, the earth is likened to ornaments (*hala'im*) while the poet refers to his poetry as ornamented work (*ma'asei hala'im*) in line 30. While the rose boasts that it is considered *nehshav* like a king in a troop (9), the poet denounces the futility of trying to set a limit to the patron's status, stating that those who do so are considered (*nehshavu*) like those who try to place a border on the sea (24).

In another example, the poet opens with a typical portrayal of a lovely woman, a gazelle who preys upon the hearts of her admirers. When the poet makes the transition to praise, he makes explicit contrasts between the treacherous beloved and the generous patron that were generally implicit in the Andalusian corpus,

1. With her eyes the gazelle preyed upon me so that my soul was placed in captivity.
2. They said to me, “She is a Levite.”<sup>346</sup> I said, “Can a Levite hunt a lion?”

3. Her hair is like a guard over the garden of her cheek, lying in wait like a wild beast.
4. Weapons of destruction are in her eyes but in her mouth are balsam for the sick and revival for the dead.
5. Her saliva is sweeter than honey; even had I not tasted it, it would be visible on her lips.
6. With<sup>347</sup> deceit and sword she hunted my soul for the lax does not roast his catch.<sup>348</sup>
7. With her passion she devoured my heart so that one burn followed another.
8. There is none like her in all the earth; has one like you, O prince, ever existed or been created?
9. She is unique, and you are unique, yet she was formed only to be your companion!
10. You are pleasing to your brethren as she is pleasing to every eye that beholds her.
11. You laugh when you distribute pearls whereas she laughs when those who love her scatter pearls weeping.<sup>349</sup>
12. A graceful wreath upon her head, your kindness is a wreath upon Time's head.
13. In truth, your glory befits one such as her just as she befits you.
14. Pursue her passion, lord, do not abandon your love and the love of gazelles....<sup>350</sup>

In the several verse transitional section (8-13), the oppositions between beloved and patron are brought into bold relief. Throughout the poetry of the Golden Age, these oppositions are embedded in the discreet parts of the poem so subtly that they are missed by most readers. Here, the same basic relationships between beloved and patron are retained and continue to revolve around word repetition, now contained within the same line. The patron laughs when he generously gives away his wealth (pearls) while the beloved laughs when she causes men to cry tears (pearls); men find the patron pleasing (on account of his generosity) while they find her pleasing on account of her physical beauty, etc. This shift hardly signifies that Abulafia did not understand the convention of separating sections of the *qaṣīda*; on the contrary, the poet is well aware of the convention and chooses to modify it slightly by creating an extended *takhalluṣ*.

In addition to sending *qaṣīdas* couched within a suite of short poems, Abulafia occasionally sent series of full length poems that had to be read together. In one such set, Todros follows a *qaṣīda* containing unflattering remarks about the patron's father with an

<sup>345</sup>i.e. men fail to praise your kindness sufficiently.

<sup>346</sup>i.e. a poetess, since Levites sang songs in the Temple.

<sup>347</sup>following the suggestion of the editor.

<sup>348</sup>cf. Proverbs 12:27.

<sup>349</sup>i.e. You laugh when you generously give out fine gems as if it were nothing, while she laughs cold-heartedly at the suffering of those who love her.

apologetic *qaṣīda*, explaining that the statements in the first poem are only made in accordance with the deceitful practices of poets, who always pepper their verses with false hyperbole and rhetoric.<sup>351</sup> In the apologetic poem, Todros toys with the conventions of *qaṣīda* composition, creating a parody of hackneyed *nasīb* motifs. As Ross Brann has stated, the poem is a “meta-*qaṣīda*,” a tongue-in-cheek overview of the devices used by poets in *qaṣīda* composition, deeming them deceptive treachery.

1. A poet speaks only deception and composes poems<sup>352</sup> about what never occurred.
2. What is poetry except for lies that a poet prattles to the tune of the lute?
3. The poem is beautiful and ornamented by virtue of its lies and epigrams as a tree is ornamented by virtue of (its) leaves.
4. Therefore poets customarily introduce words of deceit at the beginning of every panegyric.
5. Sometimes calling the miser a generous man and the generous man a scoundrel.
6. Among the poets is he who calls his fate a fate that is harsh and malevolent
7. When all the while he spends his years in happiness<sup>353</sup> and has come into good fortune.<sup>354</sup>
8. Many sing nothing but verses of erotic pleasure when they have wasted their “branches”<sup>355</sup> with desire.<sup>356</sup>
9. Another is always talking about Separation and saying that pains<sup>357</sup> have seized him.
10. That he moans by day without respite and pastures the constellations<sup>358</sup> by night.
11. When the sun is at high noon<sup>359</sup> he testifies that heaven and earth are dark.
12. Another swears his heart and soul are dragged toward a gazelle without a rope.
13. He says that a fawn stole his heart, when he is a willing servant<sup>360</sup> to the house of harlotry!
14. He’ll swear that the light of his (the fawn’s) cheeks shames the luminaries of heaven when there is none to shame<sup>361</sup> [them].
15. He’ll groan how his body has become so emaciated that the ants have nearly dragged him off.

<sup>350</sup>L., p. 123-25 [394].

<sup>351</sup>vol. I, pp. 173-4 [424]. The set of poems is discussed and partially translated by Ross Brann, *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 151-55, though the reader will notice several significant differences between Brann’s translation and my own.

<sup>352</sup>*meshalim*, see part two of this dissertation on the usage of this word as “poems.”

<sup>353</sup>based on Job 21:13.

<sup>354</sup>literally, “Delightful possession has fallen to him.” based on Psalm 16:6.

<sup>355</sup>possibly a euphemism for “their genitals.”

<sup>356</sup>this translation would fit the repeating pattern, “The poet claims that a situation is x but really it is the opposite of x.” Alternatively, the second hemistich could mean, “but they ruin their song with [too much] desire.”

<sup>357</sup>as in Daniel 3:25. Alternatively “chords.”

<sup>358</sup>*kesilim*, this plural form occurs in Isaiah 13:10.

<sup>359</sup>literally, “half way across the sky.”

<sup>360</sup>literally, “pierced,” a sign of willing enslavement.

16. But fat has built up inside him, flab on the loins!

As Brann has mentioned, all of the stock subjects of the *qaṣīda* prelude are set up to be lampooned, creating a screen behind which the poet is able to maintain his dissembling persona.<sup>362</sup> The joke, of course, is that in using poetry to berate poets, he is praising his craft's deception even as he mocks it. While this poem is not the final entry in the Hebrew *qaṣīda*'s history, it does complete a developmental circle that progresses from imitation to elaboration and concludes with the greatest tribute to a literary form's preeminence, its parody. It is hardly sufficient to relegate Todros to the status of "epigon." Certainly, the poet sees himself as an inheritor of the Andalusian literary tradition and often preserves the conventions of that tradition when it befits his literary and social purposes. Still, his oeuvre should not be understood as an attempt to preserve the literary culture of a past era only. The examples discussed here amply demonstrate the poet's ingenuity and ability to modify, tweak and perhaps even recreate a literary form with critical distance, imaginative talent and a humorous spirit.

