

HISPANO-HEBREW STROPHIC POETRY*

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The conquest of Spain by the Arabs, allegedly prompted by leaders of the Jewish population after the fall of the Visigothic regime, 711, opened up an era in Medieval European history which stands unmatched as far as cultural enlightenment is concerned. Philosophy, belles lettres and the natural sciences flourished in the academies established by the Arab savants in such main urban centres as Cordoba, Sevilla and Toledo. The Arab conquerors, who named the newly acquired land Al-Andalus ("the country of the Vandals"), quickly adapted themselves to an environment, differing markedly in climate, population and language from their countries of origin (Iraq, Syria, Yemen etc.), or the North-African countries, through which they had passed on their march westwards.

From the year 711 to the establishment of the Caliphate in Cordoba, in 932, under Rahman III, political stability had been created on all administrative levels. During the course of time the cultural and religious centres of gravity shifted from the East to the Western part of the Muslim Empire. The once so famous Gaonic academies of Babylonia closed down in 1038, and new schools of Jewish learning consolidated themselves on the Iberian peninsula and gained full recognition as independent authorities from the Jewish communities as well as the Arabic Caliphate.

The situation of the Jews under Muslim rule has been well described by Morits Steinschneider: "Die Juden, welche unter den

christlichen Westgoten ein kümmerlichen Dasein aufrecht zu erhalten hatten, atmeten unter den Arabern auf und eigneten sich schnell genug deren Bildung und Sprache an, um zeitig an deren Pflege thätigen Anteil zu nehmen".¹

In the wake of the cultural revolution², often referred to as the "Golden Age", a new branch of scholarship came into being — Hebrew Philology. Grammatical schools of differing approaches vied with one another thus creating literature on etymology, syntax, lexicography etc. The importance of this development for Biblical and Talmudic studies was, of course, immeasurable³.

Steinschneider writes about Moses ibn Ezra, c. 1070—1134, famous for his Hebrew liturgical poems, "Moses hat die arabische Bildung ('adab) derart sich angeeignet und liebgewonnen, dass er sie unter seinen Glaubensgenossen literarisch zu verbreiten suchte"⁴. Moses ibn Ezra acknowledged the debt of the Jews to their Arab counterparts and in his principal treatise on Poetics, written in Arabic, he poses the rhetorical question, "How can it be explained that poetry is congenital among the Arabs, whereas among other people it seems an acquired skill"⁵. His deep admiration for the 'adab (belles-lettres) of the Arabs was to a certain extent shared by his younger contemporary and friend, Yehuda Ha-Levi, c. 1075—1140, although the latter, for "zionistic" reasons, denounced his attachment to Arabic culture towards his old age⁶.

Another of the great Hebrew litterati, the paytan and neoplatonic philosopher, Salomon ibn Gabirol, d. c. 1060, the latinized name of whom is Avicbron, realized the impending risk of complete assimilation into a Hispano-

* To the memory of Professor Bertil Maler.

Arabic socio-culture, and voiced his concern, "They (the Jews) know no Hebrew; half of them talk the language of the Christians, and the other half Arabic"⁷. We have similar statements from the Christian camp. As early as the middle of the ninth century the Bishop of Cordoba, Alvaro, complains that his co-religionists are better versed in the theology, philosophy and literature of the Arabs than with the Christian Holy Scriptures and more conversant with Arabic than with Latin. "Alas", he exclaims, "the Christians have forgotten their own language... they spend immense sums of money in collecting Arabic books for their libraries, and proclaim everywhere that this literature is admirable"⁸. In other words, the conquered Spanish population yielded, head over heels, to the culture of their conquerors, infinitely superior to their own.

Reinhardt Dozy, the Dutch Semitist, ascribes the success, militarily, politically and culturally, of the Arabs in Spain to the achievements of the abovementioned Abd al-Rahman III, the "hard-working" (l'ouvrier), who laid the foundation of the Western Islamic Caliphate in Cordoba. In an epitome of his person, and an epoch, Dozy summarizes: "This subtle and sagacious man, who centralises, who by means of his alliances establishes a sort of political equilibrium, who in his large tolerance calls the professors of another religion into his councils, is a modern king rather than a mediæval Caliph"⁹.

From the midst of this syncretistic, "Mozarabic", milieu a remarkable poetic genre emerged.

The Muwashshah

The study of Mozarabic (from Arabic, *mustariba*, to become arabicized) poetry has proved as one of the most fertile, and controversial, fields of research for Semitist and Romanist scholars, during the past three decades.

It commenced with Martin Hartmann's pioneering work, *Das arabische Strophengedicht, "Das Muwashshah"*¹⁰. Hartmann's study was based upon the available material, extracted from literary encyclopedias, compendious works of belleslettres ('adab), history books etc. written by Arabic scholars who lived and worked the majority of their lifetime in Spain (Al-Andalus) or North Africa (Al-

Maghreb)¹¹. His principal source was, however, a man of the East, the Egyptian magistrate and poet, Ibn Sana al-Mulk, c. 1155—1211. He lived in a turbulent time and experienced the overthrow of the Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty, the so-called "Anti-Caliphs", by the renowned Saladin, who gave name to the succeeding dynasty, the Ayyubids, 1171—1250, of Sunni (Orthodox) rule.

