

## REVIEWS

J.A. ABU-HAIDAR. *Hispano-Arabic Literature and the Early Provençal Lyrics*.  
Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001. Pp. x + 266, bibliography, index.

J.A. Abu-Haidar's recent contribution to the ongoing scientific debate over literary relationships between stanzatic Andalusī Poetry and Provençal Lyrics provides readers with a good summary of this scholar's positions and achievements in the field. It should be pointed out from the outset that this book is really a collection of previously published articles rather than a completely new work offering new perspectives. On p. viii the author gives thanks to the editors of the publications in which the articles originally appeared for granting permission for their reproduction. However, he fails to give exact references for these previous works (journals' numbers, dates of publication, pages). Moreover, a reference should really have been included to indicate that Chapter 10 has been previously published in the Proceedings of a Conference entitled *Poesía Estrófica, Actas del Primer Congreso Internacional sobre Poesía Estrófica Árabe y Hebrea y sus Paralelos Romances* (Madrid, diciembre de 1989), Madrid: ed. by F. Corriente and A. Sáenz-Badillos, 1991, pp. 11-21. Such a compilation of articles written at different times and for different journals lends itself to repetition, which although perhaps unavoidable, is irritating nonetheless. To mention but one case, chapters 8 and 10 overlap with, and are surpassed respectively by chapters 9 and 11, which offer, from a similar angle, a more elaborate discussion of the same questions. It also makes it difficult to update the bibliography or to revise some of the ideas in line with the new developments in the field in recent years. Although I will endeavour to present here some examples of these inaccuracies, I would, however, from the outset, like to emphasise the intrinsic worth of this work which successfully achieves its objectives of clearly presenting a series of particular ideas.

As for the title of the book, I remain slightly disappointed with the term *Hispano-Arabic*, for it comes to emphasize the Hispanic ingredient of this literature. It seems obvious from the author's repeated statements that he does not consider al-Andalus literature a distinct form of literature, but rather a continuation of Eastern ideas, themes and forms, with nothing to do either with presumed earlier Hispanic lyrics or with the local *milieu*. Instead of *Hispano-Arabic*, the term *Andalusī* or *Andalusī Arabic* seems more appropriate, so as to bring the title in line with one of Abu-Haidar's main ideas, namely, that stanzatic Andalusī Poetry is not an invention of Hispanic Andalusis but an extension of previous Eastern models.

The book is divided into three major parts: I, "Popular Literature" (chapters 1-4); II, "The *Muwashshahāt*: An Integral Part of Classical Arabic Literature" (chapters 5-9); and III, "No Arabic Echoes in the Provençal Lyrics." The introductory chapter ("What this work is about") includes two interesting and sensible remarks: first, that we should not turn the printed word into an object of reverence; and second, that literary theories must not be viewed as the focus of attention. Instead, attention should be paid to the literature in its own right. With these important premises in mind, Abu-Haidar attempts to show that Andalusī Literature, including stanzatic poetry (*muwashshah* and *zajal*), has nothing to do with any pre-existing Romance literature or with Provençal lyrics. The point here, convincingly stated by the author, is that Andalusī literature is deeply rooted in the mainstream of Arabic literature.

Chapters 1, 2 and 5 deal with the literary function of the *zajal* and the *kharija*. A clear-cut distinction is established between *hazl* genre (burlesque, entertaining, vulgar and also piquant) and *jidd* genre (serious, classical). *Zajal* and *kharija* patently belong to the former. The *kharija* is thus an element of *hazl* introduced into the highly elaborate *muwashshah*. It is the condiment, the salt, but not the base upon which the *muwashshah* was constructed. The lack of *kharijas* in the *zajal* is precisely due to the fact that, “being the *zajal* totally *hazl*, it has no need and no place for an appended *kharija*” (p. 116). About the language of the *zajal*, Abu-Haidar prefers to view it as a mixed language, made of the vernacular Arabic on the one hand and some classical vocabulary and syntax on the other (p. 39). This is true, as proven by close examination of Ibn Quzmān’s work, but it should be noted that any written piece of Arabic, let alone literary pieces, includes classical features. It is hard to find samples of Arabic letters or poetry completely free of these classical elements. For instance, practically all of the sources used by F. Corriente to reconstruct the Andalusi Arabic dialect contain classicisms, albeit to varying degrees. Although it is true that Ibn Quzmān sometimes employed classical Arabic, the language of the *zajals* stands, in my view, as a valid testimony of the Andalusi dialect of the twelfth-century Cordova.