The school of Hebrew poetry to receive the least esteem in scholarship is the circle of poets that sprang up in late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Saragossa, including such poets as Solomon Da Piera, Vidal de la Cavalleria (Joseph ben Lavi), Vidal Benvenist, and Solomon Bonafed. The period has been titled broadly as the "decline of Hebrew poetry in Spain" and has been awarded such titles as "Dichterling" and "pathetic."<sup>363</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of critical editions of these poets' *diwāns* makes a true assessment of their poetry difficult to ascertain.<sup>364</sup> Some recent scholarship has

<sup>361</sup>or "molest," based on Judges 18:7.

<sup>362</sup>also see Brann's discussion of the return verse in this poem.

<sup>363</sup>Scheindlin gives an account of scholarly attitudes in his article, "Secular Hebrew Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Spain," in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, edited by Benjamin Gampel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 25

<sup>364</sup>a critical edition of Benvenist was prepared by Tirza Vardi as a master's thesis, "Shirei Don Vidal Benvenist: mahadurah biqortu be-liviat mavot, meqorot, u-ve'or" (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987). Critical editions of DaPiera and Bonafed are being compiled by Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos.

partially vindicated the school by beginning the process of studying the poetry's departures from convention and unique qualities.<sup>365</sup> With respect to the fifteenth century *qaṣīda*, Scheindlin points to two shifts using examples from Vidal Benvenist that open with nature descriptions.<sup>366</sup> In one example<sup>367</sup> (modeled after Halevi's *ereṣ ke-yaldah haytah yoneqet*), the poet opens a panegyric with a description of a garden that is compared to a girl who has desire for the poet; the poet spurns the girl, and hence the garden, and seeks the beauty of wisdom, a quest that naturally leads him to the *mamdūh*. Scheindlin concludes that the poem is reflective of a new value system quite distant from that of Islamic Spain, "No longer is the life of pleasure, which had been celebrated by the master poets of the Arabic period, a part of the satisfied self-image of the Jewish aristocracy; it has been replaced by more sober values."<sup>368</sup> Scheindlin's second example<sup>369</sup> combines panegyric (in praise of Joseph Ben Lavi and his family) with satire (directed at Solomon Da Piera) in the second section. In the prelude, the poet first dedicates several lines to describing the unhappy state of the earth in winter followed by its transformation with the coming of spring.

1. The poor girl<sup>370</sup> who yesterday was like a woman in mourning put on a crimson cloth, white linen and violet;
2. [Now] she wears a precious mantle, when yesterday she wore darkness like a widow, a woman bereaved.
3. She is the earth, in winter she seemed like an incurable woman without hope.
4. Like a gazelle whose lover wandered afar, she removed her ornaments as if stripping [them off].<sup>371</sup>
5. The [healing] sun of righteousness<sup>372</sup> departed from her so she was dismayed by the

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<sup>365</sup> Tirza Vardi, "ḥatuna be-Agramont..." compares some of Bonafed's epithalamia with the conventions of Golden Age wedding poetry; Scheindlin, "Secular Hebrew Poetry...." studies some shifts in the construction of the *qaṣīda* during this period (more below).

<sup>366</sup> it should be noted that opening a panegyric with a nature description is very rare in Benvenist's poetry; the two examples cited by Scheindlin are the only such examples. It is much more common to begin with the praise of poetry or language or the poetry of the *mamdūh* in particular.

<sup>367</sup> Tirza Vardi, "Shirei Don Vidal...", part 3, pp. 64ff [118].

<sup>368</sup> "Secular Hebrew Poetry...." p. 29.

<sup>369</sup> Vardi, "Shirei Don Vidal..." part 3 pp. 11ff [11] = Schrimann, HHSP. 2:599.

<sup>370</sup> Schirmann and Vardi have *dallah*; Scheindlin prefers the alternate reading in one of the manuscripts, *kallah*, and translates "bride."

<sup>371</sup> cf. Exodus 33:6, "The Israelites stripped off the finery from Mount Horeb on."



- hoar frost.
6. The trees of her delight dried up and found no ruler nor governor to raise fruits.
  7. Her tendrils dried up and seemed like useless hair locks of old age.
  8. Until winter passed and went and the sun moved in the bosom of Aries and Taurus.<sup>373</sup>
  9. He kept approaching day by day to tend to the feeble earth.
  10. By virtue of his light, the ends of the earth lit up: she removed<sup>374</sup> her mourning clothes from every inch<sup>375</sup> of ground.
  11. The earth was like a graceful wife to him, he the husband of her youth and she was married to him.<sup>376</sup>
  12. She conceived and bore him children, weaning myrtle branches upon her bosom.
  13. She bore children of grace, shoots of splendor, like the color<sup>377</sup> of pomegranate, lily and crocus.
  14. A grapevine gave forth its scent to all who passed as if it were a spice merchant.
  15. Her scent revives the hearts of the broken hearted; by virtue of her, the sad soul seems to cry out (with joy).
  16. She lit a fire of love in the hearts of men of passion and is like a consuming fire within their spirits.
  17. Then the spirit of friendship led my soul and she (my soul) descended into the nut garden and there she encamped.
  18. Amidst the fields of delight in the company of loved ones: by virtue of them my soul delights and is arrayed in standards.<sup>378</sup>
  19. The company of the sons of Lavi is the crown of every honor, for it [the company] is crowned with pleasant deeds.
  20. She [my soul] calls to Joseph ahead of them all and asks his mouth for hidden wisdom.
  21. She asks for a word of wisdom concerning the stations of the sun, how it moves and orbits.
  22. Or how the moon renews itself and how it waxes and wanes, how it disappears in gloom.
  23. She [my soul] looks at things below [and asks] how they are linked with the ends of the heavens like a chain.
  24. She was still speaking when a false gift of a poem arrived: it was like one praising itself.
  25. Boasting, saying "In my hand are all the pastures of poetry, I bring forth<sup>379</sup> its lines."
  26. I heard its voice but did not believe it and considered it self-aggrandizing.
  27. It offered its hand [to make a covenant]<sup>380</sup> with poetry experts but it is only a defective form and not complete.
  28. I said, "I will respond to its voice, lest its soul will be prideful and disgrace the poets of the age."
  29. But my soul took advice when my friends said, "Have patience for the words of old men."

<sup>372</sup>see Malakhi 3:20.

<sup>373</sup>spring constellations.

<sup>374</sup>literally, "plundered."

<sup>375</sup>literally, "part."

<sup>376</sup>or, "had intercourse with him."

<sup>377</sup>although *'ein rimon* is a place name in Nehemiah 11:29, "color of pomegranate" seems the best translation here.

<sup>378</sup>i.e. is honored.

<sup>379</sup>based on Isaiah 51:2.

<sup>380</sup>cf. Ezekiel 17:18.