Besides his administrative duties Ibn Sana al-Mulk cultivated theological interests and, above all, poetry and rhetorics. He created around him an intellectual and literary salon and got in this way in contact with itinerant Arabic, Jewish and Christian poet-musicians and men of letters from the Eastern as well as the Western part of the Islamic Empire.

Ibn Sana al-Mulk's enthusiasm for the novel poetic art of Andalusia inspired him to write poems in the fashion of the Westerners, to the disregard of the "paralysingly conventional" (Nicholson) classical Arabic poetry. But he admitted frankly that his *muwashshahs*, which is the technical term for Andalusian strophic poetry, were only "mere shadows" of the genuine art, for the obvious reason that he was born and educated far from Andalusia.

As was customary among poets Ibn Sana al-Mulk's *muwashshahs*, 35 in all, were compiled in an anthology, a "diwan"; but contrary to practice our author attached to it, as an introduction, a reader's manual, describing in often painstaking detail the compositional act, the structure of the *muwashshah* and the function of its various parts, and depicting the fundamental deviations from classical poetry, e. g. regarding language and prosody. Most important of all is his description of the essential feature of the *muwashshah*, which bears the specific name of *kharja*¹², the last refrainlike stanzas of the *muwashshah*-poem.

As far as the subject-matter of the *muwashshah* is concerned "it can have as its theme any of the subjects of classical poetry, i. e. love, panegyrics, laments for the dead and satire on indecent or ascetic themes". The author included in the *Ars Poetica* a collection of 34 *muwashshahs* by 11th—12th century Andalusian poets, employing some of them as illustrative examples¹³.

Hartmann's book from 1897 contained a biographical chapter of Arabic *muwashshah*

poets, a descriptive part ("Formenliste" and "Versmasse"), and a chapter dealing with the history of the muwashshah genre. His approach to strophic poetry was classically biased (occasionally he strikes a polemic note, when, for example, he reproaches the 600 year earlier Ibn Sana al-Mulk with his positive attitude to Andalusian poetry and his manner of expressing it; similarly, when Hartmann blames the Andalusian poets for their disregard of the rules of the Arabic language, their use of "vulgar" themes and "corruption" of the little short of sacrosanct constituent of Arabic verse, *the metre*, he appears more papal than the Pope).

Commenting in passing on the Jewish participation in the poetic school of Andalusia, Hartmann opined overtly: "Es wird sich vielmehr wohl zeigen: taugten die Juden nichts, so taugten die Andren ebenso wenig oder weniger"¹⁴.

A technical parenthesis

Muwashshah poetry, and its sister genre the *zagal*¹⁵, broke with three of classical Arabic poetry's canonized laws, (1) the unity of language, e. g. the strict adherence to the grammatical rules, established by the philologists. There was allowance for poetic license, but they were also codified; (2) unity of rhyme, by W. Wright explained thus, "according to ancient rule, the two hemistichs of the first verse of a Qasida (classical ode of ab. 25—100 verses) must rhyme with one another, and the same rhyme must be repeated at the end of every verse throughout the whole poem"¹⁶; and (3) unity of metre. Once, as a rule, one of the sixteen classical metres had been chosen for a particular ode this metric pattern should be retained throughout the poem¹⁷.

Graphically the difference between the Qasida-like poem and the muwashshah appears as in the table, capital letters denoting common rhymes and small letters the changing rhyme-patterns.

The termini technici of the parts of the strophe follow two traditions²⁰. For practical reasons we adopt the following terminology: *matla'*, the prelude, being the first stanza(s) with common rhyme (AA); *ghusn*, the part of the strophe with separate rhymes (bbb, ccc, etc.); *qufl* (A), having rhyme(s) in common

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Qasida</i> ¹⁸ | A | A |
| ..... | b | A |
| ..... | c | A |
| ..... | d | A |
| etc. | | |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|---|
| <i>Muwashshah</i> ¹⁹ | | |
| matla' | ..... | A |
| pizmon | ..... | A |
| ghusn | ..... | b |
|  | ..... | b |
|  | ..... | b |
| qufl | ..... | A |
| ghusn | ..... | c |
|  | ..... | c |
|  | ..... | c |
| qufl | ..... | A |
| | . | |
| | . | |
| ghusn | ..... | d |
|  | ..... | d |
|  | ..... | d |
| kharja | ..... | A |
|  | ..... | A |

with *matla'*; *ghusn* + *qufl* constitute a strophe = *bayt*.

Finally the *kharja* (AA), which according to our chief authorities, Ibn Sana al-Mulk and Ibn Bassam, sets the theme, rhyme and metre of the whole muwashshah²¹.

The Jewish poets and theoreticians used Arabic terminology or employed adaptations. In one case, however, they applied a "Hebrew" term, borrowed from liturgical poetry, viz. *pizmon*²², equivalent to *matla'* (supra).

The theory of Julian Ribera y Tarrago

Hartmann was more occupied with the study of the formal criteria of the muwashshah than with the actual artistic performance.