30. And [my soul] heeded the advice of Meshulam ben Shelomo<sup>381</sup> though it (the advice) is called "treacherous" to those who rebel against it.<sup>382</sup>
31. She [my soul] shall honor the days of old age according to the commandment of my loved ones, before you she shall be like one bowing low.
32. She abandons the weapons of strife, calls peace by your name, and loathes all envy and disputation.
33. Therefore, she rules over its [my poem's] spirit and composes a poem of friendship for you.

The poem may be divided into two main parts, each of which may be further divided:

- I. Nature description (1-18)
  - Earth in winter (1-7)
  - Earth in spring (8-18)
- II. Panegyric (19-33)
  - Praise of Ben Lavi (19-23)
  - Satire of Da Piera's poetry (24-31)
  - Concluding dedication (32-33)

The *takhalluṣ* occurs over lines 18 and 19, narrowing in from the pleasurable company the poet finds in the nut garden to the specific company of the Ben Lavi family. As Scheindlin points out, this poem, though certainly tied to the Andalusian tradition, differs from its precursors in significant ways. The poet finds a clever way of combining praise with invective; soon after the *takhalluṣ* and the panegyric in praise of Joseph Lavi there appears a second, unexpected transition to the lampoon of Da Piera's poem. Such a technique occurs nowhere in the poetry of Muslim Spain and is not simply reflective of an inability to adhere to the norms mandated by the earlier school. Though the poet claims to restrain himself from satirizing Da Piera, the lingering and biting critique is more than obvious. Da Piera is only "spared" further insult by calling attention to his old age, thus adding insult to injury. As Scheindlin suggests, the contrast between the earth's appearance before and after spring mirrors the division between panegyric and invective; the abandoned, sickly state of the earth in winter is analogous to the poetry of Da Piera while the earth in spring befits the praise of Ben Lavi. Scheindlin thus finds the poem "quite satisfying in its symmetry."

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<sup>381</sup>Meshulam Da Piera, a poet of the thirteenth century, who apparently offered some wisdom concerning exercising patience with the speech of the elderly. Vardi suggests a specific verse.

In addition to this striking structural feature, the poem also makes use of repeating semantic and thematic elements. Most significantly, the theme of old age (*seiva*) that is so prominent in the satirical section of the poem (29, 31), is prefigured in the description of the earth in winter (the satire's analogue); the tendrils of the earth are likened to the useless hair locks of old age (7). A strong contrast is drawn between the Ben Lavi family, which is crowned (*mukhlelet*) with pleasant deeds (19) and the poem of Da Piera, which is defective and not complete (*kolelet*) (27). The theme of the sun (called *shemesh* and *hammah*) surfaces in several parts of the poem. In winter, the sun wanders (*na ve-nad*) from the earth (5) and passes through Taurus and Aries in the spring (8); the praise of Joseph Ben Lavi focuses on his knowledge of scientific matters, such as how the sun moves (*na'ah*) (21). The concluding words of lines 18 and 26 form a contrasting paranomastic pair: by virtue of the *mamdūh*, the poet's soul is arrayed in standards (*nidgelet*) while Da Piera's poem is not truly honorable but is only self-aggrandizing (*mitgaddelet*). Several other roots and themes repeat with less significance. The sun moves through the bosom (*heiq*) of constellations (8) in spring and the earth weans myrtle branches on her bosom (*heiq*) (12). The root *mshl* repeats numerous times; in the description of winter, the earth finds no ruler (*memshelet*) to gather fruit (6). In the concluding line, the poet uses the root in two senses; the poet's soul rules over (*moshelet*) the spirit of the poem and composes (*moshelet*) a poem (*meshal*) of friendship.

Following the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the *qasīda* form all but disappears. In Arabic speaking territories, the term *qasīda* comes to signify any poem in general (both for Hebrew and Arabic poetry) or, when referring to a particular form, it is not one that can be identified with medieval model.<sup>383</sup> The form never became popular in Italy, although the poem *zeman hikkah be-ḥeṣ shamun levavi* by Judah Abravanel,<sup>384</sup>

<sup>382</sup>I agree with Vardi that this verse is difficult to understand.

<sup>383</sup>see the review of scholarly literature above.

<sup>384</sup>Jefim Schirmann, *Mivḥar ha-shirah ha-ivrit be-italyah* (Berlin, 1934) p. 216-222; see the English

composed in 1503, preserves a basic two part structure. The poem opens with a complaint against Time (including some personal information) and concludes with a moral exhortation for the poet's son. However, rather than linking the two sections through a transitional device, Abravanel simply concludes one theme and picks up another without linking them in any logical way. Although there is some precedent for such a transition in Arabic poetry, the overwhelming tendency of Hebrew *qaṣīdas* to include a progressive transition suggests that this poem falls outside of the *qaṣīda* tradition even as it harks back to it. Abravanel, whose diction and style suggest thorough familiarity with the Iberian, particularly Andalusian, poets, may have found the tradition of synthetic transitions aesthetically deficient.

## THE *QAṢĪDA* AND THE POETICS OF LONGING

Chapter four introduced the poetics of nostalgia bound up with the *qaṣīda* tradition with specific reference to the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid and Moses Ibn Ezra. Each of these poets exploited the *qaṣīda* form, particularly the nostalgic motifs associated with the *nasīb*, to express emotions of loss and estrangement following the political upheavals they witnessed--the fall of Cordoba in 1013 and the Almoravid attacks of the 1090s. In particular, Moses Ibn Ezra utilized such themes as weeping over ruined abodes and pasturing stars through an endless night to capture his emotions of displacement in Christian Spain and nostalgia for the Andalusian past. The following discussion briefly complements the treatment in chapter four by pointing out the use of the *qaṣīda* form and motifs of estrangement in the poetry of Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi. While these poets did not use the *qaṣīda* to refer to political displacement, they did utilize the form in friendship poems, even if only in the service of hyperbole and convention. Documenting these poems is important for creating a comprehensive literary history of the

translation and article by Raymond Scheindlin. "Judah Abravanel to His Son." *Judaism* 41, no. 2 (1992):

Hebrew *qaṣīda*.

In the following discussion, distinctions are drawn among the terms “estrangement,” “longing,” and “nostalgia.” Although often related, their meanings are not identical. “Estrangement” is understood as the feeling of being displaced in the environment that one occupies, often in contrast with one’s feeling in another place. “Longing” expresses a desire for something that is distant. “Nostalgia” may encompass both of these feelings, but relates specifically to longing for a place or state that is not only distant but lost, irretrievable.

As mentioned, the use of the *qaṣīda* to express emotions of loss and nostalgia originated in the Hebrew tradition in the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid. The tradition continued in the poetry of Solomon Ibn Gabirol, though not in response to the destruction of a city or a political upheaval. Despite the common portrayal of Ibn Gabirol as friendless, the poet occasionally lamented the departure of loved ones,

1. My friends, desist from me! I weep bitterly, perhaps I will extinguish the flame of my heart with my tears.
2. For my heart burns like Tofet,<sup>385</sup> my bones like straw, behold my fire pit (is equipped with) fire and firewood.
3. When sleep and slumber descend upon my eye, my eyes’ sleep flies off and my sleep wanders.
4. I wander and watch the stars of heaven and its constellations as if it were my occupation to study their secrets.
5. A dove upon a branch laments her sister who departed and wails as I do.
6. Whenever I stop and hope to find healing, distress rouses my heart and my trouble increases.
7. I die in my pain, though the balsam of Gilead is before me; I thirst for water though the Gihon river<sup>386</sup> is close by.
8. By my life, I hope for his life and tranquility, though he rejoices on the day of my distress and hopes I will be wiped out.
9. I loved him with all that I had and with a pure heart, but my reward was naught, my compensation was deception.
10. By God, my friends, loved ones who departed--when they became distant so my joy and happiness wandered afar.
11. I saw them upon their camels, my heart turned, my strength stumbled and my succor was spent.

pp. 190-99.

<sup>385</sup>A site near Jerusalem where human beings were sacrificed by fire in pagan periods (II Kings 23:10). The whole verse is based on Isaiah 30:33.

12. How can I live after they have gone, how can I go on with their leaving when they are my spirit, soul and breath?
13. Can a man live and persist without breath, behold my body remains without breath.
14. May God be with them when they travel and when they encamp, may they be before my eyes when I travel and encamp.
15. May He give them drink at every station with rain like the water of my eyes, may He cause dew and rain to fall upon them like my tears.
16. May He kill their camels that carried them for they carried away my peace and tranquility.
17. I hope that my heart will return to my body. I hope to find healing and a medicinal drink for my ailment.
18. When I return to my loved ones, keep their covenants and see their faces that illumine my gloom.
19. Ahiyya, who makes my soul live by the wisdom of his mouth, and though he prolongs my sickness, in his words is my healing.
20. And Isaac, the earth smiles when he passes through and becomes proud and mighty on account of his might, as I am proud (of him).
21. And Hayyun, upon whose well-being my life depends, I pass away when his well-being fails.
22. The three of them are my aid, my strength against my enemies, my sword, my club, my spear and my shield.
23. I engraved them upon the tablet of my heart, my liver, the pupil of my right eye.<sup>387</sup>

As in the poetry of the Nagid, we find the common motifs of estrangement and longing: weeping (1), insomnia (3), constellation gazing (4), a dove's participation in lamentation (5) and the departure of friends (10). Most significant is the theme of friends departing on camels, clearly evoking the departure of tribes motif dating back to pre-Islamic poetry.<sup>388</sup> Departure upon camel is a way of expressing the long duration of the journey and its likely finality, the departure from a place never to return. In a sense, Ibn Gabirol is only reinvigorating with Arabic a theme already present in the Bible, as when Rebecca mounts a camel when leaving her father's house to marry Isaac (Genesis 24:61) or when Jacob sets his wives and children on camels, leaving Paddan-Aram for Canaan as God commanded (Genesis 31:17). Although the memory of a former time lurks in the background, the poem may not be called nostalgic properly for it refers explicitly to the distress of the present only.

As discussed in chapter four, there was a surge of expression of estrangement and

<sup>386</sup>Genesis 2:13.

<sup>387</sup>ed. Jarden, p. 45-47 [23].

nostalgia in the poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra, not only because this poet was more classical in his use of *nasīb* themes, but because he was responding to the dissolution of his political-social environment. The themes introduced by Samuel ha-Nagid--insomnia, wandering, pasturing stars--all became extremely prevalent. The proliferation of *qaṣīda* themes was also characteristic of the poetry of Judah Halevi, who utilized the *qaṣīda* form in some of his friendship poems. For Halevi, however, the language of longing was more connected with the general context of separation from friends than with the collapse of Andalusia *per se*.

In friendship poems, Halevi often made use of the thematic material of estrangement and longing so poignantly developed in Ibn Ezra's verse. The following *qaṣīda*<sup>389</sup> excerpt is dedicated to the Ben Ezra brothers (probably the sons of Abraham Ibn Ezra) who were residing in Granada at the time of the poem's composition.<sup>390</sup>

1. Tears that were like the dew of Hermon, why have they become waters of Dimon?<sup>391</sup>
2. They were clear when love was new, but separation has made them red.
3. No lover is without wandering, and this turns the songs of my mouth into a lament of Hadardimon.<sup>392</sup>
4. My heart is in so many pieces that I can disperse it like cumin powder.
5. I weep in the deserts and anger the clouds, for there I reveal all that I have hidden.
6. To the extent that Jealousy chides, "Why don't you cause fruits to blossom in the wasteland?"
7. And I answer, "My tears are not few, there is no multitude as great as theirs."
8. Had the flame of my heart not boiled off the waters from my lake of tears like vapor.<sup>393</sup>
9. [My tears] would have watered the parched places such that cedar, acacia and plane would sprout there."
10. How long will I drink the bitterness of separation? How long will I linger in horror.
11. To see if my path might be prosperous, if Time has treasures in store for me?
12. I pray, will Time be abundant for me or will the end of my days be as the first?
13. My ambitions build but it [Time] destroys; I cannot build a palace because of it.
14. Until I meet the two illustrious ones who were nourished at the breast of a worthy woman...

<sup>388</sup>see also chapter three in connection with desert motifs.

<sup>389</sup>ed. Brody, II, p. 278-80 [55].

<sup>390</sup>see line 45 of the poem and Brody's note, which identifies *beit rimon* with Granada.

<sup>391</sup>which were flowing with blood (Isaiah 15:9).

<sup>392</sup>based on Zechariah 12:11.

<sup>393</sup>literally, "waters of Agmon," based on Job 41:12. Commentators disagree over the exact meaning. Ibn

The first three lines address the poet's emotional transformation brought on by separation from the *mamdūh*. As in many of Moses Ibn Ezra's poems of wandering, the theater of the poet's experience is transformed into the desert (5) where the poet weeps bitterly for the separation of his friend. In addition, the poet has a memory of a former period when Time was abundant for him (12). Thus, Halevi is well aware of the conventions of *qasīda* composition and can execute them effectively. Still, the poet is not using the register of estrangement to memorialize an entire culture; there is no memory of a "land more pleasant than all other lands," as Ibn Ezra lamented.<sup>394</sup> Rather, Halevi is simply expressing longing for the *mamdūhs* who are residing in Andalusia. While the poet may have been residing in Christian Spain at the time of the poem's composition, his location had little bearing on his experience of separation.

The language of estrangement is even more striking in the following excerpt.<sup>395</sup> which is taken from a *qasīda* Halevi addressed to Solomon Ibn Ghiyat,<sup>396</sup>

1. A generous<sup>397</sup> eye that roves like a saleswoman takes wandering and gives out pearls and precious stones.<sup>398</sup>
2. Drops of beryl, which would be assembled as a necklace were it not for the vaporous fire within them.
3. It goes on weeping over the ruined dwellings of loved ones, it refuses to hear a voice and refuses to speak.
4. It is not enough for the hand of Wandering to destroy their dwellings but it strips down the walls of my heart to its beams.
5. They<sup>399</sup> acted like strangers to me, as if I did not know them, though my heart recognizes that which my eye fails to grasp.
6. The Lord favors the path of the wandering [who took] the sleep of the "generous eye," scattering its tremendous wealth.<sup>400</sup>
7. I would console myself a bit for the wandering of gazelle-troops were the troops above<sup>401</sup> not a reminder to me.