To Ribera it seemed obvious that the strophic form presupposed antiphonal singing. In his famous address to the Spanish academy, delivered in 1912, he expounded a thesis to the effect that the muwashshah was the imitation of a popular strophic form of lyric in Spanish. Referring to strophic verses from the song collection of Alphonso the Wise, d. 1284, and popular *villancicos* and *cantigas de amigo*, he reconstructed the performance of the mu-

washshah²³: The soloist, claimed Ribera, sang the *matla'* (*pizmon*), which was repeated by the choir. Then the soloist went on to sing the *ghasn* (the part of the strophe with separate rhyme) and the *qufl* (part of strophe with common rhyme) — and the choir concluded each strophe by repeating the *matla'*.

But there was still the song-technical function of the *kharja*, the last refrain-like stanzas, to be accounted for, the component which according to Ibn Sana al-Mulk "is the beginning (of the muwashshah) although it comes at the end".

Ribera's theory as regards the *matla'* is confirmed by the Jew, Tanchum Yerushalmi, c. 1250, by some referred to as "Abraham in Ezra of the East", due to his philological and exegetic research. In his dictionary to the Code of Maimonides²⁴ he writes a detailed exposition of the manner in which the muwashshah was sung in Egypt (!), "... And in the terminology of the muwashshah, when the person reciting has finished each verse, those present answer him with the *matla'*, which is the first verse of the composition. The rhymes of all the other strophes correspond to this verse at the beginning of the composition which is the *matla'*. The *matla'* is termed *pizmon* ("refrain") because it is given as a response as the reciter ends each strophe²⁵." If Fleischer is correct in assuming that the term *pizmon* "should be considered as a musical term rather than a prosodic or poetical one", borrowed from Greek *prosomoion*, "employed in early Byzantine manuscripts to denote poetical texts fashioned on the melodic prototype of another poem" interesting considerations arise as to the part played by the Jewish poets in the formation of the Hispano-Semitic poetry²⁶.

Samuel Miklos Stern's discovery

In the years 1947—8 scholarly research in the field of Hispano-Arabic and Hebrew strophic poetry took a completely fresh change of direction. S. M. Stern published two articles, which may well be considered as preliminary studies to his doctoral thesis (op. cit.). The first article entitled, "Imitations of Arabic muwashshahs in Hispano-Hebrew poetry"²⁷ dealt with the dependence of the Hebrew on the Arabic muwashshahs.

It was a well established fact that the Je-

wish poets of Spain adopted the practice of writing their liturgical and secular poetry in "the metres of the Arabs"²⁸. Less was however known about their imitative practice, contrafactum, i. e. the modelling of the poems on already existing rhythmic and textual patterns (cf. the abovementioned *pizmon* concept). Stern referred to several cases of the phenomenon from the so-called classical period, taking his examples from the great Hebrew poets, Yehuda Ha-Levi, Moses ibn Ezra, Abraham ibn Ezra and others. According to Stern the Hebrew imitation of Arabic muwashshah poetry was done in either of two ways. They copied the metre and rhyme of a given poem or took the entire *kharja* ("refrain") or part thereof in order to use these patterns as a base for their own compositions. *Mu'arada*, as this technique was called, played an important role in all subsequent muwashshah studies by Stern²⁹. His theory that Hebrew strophic poetry originated from the Arabic muwashshah still stands uncontested³⁰.

Stern's second contribution addressed itself to Semitic- and Romanse philology: "Les Vers finaux en espagnol dans les muwashshahs hispano-hébraïque: une contribution a l'histoire du muwashshah et a l'étude du vieux dialecte espagnol "mozarabe"³¹.

In this study, revised with the inclusion of Arabic muwashshahs with Romance *kharjas* in 1953, Stern touched at the very core of the strophic problem. Before presenting his material, Stern briefly bridged the gap between the two proposed theories of origin, "The Arabic thesis", propounded by Hartmann and the theory advanced by Ribera to the effect that the muwashshah developed from an "estrofa zejelsca con vuelta"³², popular strophic poetry in Spain, "the theories of Hartmann and Ribera, although at first sight contradictory, are not in fact mutually exclusive. One might well conceive how the *musamma*³³, in that it prepared the way for a strophic form of poetry, made it easier for a Romance popular form of poetry, the muwashshah to be accepted"³⁴.

This was as far Stern would go on the origin of the muwashshah. He refrained from speculations and when he made cautious conjectures about strophic archetypes, patterns of development and ways of influences he did so "sitting on the fence"³⁵.

As a demonstration of the problems facing the one who attempts to decipher Mozarabic

kharjas three examples will be given from the *Diwan* (anthology) of Yehuda Ha-Levi, edited by Chaim Brody³⁶ and based upon ms Oxford 1971 and ms Schocken 37. Both mss have this explanatory introduction: "Panegyric poems love songs composed in the metres of muwashshahs or zajals; their kharjas may be composed in Hebrew, Arabic or Spanish". The first two specimens belong to panegyric poems while the third is taken from a love poem with an underlying quality of eroticism. It should be noted, however, that a precise distinction between panegyric and love-poetry often is out of sight.

Ex. 1. (no. 2 according to Stern's enumeration³⁷, no. 31 in Sola-Solé)

g'r sbwsh dbynh 'dbynsb b'lbq
g'rm knđ mbrn'd mn hbyby 'shq

Apart from a minor emendation of the Hebrew consonantal text, suggested by Stern himself, scholars agree to this transliterated version, and the following vocalisation:

gare: *shosh debina e debinash bi-l-haq?*
gar-me kand me bernad mio habibi 'Ishaq?