Janāh suggests "risen steam" (*al-bukhār al-murtafa min al-mā'*), which fits well here.

<sup>394</sup>see chapter four.

<sup>395</sup>Brody, I, pp. 137-141 [94]=Schirmann, HHSP, I, p. 449-454 [182].

<sup>396</sup>possibly the grandson of Isaac Ibn Ghiyat (d. 1089).

<sup>397</sup>i.e. ever-giving in tears.

<sup>398</sup>*dar ve-soheret* - Esther 1:6. The identification of the latter stone is uncertain, though here it is clearly meant to imply the eye's tears even as it provides a complete *tajnis* with the word concluding the hemistich, *soheret* also meaning "female merchant."

<sup>399</sup>it is ambiguous whether this refers to the poet's friends or the dwellings. Brody first suggests the former but allows the latter as a possibility. Schirmann follows the second suggestion.



8. When the moon conspires against her king,<sup>402</sup> thinking that he went and sank like led in the western sea.<sup>403</sup>
9. She unsheathes flaming swords of lightning and chastises the earth's back with staves of fire.
10. Flashes of lightning lead a gazelle<sup>404</sup> to dance in the golden flap of a veil, leaping and whirling.
11. The earth stands ready in a mail of gloom, the stars launching a spear girded with sparks.
12. She (the moon) runs and then dims; there is a moment when she stands upon the face of the sky with the semblance of a golden wedge in a mantle.<sup>405</sup>
13. The face of the earth<sup>406</sup> altered with the dust of battle is like the face of the lady [the moon] strengthening her soldiers.
14. I pasture the flock and guide them with difficulty as if only sick and crippled [sheep] were in my flock.
15. I weep for the departure of the daughters of the Great Bear and envy the Pleiades for being eternally close-knit.
16. With the form of a hand she supports the heavens so that they will not collapse, she spread the span in order to measure the curtains of the heavens.
17. Have the chariots of the sun halted, has the eastern limit been shut up or its path been blocked?
18. When will onyx become pearl?<sup>407</sup> [When will] a black veil [become] a rising cheek of dawn?
19. I despise my night such that in my eyes the moon appears a plague-spot spread like an eruption on a black man's skin.
20. When I see a tongue of flame flickering I rejoice for perhaps it is heralding the rising of dawn.
21. Night is like a black man, will his skin ever change? The firmament is like a leopard, can it ever lose its spots?<sup>408</sup>
22. An eye waiting to behold the brightness of the sun grows desperate for the hoof beats of its chariot are tardy.
23. A breeze, its foot among the garden beds, exposes hidden love from the midst of the myrtles.
24. Winged creatures chirp and a far-off dove, a stammerer, speaks to me eloquently!
25. She drips pleasant drops and sends down love's dew like manna while she shakes out the dew of night from her wings.
26. She burns frankincense and opens up a bundle of myrrh, or is the poetry of Shelomo bound to her talons?...

Determining the context of this *qasīda* is extremely difficult. The poem was written in response to a certain Solomon Ibn Ghiyat, who is otherwise unknown. While many

<sup>400</sup>i.e. the wanderers made the eye an insomniac and drove it to tears.

<sup>401</sup>i.e. the stars.

<sup>402</sup>i.e. the sun.

<sup>403</sup>i.e. that the sun had set in the western sky, never to rise again.

<sup>404</sup> interpreted alternatively as the moon or as the earth.

<sup>405</sup>cf. Joshua 7:21.

<sup>406</sup>Schrimann, "the moon."

<sup>407</sup>i.e. when will night become morning?

<sup>408</sup>i.e. its stars; the expression is adapted from Jeremiah 13:23.

scholars have assumed that this Solomon is the son of the well-known Judah Ibn Ghiyat who appears in the dedications of several of Halevi's poems and from whose pen fine examples of poetry survive, Schirmann suggests that the addressee is a different person.<sup>409</sup> The poem was accompanied by a letter in rhymed prose,<sup>410</sup> which unfortunately does elucidate the poem's context.

Many of the major themes that have been identified with estrangement are present (and beautifully executed): weeping over ruins (1-4), the departure of cultured loved ones (6-7), night description (7-14) including pasturing stars (14) and the slow, endless night (14-19). The mood of distress is amplified through the imagery of violence in the night sky: the treacherous moon conspires against the sun (8) and punishes the earth with lightning staves and flaming swords (9). The references to ruined abodes and the departure of loved ones (3-6) naturally remind the reader of the relentless laments of Ibn Ezra.

Still, it is worth considering whether this complaint has any relationship to Andalusia per se or whether the employment of estrangement motifs is a mere affectation meant to impress and entertain Halevi's fellow *littérature*. It is possible that Halevi is lamenting the departure of friends from Andalusia for Christian Spain; this would explain the ruined abodes (7), the wandering of gazelle-troops that trouble the poet (7), the favor God shows to the wandering (6), and the poet's envy for the close association of stars in the Pleiades (15). It is even possible to understand the poet's desperate search for the sun past the closed-off eastern limit (17, 22) as a look toward Christian Spain (called "East" in some of Halevi's poems), hoping that his friends might return. On the other hand, complaint over separation is an almost requisite component of the friendship poem; the more intricate the complaint, the more effective the praise. The poem may well have been written from one Andalusian to another without there being any reality behind the ruined

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<sup>409</sup>*Toldot ha-shirah...muslemit...*, pp. 516-17.

abodes.

While it might be tempting to view this poem as another memorialization of Andalusian decline that would parallel Ibn Ezra's poems, some aspects of the poem suggest that this is not the case. Unlike the poems of Ibn Ezra, a stark contrast is not drawn between present and past. While there is a clear memory of associating with friends, gardens are not becoming ruins; gazelles, although departed, are not being supplanted by jackals and ostriches. There is no attempt to memorialize the culture being longed for; it seems entirely possible that it will flourish and be enjoyed again. Furthermore, the time sequence identified with nostalgia in several of Ibn Ezra's poems (present leading to a lost past) is absent. The long tormenting night finally gives way to a fresh morning when the wind disperses hidden spices through the garden and a dove (carrying a poem from the *mamdīh*) shakes off the dew of night (23-26). For these reasons, it would be difficult to call this poem "nostalgic" in the grand sense; this feature is predominantly the domain of Moses Ibn Ezra's poems.

<sup>410</sup>Brody, II, p. 329-30 [118].

## APPENDIX B

### A NOTE ON MEDIEVAL TRANSLATION THEORY

Translation from Arabic to Hebrew was the literary equivalent of the transplanting of Andalusian Jewish social and communal organization to the Christian North. The act of translating intimated that it was not the Arabic language but the contents of Arabic culture that were essential to Jewish self-definition in the Christian environment.