Modern Spanish:

Dime: eres adivinadora / y adivinas con verdad?

Dime entonces cuándo vendrá a mí / mi amigo Ishaq?

(Tell me, are you a soothsayer / and do you tell the truth? Tell me, when will he come to me / my friend Isaac?)³⁸

Commentary: The transitional strophe (ghusn) to the kharja which like the rest of the muwashshah is in Hebrew runs as follows: "If each heart has the passionate desire to see the lord who is like "a mountain of myrrh"³⁹, so as to drink from his spring and listen to his words, we shall go to ask the soothsayer: ... (the kharja). In the kharja Yehuda Ha-Levi employs Arabic glosses as rhyme words, haq (truth) / Ishaq (Isaac) an ingenious practice which is also used in no. 3 (Sola-Solé, 32), no. 6 (34), etc. This practice had an important bearing on the ensuing combat after Stern's discovery, viz. whether these kharjas belonged to an oral popular tradition or were literary creations by the poets themselves⁴⁰.

צח.
הַכְּבוֹס הַלְּבָנָה.

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | אל [אבו] אברהם [יצחק] בן מהארי. |
| הַכְּבוֹס הַלְּבָנָה | אז בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּרָד |
| וְיֵן אֲדַמְדֵם הַיֶּרֶק | כּוֹס בְּלִבְנֵת סָפִיר |
| נֶאֱמַר הַבְּרָק: | וְדִבְתָם אוֹסִיר |
| אֶחָדָה עֵינַיִם | עַל־זִמְן שֶׁר מִסְפִּיר |
| שְׂבִיעָה יְדֵיִם | |
| כּוֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם | |
| בָּם הַנְּבִקֵעַ שַׁחַק | וְאֵנִי אֲדִבְנָה |
| לְנֶשֶׁק נָד יִצְחָק: | אז עָבָא רִזִּים יָרֵד |
| מֵאֲצִילֵי עֵינַיִם | הַנְּבִיר הַנְּאֲעֵל |
| אֶת־עַרְוֵי מִדְּלָלִים | אֵל זִמְן וְהַנְּעֵל |
| הַתְּלִיפֵי אֵלִים | כִּי כְּאִסֵּר מֵעַל |
| מַעֲלָה לֹא תִעָשֶׂה | נָד זִמְן הַבִּינָה |
| נִחְלִי לֹא נִתְקַב: | הַעַרְוֵי לֹא הַיֶּרֶד |
| רַב זֶרֶם מִנְעַר | זֶה אִסִּיר הַתְּסִיר |
| יִשְׁבִּי בְּלִשְׁעָר | מִתְּלִילֵי סִיאָר |
| עַל־שָׁמַיִם עִם שִׁנְעָר | מִנְעַרְבֵי וְתִיאָר |
| שֵׁם לְקַל־פֶּה יִמְתַּק | שֵׁם פֶּה־יֵשֶׁם בִּינָה |
| אִם יִבְרַח עֵתֶק: | יִאֲקִיף לְסִפְרֵד |
| בְּקִשׁוֹ אֶת־רַעְיוֹ | אִם לֵנֵד מִעֲרֵבָה |
| שְׂאֵלוֹ רַעְיוֹנֵי | אִם לֵנֵד מִתְּלֵבָה |
| וְתִלּוֹ לַעֲנִינֵי | אִי לְהֵן וְכִרְבָּה |
| מֶה לְכַבֵּד הַשֶּׁקַּח | הַשְּׂמֵאֵל הַיִּמִּינָה |
| אֶת־שֵׁמִי יְדֵיִ זֶקַח: | אִם לְהַנְּעִשִׂיר מִתְּנַד |
| לְחֻזֹת הַר הַמַּד | אִם בְּקַל־לֵב מִמְּאֹב |
| וְדִבְרוֹ לְשִׁמְד | מִמְּסֻרוֹ לְשִׁיאָב |
| בְּעִבְרוֹ לְאִמְר: | שְׂאֵלִים בְּעֵלֵת אוֹב |
| אֵד בִּינֵשׁ כְּאַלְהָק | נֶאֱרַ שׁוֹשׁ דְּכִינָה |
| מִן הַכִּיבִי אִסְחָק: | נֶאֱרַם כְּנֵד מִכְּרִנָּד |

Ex. 1. Panegyric poem by Yehuda Ha-Levi. The kharja is transliterated, translated, and commented in the text.

Ex. 2., (Stern, no. 7 b, Sola-Solé, no. 37 b, Gómez, no. 7 b and 18. The kharja has come down in two versions, the present one and in an anonymous Arabic muwashshah no. 7 a, etc.)⁴¹.

Consonantal text:

flywl 'lynw nmsb 'drmysb 'mw sb'nw

Vocalized text:

filyol alyenu non mas adormis a meu senu

Translation:

Hijo ajeno no mas te duermes en mi senu
(Estranged son / you sleep no longer in my heart)⁴².

Ex. 3., (Stern no. 8 c, Sola-Solé, nr. 29 c, Gomez, no. 8 ref. XXII a and b. The kharja is extant in three versions the present one by Yehuda Ha-Levi and two more in Arabic muwashshahs⁴³).