The translation movement began not in Christian Spain but in Provence with Judah Ibn Tibbon, who was driven out of Andalusia in the 1140s, settling in Lunel around 1150.<sup>1</sup> For several generations, the Ibn Tibbon family vastly transformed the possibilities of Hebrew by systematically creating a philosophical vocabulary into which texts could be rendered for the benefit of non-Arabized Jews. The first Judeo-Arabic work to be translated from Arabic to Hebrew was the introduction of Bahya Ibn Paquda's classic *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, followed by Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* and Sa'adia Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*. The canonical translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* was executed by Samuel Ibn Tibbon. Further translations by the Ibn Tibbons made most of the Greek and Arab philosophy that had reached the Jews in Andalusia accessible to Provencal Jewry.

A second and more modest school of translation, if it may be designated as such, emerged in Toledo in the thirteenth century. Judah al-Harizi began a translation of Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah, completing the introduction and the first five tractates of *Seder zera'im*, and was then invited by Provencal intellectuals to compose a translation of the *Guide of the Perplexed*.<sup>2</sup> Also, al-Harizi and his younger contemporary

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on the Ibn Tibbon family and its translations, see Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 222.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to translations of Maimonides and al-Hariri, al-Harizi made translations of other classical and

Jacob ben El'azar moved beyond scientific and philosophical literature and made translations of *belletristic* writings. Al-Ḥarīzi composed a rendering of al-Ḥarīri's *maqāmāt* in literary Hebrew and Jacob Ben El'azar wrote a Hebrew translation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.

The study of these translations as translations, rather than faithful representations of original works, is a field in its infancy. Translation is always interpretation, especially as the translators (or "re-writers" as they are sometimes called in contemporary scholarship) are interpreting one cultural discourse to be intelligible in another. This is true even when "Jewish" texts (i.e. those in Judeo-Arabic) are being translated for a "Jewish" (non-Arabic speaking) audience.

As it is widely recognized, translators are faced with many choices in determining a method of translation.<sup>3</sup> They choose between creating a text in the target language that mimics the original as closely as possible and creating a new text that is either more accessible or more attractive, perhaps at the expense of accuracy. Through translators' choices, we can extrapolate which aspects of Arabic intellectual culture were deemed useful or essential for Jewish intellectual culture in the Christian environment.

The following discussion has two parts. The first part contrasts the translation methods employed by Judah al-Ḥarīzi and Samuel Ibn Tibbon in their renditions of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. The second part addresses the methods of translation used by the Toledan translators in their rewritings of belletristic works. Both sections treat the competing ideologies surrounding the expansion of the Hebrew language in the thirteenth century as Judeo-Arabic culture was replanted in the Christian north. Whereas the translators of Provence sought to transmit the Judeo-Arabic heritage accurately even at the expense of Hebrew's purity and eloquence, the translators of Christian Spain sought to preserve the literary ideals of the Andalusian Hebrew school, perhaps at the expense of

Arabic works. A complete list is given in chapter six of this dissertation.

accuracy.

Scholarship comparing the various translations of the *Guide of the Perplexed* has generally sought to determine which translator produced the most accurate rendering of the original.<sup>4</sup> Leaving the question of accuracy aside for a moment, studying translation technique provides a window into some of the processes underlying cultural transition in the thirteenth century. Through translators' choices, we can evaluate some distinctions between intellectual ideals in Christian Spain and Provence. Moreover, we learn what role translators believed Hebrew would play in the budding intellectual culture of the Christian lands.

Judah Ibn Tibbon held deep reservations about Hebrew's ability to accurately convey Arabic writing during the early stages of the translation enterprise, admitting that "Arabic is ample and eloquent...but of the Holy Tongue we have what is found in the Bible only."<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps this "under-confidence" that led this school of translation to take all possible measures to ensure the preservation of the Arabic, even at the expense of accessibility. In their zealous effort to recreate Hebrew to fit the needs of Arabic, the Ibn Tibbons created a synthetic language that left not a few readers baffled. The Tibbonid method of translation aims to be extremely literal, preserving much of the syntax of the original Arabic, even though the translators were writing for a non-Arabized audience. Furthermore, when existing Hebrew terminology seemed insufficient the Ibn Tibbons readily adopted calques from Arabic terminology, which might be as unintelligible to the Hebrew reader as the Arabic original.<sup>6</sup> For example, Tibbonid Hebrew rendered the

<sup>3</sup> see Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations* 4 (1968): 69ff.

<sup>4</sup>see also Yair Shiffman, "The Differences Between the Translations of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* by Falaquera, Ibn Tibbon and al-Harizī, and Their Textual and Philosophical Implications," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 44 (1999): pp. 47-61; this article focuses on Falaquera's critique of Ibn Tibbon's translation, showing that Falaquera's emendations show him to be correct on textual and philosophical grounds.

<sup>5</sup> Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: E. J. Brill, 2000), p. 228.

<sup>6</sup>Calques are employed despite the admonition by Judah Ibn Tibbon to his son that such terms should be

Arabic word *jism*, “body” but in the philosophical sense of something corporeal, as *geshem*. Apparently, it was the duty of the cultured reader to master the vocabulary and style of the new Hebrew. While offering the strength of being very “accurate,” such a method renders a new text that can be cumbersome to the Hebrew reader, especially one who is not trained in Arabic. Indeed, testimonies from the early thirteenth century indicate that readers sometimes found the Tibbonid translations impenetrable. It is perhaps for this reason that notables of Provence commissioned al-Ḥarīzi to compose a translation of the *Guide* in “simple and clear words” (*milim peshuṭim ve-ṣaḥīm*), as al-Ḥarīzi mentions in his introduction to the work.

As a versatile translator, al-Ḥarīzi adopts somewhat different translation methods when adapting legal, philosophical and belletristic texts, albeit with some points of commonality. He often strives to compose Hebrew using the biblical lexicon only, largely suppressing Rabbinic Hebrew and the Arabic calques common in Tibbonid translations. Interestingly, while al-Ḥarīzi repeatedly uses the root *gshm* (a calque of the Arabic *jism*, “body,” popular in Ibn Tibbon’s translations) to mean “corporeal,” he defends its usage in his introductory glossary of difficult terms by explaining its “biblical” origin.<sup>7</sup> Al-Ḥarīzi’s most explicit note on translation theory is found in his introduction to the translation of Maimonides’ commentary on the *Mishneh*,

This is the method of translation toward which I incline and the way upon which I travel. In most cases I translate word for word although I strive to comprehend the topic first; I do not cease pursuing it and its young<sup>8</sup> on the road until [I reach] the place where its tent had been formerly (Genesis 13:3). When I find a lone Arabic word that rebels against me,<sup>9</sup> taking the road of rebellion like a fleeing maidservant, the warriors of my thought pursue it to the point of collapse and all its pursuers reach it in straits. And when I encounter a difficult word in Hebrew, I say it another way; I remove it from its

avoided (at least in poetry). “Use no strange constructions nor foreign words, even if they are justifiable by analogy, for the foreign word is not natural.” See Israel Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1926), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>al-Ḥarīzi writes in the glossary, “*gashmut ‘o hagshama*, its interpretation is to explain that the Creator does not have a body, as in “*ve-geshem yegaddeh*” (Isaiah 44:14), whose interpretation is ‘body.’” This is farfetched of course, since the word is generally understood as “rain” in this case.

<sup>8</sup>i.e. its implications, details.

mistress and give its majesty to her friend who is better than she. Every Arabic word I wish to express, I come up with three or four [in Hebrew], the best of which I use; I choose their course and preside over them (Job 29:25). I glean and snatch the sweetest words from the Holy Tongue. I pick a tender twig from the tip of its crown so that the words may enter the heart of the listener and so that they will be straightforward to the one who understands. The wise men of every nation agree that one cannot translate a book until he knows three things: the secret of the language from whose territory he is translating,<sup>10</sup> the secret of the language into which he is translating, and the secret of the wisdom whose words he is explaining. By these three matters the string of rhetorical language will enchant, and the threefold cord is not easily broken.<sup>11</sup>

This formulation, written with a high degree of literary flair, captures the attitude toward the Hebrew language al-Harizi expresses elsewhere, as in the introduction to the *Tahkemoni*. Hebrew writing, even when rendering a foreign text, must be smooth, rich and eloquent, sweet and enchanting to the ears of the listener. Although al-Harizi usually strives to translate literally, he is also concerned with choosing the “sweetest words” so that they might “enter the heart of the listener.” There is also an implicit polemic concerning Hebrew’s superiority over Arabic. Arabic words act rebelliously like a “fleeing maidservant,” which might be a veiled reference to Hagar, the matriarch of the Arab people and hence Arabic, reminding the reader of Abraham’s preference for Sarah, the matriarch of Jews and hence Hebrew. Arabic words can be translated with “three or four” Hebrew words, among which the translator can choose, implying that Hebrew is richer than Arabic.

The differences in translation method between Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Judah al-Harizi may be illustrated by comparing typical parallel passages in their translations of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Below are parallel translations from Part I, chapter 31 of the *Guide*, following an English translation from the original Arabic,

Moses Maimonides<sup>12</sup> Know that the human intellect has objects of apprehension (*madārik*) within its power and its nature to apprehend. Yet there are in existence (*al-*

<sup>9</sup>i.e. that is difficult for me to translate.

<sup>10</sup>i.e. the language from which he is translating.

<sup>11</sup> M. D. Rabinovitz, *Rabeinu moshe ben maimon: haqadamot le-ferush ha-mushnah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kook, 1961), p. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Moshe Ben Maimon, *Dalalat al-hā'irīn*, edited by Solomon Munk (Jerusalem, 1929), pp. 42-43. (My translation of the Arabic).



*wujūd*) existing things (*mawjūdāt*) and matters that are not within its nature to apprehend through any means or any cause: rather (*bal*), the gates of apprehending them are shut before it. There are in existence matters that it apprehends in one state (*hāla*) but is ignorant of in other states. Its being something that apprehends does not require that it apprehend everything, just as the senses (*hawās*) have apprehensions though they cannot (*laysa laha*) apprehend them from any distance...

Samuel Ibn Tibbon Know that the human intellect has objects of apprehension (*hasagot*) within its power and nature to apprehend. Yet there are in existence (*meṣi'ut*) existing things (*nimṣa'ot*) and matters that are not within its nature to apprehend through any means or cause: rather (*aval*), the gates of apprehending them are shut before it. There are in existence things of which it apprehends one matter (*inyan*) but is ignorant of in other matters. Its being something that apprehends does not require that it apprehend everything, just as the senses (*hushim*) have apprehensions but do not (*velo*) apprehend them from any distance...

Judah al-Harizi<sup>13</sup> Know that the human intellect has objects of apprehension (*hasagot*) that it can apprehend with its power and its nature. Yet there are in the world (*'olam*) existing things (*nimṣa'ot*) and matters that are not within his power and nature to apprehend through any means or any cause because (*ki*) the gates of apprehending them are shut before it. There are in the world things of which it apprehends certain matters (*'inyanim mevhadam*) [only]. [Just] because it is something that apprehends does not require that it apprehend everything, just as the senses (*regashim*) have apprehensions though it is not in their power (*'ein be-koham*) to apprehend those apprehensions from any distance...

The general similarity between al-Harizi's and Ibn Tibbon's versions is apparent. In many cases, al-Harizi uses the same terminology as Ibn Tibbon, particularly when a readily understood Hebrew term that is a cognate of the Arabic original is available. Both Ibn Tibbon and al-Harizi translate the Arabic terms *quwwa* and *ṭabī'a* (power and nature) with their Hebrew equivalents *koah*<sup>14</sup> and *teva*. On the other hand, al-Harizi is less zealous to use Arabic calques when comprehension might be compromised. Thus, whereas Ibn Tibbon uses a Hebrew neologism for "existence" (*meṣi'ut*, from the root *mṣ'*, "to find," imitating the Arabic *wujūd*, from the root *wjd*, "to find"), al-Harizi opts for the simpler term *'olam*, "universe" or "world," following Rabbinic usage.<sup>15</sup> In many cases, Ibn Tibbon

<sup>13</sup> Moshe Ben Maimon, *Moreh ha-nevukhim be-tirgumo shel rabbi yehuda al-harizi* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1953) . p. 116.

<sup>14</sup>although *quwwa* and *koah* are not true cognates, the similarity in their sounds probably contributed to the Hebrew usage.

<sup>15</sup>However, al-Harizi does seem comfortable with the word *nimṣa'ot* for "existing things." Perhaps he was troubled by the redundant sound of "be-meṣi'ut nimṣa'ot."

translates Arabic words into Hebrew cognates based on rare biblical precedents, such as his translations of *hawās*, “senses” as *hushim*, based on the usage of the root in Ecclesiastes 2:25. Wishing to avoid confusion, al-Ḥarīzi translates the term as *regashim*, a more common word for “feelings” and hence “senses.” This phenomenon is also observed in the authors’ translations of the word *raqāba*, “providence” (from *rqb.* “to watch, supervise”) in Part III chapter 17 of the *Guide*. Ibn Tibbon uses the word *hashgaha*, also carrying the sense of “providence” in Rabbinic Hebrew (based on its usage in Psalm 33:14). Imagining that the term might be difficult for the Jews of Provence and in harmony with his explicit statements about translation method, al-Ḥarīzi opts for the more common *shemira*, “watching, guarding,” even though it does not capture the concept of providence as precisely.