Theme: Erotico-love.

Consonantal text:

nn mt'nqsb y' hbyby f'nkr dn'sbw
'lgb1 'lh rhsh bsbt't hfrmsbw

Vocalized text:

non me tanges ya habibi fa-ankara danosbo
al-gbilala rakhsahu ... me refuso

Translation:

No me toques, oh mi amigo pues todavia es
dañoso
El corpino (es) frágil (a todo, basta,) me
rehuso
(Do not touch me, my friend / it may still
be harmful the under-garment is fragile /
(enough!), I withdraw!)

Commentary: The thematic connection between the kharja and the rest of the muwashshah by Yehuda Ha-Levi is struck in the last transitional strophe (ghusn), in Hebrew: "The day my hands wandered in the garden of her bosom / she said, TAKE YOUR HANDS AWAY! I have not yet known such things / she said to me words which melted my heart: (the kharja).

As this kharja belongs to the group of kharjas presenting difficulties due to linguistic ambiguities, readers are referred to the commentaries⁴⁴. The mozarabic "tone" is, however, unmistakable, revealing those essential traits of Spanish and Gallico-Portuguese erotico-love lyric apparent in villancicos and cantigas de amigo⁴⁵.

In a chapter of his thesis⁴⁶ "The Evidence of the Kharja — Traces of Lost Spanish Love Poetry?"⁴⁷, Stern concludes the controversial problem with a series of questions, e. g. "... may we give free rein to our imagination and assume that these Romance poems were in strophic form, that the Arabic muwashshah⁴⁸ was modelled on them, and that the kharjas are taken, say, from the beginnings of these Romance "muwashshahs"?⁴⁹. Stern leaves the conjectures in suspense, "From whichever angle we approach it, we find that the enigma of the origins of the muwashshah keeps its secret"⁵⁰.

The testimony of Ibn Sana al-Mulk

Although Ibn Sana al-Mulk does not provide the answer to the questions raised by Stern, he gives valuable hints pertinent to the kharja.

As to the content, he says that it must allude to a pungent and piquant theme, with a touch on impudence and hooliganism. Its language was foreign and unintelligible (scil. Romance), and the muwashshah composer took, arranged or composed a kharja *before* he dealt with the text, metre and rhyme of the muwashshah itself. Ibn Sana al-Mulk emphasizes that the kharja, although it concludes the poem, in actual fact is the beginning, viz. it must come to the mind of the poet, intuitively, before he proceeds to the more conscious (literary) act of composing. The kharja is in short the quintessence of the poem — in the words of Ibn Sana al-Mulk, "... the spice of the muwashshah, its salt, its sugar, its musk and its ambrosia"⁵¹.

Ibn Sana al-Mulk was neither a historian nor a methodical scholar. He was rather a poet with a highly developed and subtle artistic sense. His *Ars Poetica* does not claim to be a historical treatise or a chronological account of the evolution of the muwashshah but it certainly reveals a thorough knowledge and

a deep understanding of the creative process underlying the art of the poet.

Unfortunately neither our Egyptian authority nor the Andalusian Ibn Bassam provide us with examples of *kharjas* written in Romance⁵². Ibn Bassam, the classicist, to whom the strophic poems appeared unworthy of registration and inclusion in literary anthologies, would consider the *muwashshahs* as odd curiosities.

Ibn Sana al-Mulk, on the other hand, took the Andalusian poetic art seriously — but he was unable to record the final "unintelligible" lines, i. e. transcribe the Romance *kharjas* in the Arabic alphabet. He limited himself to a registration of *kharjas* in vulgar Arabic and the valuable information on Romance *kharjas* in general, making it abundantly clear that he was thrilled at the peculiar sounding refrains and appreciated their essential role. The lack of documentary evidence in the works of Ibn Sana al-Mulk and Ibn Bassam explains why Stern's discovery of Romance *kharjas* in Hebrew and later Arabic *muwashshahs* was sensational⁵³. His findings corroborated the allusions in the Egyptian *Ars Poetica* and supplied the necessary proof as to the author's veracity. From this evidence the following conclusions suggested themselves:

1. The *muwashshah* was in its original shape composed upon a Romance versicle (*kharja*, *estribillo*, *cantiga* etc.), and as a logical consequence,
2. the metre of the proto-*muwashshah* was unclassical.

As the implications of the first fact have been mentioned, we proceed to the subject of prolonged controversy, the metric problem.