Ibn Tibbon is also more consistent in preserving the syntax of the Arabic original. Although the reader can sense Arabic pulsing beneath the surface of Ibn Tibbon’s and al-Ḥarīzi’s Hebrew, its presence is more pronounced in Ibn Tibbon’s. Ibn Tibbon is consistent in translating Maimonides’ *bal*, “rather” or possibly “moreover” with the Hebrew cognate *aval* whereas al-Ḥarīzi freely substitutes the word *ki*, “because.” In the final section of the passage, Ibn Tibbon translates the idiomatic *laysa laha*, “they cannot” (literally, “it is not to them”) with the morphologically approximate *ve-lo*, even though this renders the phrase “they do not” rather than “they cannot.” Al-Ḥarīzi, on the other hand, moves further from the morphology of the original and translates idiomatically, *‘ein be-koḥam*, “it is not in their power.” Finally, al-Ḥarīzi sometimes rewrites certain sections altogether. Ibn Tibbon translates the sentence “There are in existence matters that it apprehends in one state (*hāla*) but is ignorant of in other states” as “There are in existence things of which it apprehends one matter (*inyan*) but is ignorant of in other matters,” simply substituting the imprecise word *inyan* for the Arabic *hāla* because of Hebrew’s

deficiency. Al-Harizi, probably struggling to find a Hebrew equivalent for “state,” translates even more loosely, “There are in the world things of which it apprehends certain matters (*inyanim meyuhadim*) [only].”

Although he strove to translate “word for word,” al-Harizi also aimed to create a text that was straightforward and concise. Al-Harizi’s word choices were determined, in part, by his patrons’ request for “simple and clear words.” At the same time, however, his method reflects a different attitude toward the role of Hebrew in the Christian environment. Hebrew must be kept pure and uncontaminated by a foreign vocabulary that would render Hebrew a derivative language. Interestingly, al-Harizi, who composed original poetry and prose in Arabic and was far more dedicated to Arabic as a living literary language than Ibn Tibbon, was less concerned with letting the Arabic beneath his Hebrew show through. For Ibn Tibbon, Hebrew was the new vessel that would contain Arabic and Judeo-Arabic thought; infusing Hebrew with some of the feel of Arabic may have created the sense that Hebrew was capable of such a daunting task. For al-Harizi, Hebrew and Arabic were separate spheres and should remain so. Al-Harizi’s insistence upon a pure Hebrew tongue may be seen as a direct continuation of the values of Andalusian Hebrew writers who composed in a pure Hebrew, in part, to compete with claims of Arabic’s inimitability. Perhaps even more important to al-Harizi than the preservation of the content of Arabic and Judeo-Arabic works was the preservation of the Andalusian literary ideal.

This point is even more apparent in al-Harizi’s translation of al-Hariri’s *maqāmāt*.<sup>16</sup> In Toledo, al-Harizi and Ben El’azar created translations of belletristic works that not only aimed to capture the sense of the original but to create new works that were

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<sup>16</sup> al-Hariri. *Maḥberot ‘iti’el*, translated by Judah al-Harizi, edited by Yiṣḥaq Peres (Tel-Aviv: Moledet, 1951); for studies, see Jefim Schirmann, *Die hebräische Übersetzung der Maqamen des Hariri* (Frankfurt a.M., 1930); A Percikowitsch, *Al-Harizi als Übersetzer der Maqamen Al-Hariri’s* (Munich, 1932); Abraham Lavi, “A Comparative Study of al-Hariri’s Maqamat and Their Hebrew Translation by al-Harizi” (Ann Arbor, Mi: University of Michigan, 1979). Some aspects of the translation are discussed in

belletristic in their own right. This method is stated explicitly in Ben El'azar's introduction to his translation of *Kalila wa-Dimna*, a classic book of didactic and moral animal fables,<sup>17</sup>

I translated this book from the Arabic language and changed some of its words so that it would be sweet, for it is not possible or reasonable to translate from one language to another letter by letter, for the word is spoiled once it leaves its language: its splendor and tumult decline. In places I subtract from their words and in [other] places I add to their words and set in all of its themes a word aptly spoken. Every translator who does not adorn it [his book] when producing it in his own language, the splendor of such a book will dwindle and its color will fade, its fountain will be parched and its spring dried up (Hosea 13:15). Therefore, every translator of a book from one language to another must adorn it and maintain its glory and not break his pledge.<sup>18</sup>

In creating less literal translations, al-Harizi and Ben El'azar would rewrite one discourse into a referential field specific to another. When possible, al-Harizi preserves the literary, sometimes orthographic, conceit around which al-Harizi structures a *maqāma*. Thus, al-Harizi builds his seventeenth *maqāma* around the composition of palindromes. Rather than translating the chapter literally, al-Harizi creates palindromes of his own, thus translating the story's central conceit rather than its precise meaning. In some instances, however, al-Harizi confesses that he cannot recreate in Hebrew a given effect created by al-Harizi in Arabic. In his sixth *maqāma*, al-Harizi includes an epistle made up of words that alternatively contain pointed and unpointed letters. In his translation of the epistle, al-Harizi includes a footnote with some resignation, "This is the epistle half of which consists of pointed letters in the Arabic language and half of which consists of unpointed letters. I am therefore unable to translate the art (*melekhet*) of this epistle into the Holy Tongue.

chapters six and seven of this dissertation.

<sup>17</sup>probably originating in India, these stories are known in Persian, Syriac, Arabic and other languages. There are several Arabic translations, the most famous of which is by 'Abdallah Ibn al-Muqafa'. It is unclear which Arabic version Ben El'azar had before him when creating his rendition, which is natural considering his liberal translation method. On *Kalila wa-Dimna* in general, see the article by C. Brockelmann in *EL*, vol. 4, pp. 503-06. Ben El'azar's translation has received relatively little attention, but see Ángeles Navarro Peiro, "La versión hebrea de *Calila y Dimna* de Ya'āqob ben El'azar," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden, Boston, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 468-75.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Derenbourg, *Deux versions Hébraïques du livre de Kalilah et Dimnah* (Paris: F. Vieweg, Libraire-Éditeur, 1881), p. 314. One should compare this with the note on translation by Dante in the *Convivio*. "Everyone should know that nothing that is bound by musical harmonies can be translated from its own language into another, without completely disrupting its sweetness and its harmonies. And it is for this reason that Homer was never translated from Greek into Latin, as were other texts that we have from the [Greeks]. And it is for this reason that the verses of the Psalms are without sweetness and harmony, because they were translated from Hebrew into Greek, and then into Latin, and in that first translation, all that sweetness disappeared..." Quoted in Maria Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and*

Still, I have translated its theme to be a reminder, to explain its sense and to make known its interpretation."<sup>19</sup>

By inventing different registers of the Hebrew language, the translators of Christian Spain and Provence laid distinct foundations for Jewish intellectual continuity after the Andalusian period. In Provence, Hebrew was recreated in the image of Arabic to fulfill the requirements of an extensive philosophical vocabulary. It is this language that would become the parlance of Jewish philosophy for centuries to come. The translation method of Christian Spain was more liberal regarding the preservation of meaning but more conservative regarding fidelity to existing Hebrew diction. In Christian Spain, greater emphasis was placed on the purity of Hebrew and belletristic writing than on philosophical precision, thus showing greater fidelity toward the Andalusian vision of the Hebrew language.

*the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 156-7.

<sup>19</sup>al-Harīri. *Maḥberot 'ittiv'el...*, p. 48.

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