Metric theories

Both Ibn Sana al-Mulk and Ibn Bassam explicitly state that the metres of the *muwashshahs* "followed other patterns than those of classical poetry"⁵⁴. Hartmann interpreted their statements to the effect that they were unable to scan correctly. He insisted that all *muwashshah* metres were quantitative, i. e. two short syllabic entities equalled one long, and constructed a system of 146 metric patterns claiming them to be variants of the 16 canonized metres⁵⁵. The quantitative approach has

remained in vogue to the present day. Also Stern has been cited in support of this theory in spite of the fact that Stern after the doctoral thesis attached very little importance to the metrical issue. The two characteristic conclusions (1) "metre is not an essential feature"⁵⁶ and (2) "in the present stage of our knowledge, speculations about the origins of Arabic strophic poetry, based on the metrical structure, end in a non liquet"⁵⁷, are in full agreement with Stern's reluctance to commit himself to hypotheses. Not unexpectedly the one to challenge the "quantitative metric approach" was a Spanish scholar. Emilio Garcia Gomez radically dismissed the traditional line of thinking and proposed a syllabico-accentual approach. His argument was as follows: The *kharjas* represented the earliest known Spanish lyric (archetypical *cantigas de amigo*, *villancicos* etc.); according to our chief authority, Ibn Sana al-Mulk, Arabic (and Hebrew) *muwashshahs* depended entirely on a preconceived *kharja*; hence, Gómez concludes, as all popular traditional poetry is syllabic, the metric structure of the *muwashshah* would, supposedly, also rest on the syllabic principle. Gómez has decisively directed what may be called a somewhat barren scholastic dispute on the metric problem towards new vistas.⁵⁸

Contrary to Stern, Gomez allots the metric issue a first priority in his deliberations. And most important of all, he emphasizes the close relationship between poetic meter and musical rhythm. He stresses the necessity of an interdisciplinary co-operation of Romance and Semitic philology in future research, and adds "... car nous n'oublions pas qu'au moyen age musique et poésie étaient indissolublement liées — qu'une troisième compétence encore plus rare serait souhaitable: celle d'un musicologue connaissant bien les techniques musicales et l'évolution historique des mélodies médiévales"⁵⁹.

Gómez was the first to recognize the value of the prosodic part in Ibn Sana al-Mulk's *Ars Poetica*⁶⁰.

A Hebrew origin

Was Hispano-Hebrew strophic poetry mere imitation of its sister genre, the Arabic *muwashshah*? Is Stern's claim true: "The Hebrew *muwashshah*... derives from Arabic literatu-

re, but in its turn exercised no influence whatsoever upon it"⁶¹.

The "passive role" of the Jews in the creative process of Andalusian literature has won general acceptance among scholars.

Two Spanish Hebraists, J. M. Millas Vallicrosa and Francisco Cantera, objected to this view and posed a "liturgical theory", suggesting an active participation of Hebrew liturgical piyyut-pizmon poetry in the formation of the secular muwashshah in Spain⁶².

In a schematic representation of the development of the muwashshah, they set the point of departure in Biblical "strophic" poetry, which at least in theme has striking resemblances with the themes of muwashshahs and kharjas (see Yehuda Ha-Levi, above). The technical and formal perfection was assumed to have taken place under influence of Byzantine responsorium and Hebrew pizmon, 5th—7th century, finally resulting in popular and profane Hispano-Hebrew and Arabic strophic poetry⁶³.

The liturgical theses leaves the Arabic-Persian *nussamat* (Hartmann) out of consideration and does little to explain the very crux of the strophic formation, viz. the function of the kharja. It would, however, not seem hazardous, to conjecture that the Jewish "responsorium", to use a phrase from Stern in another connection "prepared the way for strophic poetry (and) made it easier for a Romance popular form of poetry, the muwashshah, to be accepted". In the Geniza material discovered in the Fustat Synagogue in Egypt a wealth of Hebrew liturgical and muwashshah poetry, has been brought to light. In some anonymous Hebrew muwashshahs, kharjas in Romance and Arabic exhibit traits,

linguistically and metrically more "primitive" than the kharjas of Yehuda Ha-Levi or any of the extant muwashshahs in Arabic⁶⁴.

Concluding note

The discovery of the kharjas in Hebrew and Arabic muwashshahs is, as we have seen, of gross significance for a correct understanding of the muwashshah genre, its origin and structural development. Scholars have been liberal with theories on all the intricate questions of which the problem concerning the rôle of the metre probably has given rise to the most piercing controversies.

The metric problem still remains to be solved. Gómez' "syllabico-accentual theory" requires a thorough re-examination, especially with regard to its application to the Hebrew and Arabic part of the muwashshahs, and the paragraphs on prosody in Ibn Sana al-Mulk's *Ars Poetica*, being a sine qua non in kharja and muwashshah research, demands a re-newed analysis and appraisal⁶⁵.

But there are other perspectives around the Romance kharjas to be considered in future research, viz. Did there exist a preliterary popular school of Romance poetry in Spain, a "pre-troubadourian tradition"⁶⁶ which miraculously survived in the kharjas of the Hebrew and Arabic muwashshah composition?⁶⁷ Was it from Spain that the Provençal troubadours received "sinon leurs modèles, du moins l'image cristallisatrice"⁶⁸ for their court poetry? And, ultimately, what was the inmost cause of the poetic symbiosis, which sprung from the genii of Semites and Europeans, the muwashshah?

Footnotes

- 1 Die arabische Literatur der Juden, (Hildesheim, 1964), 114 sq., repr. of the Frankfurt a. M. (1902) edition, Bibliotheca Arabico-Judaica series; see also, I. Epstein, *Judaism* (First publ. 1959, repr. Pelican Book, 1979), 192 sq.
- 2 See, S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, 1958), VII, 135 sq.
- 3 "It is important also to observe the connexion, often hostile, of the philological study of the

Bible with that of the Halacha and Haggada", Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature*, (Hildesheim, 1967), 131. Repr. of London edition, 1857.

4 Steinschneider, *Arab. Lit. d. Juden*, op. cit., 149.

5 M. ibn Ezra, *Kitab al-Muchadara w'al-Mudhakara*, ms. Bodleian, Nb. 1974, ("Book of Notions and Memoirs"), transl. from the original Arabic into Hebrew by B. Z. Halper, Shirat Yisrael, ("Song-poetry of Israel"), (Jerusalem, 1967, new ed.). "Die einzige jüdische Adab-schrift", M. Schreiner.

6 Cf. Steinschneider, op. cit., 152—54.

- 7 'Anaq, lines 14—16. Gabirol's grammatical and didactic poem on the Hebrew letters of the alphabet.
- 8 R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, ed. 1956), 414—15.
- 9 R. Dozy, *Histoire des Musulman d'Espagne*, 711—1110, (Leiden, ed. 1932), II/3, 175. English transl. Nicholson, op. cit., 412. On Jewish participation in Muslim rule, see Epstein, op. cit.
- 10 *Ergänzungshefte zur Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, Semitische Studien*, Heft 13/14 (Weimar, 1897).
- 11 Ibn Abd Rabbihi, 10th century, Ibn Bassam, 12th century, Ibn Khaldun, 14th century, al-Maqqari, 16th century a. o.
- 12 Called by others *markaz*, "point d'appui".
- 13 Ibn Sana al-Mulk's text was edited by J. Rika-by, *Dar al-Tiraz, Poétique du Muwassah*. Edition critique d'après les mss du Caire et de Leyde (Damas, 1949).
- 14 Hartmann, op. cit., 45—6, note 3.
- 15 The muwashshah and zagal differ in the language they employ, the zagal being dialectical thought.
- 16 *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, rev. 3rd. ed. (Cambridge, 1955), II, 351.
- 17 *ibid.*, 358 sq. And Nicholson, op. cit., 71 sq. As in Greek and Latin, the classical metres are quantitative.
- 18 Nicholson, op. cit., 78.
- 19 In contradistinction to the qasida, the muwashshah has five or seven strophes with stanzas of alternating rhyme and of differing length. Ref. S. M. Stern, *The Old Andalusian Muwashshah*, (Oxford doctoral thesis, 1950), edited and published, posthumously, by L. P. Harvey, *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry* (Oxford, 1974). The edition contains five other important studies by Stern, including his paper at the Spoleto Conference (1964), "Esistono dei rapporti letterari tra il mondo islamico e l'Europa occidentale nell'alto medio evo?".
- 20 Cf. Stern, op. cit., 13—15.
- 21 Ibn Sana al-Mulk applies the term *qufl*, technically, to the *kharja*, which he names "the last qufl of the muwashshas".
- 22 See E. Fleischer, "Enquiries..." *TARBIZ* (1979), 189—91.
- 23 Ribera, *Disertaciones y Opúsculos*, (Madrid, 1928), I, 3—92.
- 24 W. Bacher, "Aus dem Wörterbuche Tanchum Jerushalmi's", *Jahresberichte der Landes-Rabbinerschule in Budapest* (1903).
- 25 Transl. from Stern, op. cit., 17.
- 26 In Geniza mss of piyyutim and secular Hebrew poetry the word *pizmon* appears with regular intervals in the margin after each strophe, possibly as an instructional indication to the precentor and frequently in abbreviated form, pz', pzm' etc. Pizmonim, conceivably, existed as independent strophe-like versicles in the Jewish secular and liturgical repertory as more "popular" correlates to the synagogal piyyutim. Cf. A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music* (Schocken ed., N. Y. 1975), 124 sq.
- 27 *TARBIZ*, XVIII (Jerusalem, 1946—7), 166—86.
- 28 Allegedly introduced by Dunash ibn Labrat, c. 920—990.
- 29 See especially, "An Arabic Muwashshah and its Hebrew Imitations", *Al-Andalus*, XXVIII (1963), 155—170.
- 30 The theory has been challenged by the Hispano-Hebraists, F. Cantera and J. M. Millás Vallicrosa, cf. "La canción mozárabe", *Publ. de la Univ. Internacional Menéndez Pelayo*, VII (Santander, 1957), but the challenge has been met with little response.
- 31 *Al-Andalus*, XIII (1948), 299—348. English translation in *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry*, op. cit., 123—60. Revised and enlarged edition, *Chansons Mozarabes*, (Palermo, 1953).
- 32 A penetrating exposition of the "Spanish" theory is found in R. Menéndez Pidal's essay, "Poesía europea y poesía árabe", *Bulletin Hispanique*, XL (1938), 337—423, repr. in *Colección Austral*, (Madrid, 1941).
- 33 A strophic form of Persian origin with an A bbb A rhyme pattern.
- 34 *Hisp. Arab. Poetry*, op. cit., p. 124.
- 35 Introduction to *Chansons Mozarabes*, op. cit., p. xx, "Comme le présent livre a pour but de présenter les faits sur la kharja sans avancer de théories, je ne me propose pas de discuter des questions comme celle de l'origine du muwashshah...".
- 36 *Diwan des Abu-l-Hasan Jehuda Ha-Levi* (Berlin, 1894/1930).
- 37 Cf. the kharja concordance in, R. Hitchcock, *The Kharjas, a critical bibliography* (London, 1977), 11—13.
- 38 Vocalisation and translation of the kharja based on E. García Gómez, *Las jarchas romances de la serie árabe en su marco*, App. I, *Jarchas de la serie hebrea* (Madrid, 1965), ed. 1975, 113—4.
- 39 *Song of Songs* IV, 6.
- 40 See, W. Ross, "Sind die Hargas Reste einer frühen romanischen Lyrik?", *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, CXCVIII (1959), 129—38 and G. Hilty "La Poésie mozarabe", *Travaux de Linguistique et de Literature*, VIII, 1 (1970), 85—100.
- 41 mu'arade ("contrafactum"), infra. The question "who copies whom?", cf. supra p. 10 n. 3.
- 42 The long process of restoration of delapidated kharjas and the difficulties of decipherment will appear from Hitchcock, "Some doubts about the Reconstruction of the Kharjas", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, L (1973), 109—19.
- 43 Both included in the Ibn Bushra anthology, discovered after the publication of Stern's, "Vers

- finaux...”, op. cit. One of the muwashshahs is by Ibn Baqi, "... in spite of his youth a sparkle of cleverness”, (Ibn Bassam), whose muwashshahs served as models for Abraham ibn Ezra. He lived in Toledo but had to flee to the South after the capture of the town by the Christians in 1086. The second is by Ibn Ruhaim, of whom less is known. He, too, was a contemporary of Yehuda Ha-Levi. Again we are faced with the problem "who imitates whom" or do all three of them base their compositions on an "archetype" from the oral tradition?
- 44 Stern, *Les Chansons Mozarabes* (Palermo, 1953). Gómez, (Madrid, 1965 and 1975), op. cit. and J. M. Sola-Solé, *Corpus de Poesia Mozárabe* (Barcelona, 1974). See also, Hitchcock's bibliography op. cit., Index, p. 67.
- 45 Transferred to Arabic kharjas, too. Cf. present writer in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, VII (1976), 24—7.
- 46 op. cit.
- 47 *ibid.*, 56—62.
- 48 And its Hebrew "imitation".
- 49 *ibid.* 62
- 50 *ibidem.*
- 51 Dar al-Tiraz, Rikaby ed., op. cit., 30—31. Cf. the translated extracts of the treatise by Hartmann and Stern, op. cit. A complete translation, in Spanish, has been provided by E. G. Gómez, "Estudio del Dar at-Tiraz", *Al-Andalus*, XXVII (1962), 21—104. See also, the present writer, *Al-Andalus*, XLIII (1978), 113—24.
- 52 Cf. Stern's discussion, *The Old Andalusian Muwashshah*, op. cit., 33 sq.
- 53 One year after his publication of the kharjas in Hebrew muwashshahs, Stern published the first kharja in a Arabic muwashshah, of which no satisfactory interpretation has as yet been proposed, "Un Muwashshah arabe avec terminaison espagnol", *Al-Andalus*, XIV (1949), 214—28.
- 54 Ibn Bassam goes to the extent of asserting, that he does not register muwashshahs, because they do not follow classical Arabic prosody.
- 55 His method was opposed by Rikaby, op. cit., p. 9.
- 56 Stern's thesis, op. cit. 12.
- 57 *ibidem*, 56. Cf. Stern's confession, p. 27, "Hartmann, so far as the main facts are concerned, assessed correctly the main points concerning the metres in the muwashshah".
- 58 His views have also received strong opposition, especially from "Anglo Saxon" scholarship, cf. T. J. Gorton "The metre of Ibn Quzman: A classical approach", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, VI (1975), 1—29.
- 59 Cf. Gómez' lucid aperçu of the complex problem in "La lírica hispano-árabe y la aparición de la lírica románica", *Al-Andalus*, XXI (1956), 303—38. French transl. *Arabica*, V (1958), 113—44.
- 60 See also the present writer, *Al-Andalus*, op. cit.
- 61 Stern, op. cit., 76.
- 62 "Versos españoles en las muwashshahas hispano-hebreas", *Sefarad*, IX (1949), 197—234. Cf. also, J. M. Millas Vallicrosa, "Sobre los más antiguos versos en lengua cassellana", *Sefarad*, VI (1946), 363.
- 63 The Villacrosa-Cantera view was vehemently attacked by Gómez, "Las jaryas mozarabes y los judíos de Al-Andalus", *Boletín de la Real Academia Espanola*, XXXVII (1957), 337—94.
- 64 Jefim Schirmann, *New Hebrew Poems from the Geniza* (Jerusalem, 1965). See especially nos. 140, 180 and 197.
- 65 Cf. the present writer, *Al-Andalus*, XLIII (1978), op. cit.
- 66 "La poesía pretrovadoresca", cf. M. F. Alatorre, *Las Jarchas Mozarabes*, (Mexico, 1975) and P. Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-lyric* (Oxford, 1965), 26—32, 274—7.
- 67 Cf. the opposite view held by Ross, op. cit.
- 68 P. Zumthor, "Au berceau du lyrisme européen", *Cahiers du Sud*, XL (1954), 3—61.

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