Chapters 3 and 4 are focused on Ibn Quzmān’s *dhwān*. Some critical comments are put forward on the interpretation of several points by García Gómez and Corriente in their editions. Some of them are well founded, and others are perhaps more dubious. However, this is not the place to discuss Abu-Haidar’s proposals in detail. The author states that the “*dhwān* should be treated with great care, and no changes or emendations should be introduced on the single manuscript we have of it, unless they are the kind of changes which, as Emerson says, constitute their own evidence” (p. 79). Needless to say, deciding which changes are “evident” and which are not depends on the criteria of each editor. What for one scholar is an “evident” emendation may not be so clear for another. Common sense and a profound knowledge of the Arabic literary background are indeed powerful tools, but I think that another powerful tool has been underestimated by Abu-Haidar, namely, an acquaintance with Andalusi Arabic dialect, which led F. Corriente to introduce a host of sound linguistically guided emendations to the Ibn Quzmān manuscript. It is beyond doubt that many of the “vagaries” (to use Abu-Haidar’s term) of Ibn Quzmān’s language are closely connected to the vernacular Andalusi Arabic, which stands as an important key for a correct interpretation and edition of the *dhwān*. To under-value this fact, as the author sometimes seems to do, is to overlook one part of the whole picture, a complex picture in which all elements need to be considered before reliable judgements can be made. Pages 60-63, for instance, devoted to the use of an “anomalous” *tamwīn*, reveal that the author is somewhat misled, for he relates this *tamwīn* to an accusative case ending whereas Andalusi sources clearly show that it acts as a connective form between a noun and its attribute, irrespective of case inflection. It is clear that great caution must be taken when proposing emendations, but it is precisely the effort displayed in these proposals that contributes to an improved acquaintance with the original text. Thus, although there are inherent dangers when editing problematic passages, the potential gains seem to outweigh the possible risks of mistakes.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 discuss, among other points, the origins and settings of the *muwashshah*. The main ideas of the author may be summarized as follows: Eastern rhymed prose, mainly the *maqāmāt*, took al-Andalus by storm. In a milieu where difficulty of execution passed for merit, the *muwashshah* developed as an extension

of the permutations of rhyme (basically fettered rhyme) in Arabic prose to Arabic poetry. In doing so, technical difficulties made Andalusī poets feel less inhibited about using poetic licence and modifying syntax and metre, which became more irregular or deviated from classical standards. As the main concern of Andalusī poets was the rhyme, they were inclined to sacrifice metre and syntax for its benefit. The *kharija*, which is the use of another language (Romance) or another variant of the same language (Andalusī Arabic) at the end of the poem, could be viewed as another challenge, a proof of virtuosity and sophistication. There are two types of *muwashshah*: one which scans (*al-muwashshah aṣ-ṣīrī*) and another which simply does not scan (*al-muwashshah ḡayr aṣ-ṣīrī*). Attempting to scan the latter is tantamount to trying to square the circle. Although I agree with most of these ideas, I still consider that scanning difficult *muwashshahāt* or analysing their syntactic peculiarities is not a fruitless task, especially when applying solid linguistic criteria, like, for instance, the substitution of quantity by phonemic stress as the ruling principle in the rhythm of the *muwashshah*, as suggested by the study of Andalusī dialects championed by F. Corriente.

Chapters 10 and 11 deal with the lack of parallels between Arabic Literature, especially Andalusī poetry and the poetry of the troubadours. A continuous line is drawn from Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry to the *muwashshah*. Motifs, language and rhetoric remain basically the same. Similes, metaphors, flora and fauna in the *muwashshah* reflect the most beloved environment of the Arabian desert rather than the contemporary Spanish environment. There is no equivalence between Provençal Lyrics and Arabic poetry. The basic terminology of love poetry and the very concept of love itself reveal an important gap between the two literatures. Whereas, for instance, Provençal love is ennobling and makes the lover gain in worth or excellence, Arabic love is not so metaphysical and not so celebrated. Themes also differ considerably. For example, there are no wine songs at all in the poetry of the troubadours, and courtly love is not really present in the *muwashshah*. Another important difference can be found in the language itself: while the language of Arabic poetry is classical Arabic, bearing the weight of an enormous literary tradition and distant from everyday language, the troubadours were writing in a vernacular language with practically no literary antecedents. The literary purport and the style also prove to be different: Arabic poetry has a classical studied style, whereas the poetry of the troubadours approaches the emotions of everyday life. We find therefore no loanwords from the lexicon of Arabic literature in Provençal Lyrics. To sum up, in Abu-Haidar's own words: "the language of Arabic love poetry and the language of the Provençal love-songs, the *cansos*, are simply two immiscible quantities" (p. 229).

Chapter 12 aims to prove that the famous Andalusī treatise on love, Ibn Ḥazm's *Tawq al-ḥamānīna*, is not a treatise on courtly love, as some scholars have suggested. Abu-Haidar convincingly argues that Ibn Ḥazm's treatment of love is realistic and by no means platonic and therefore unrelated to the concept of love as treated by the troubadours. The final remark is worthy of a textual quotation: "Hispano-Arabic literature and the poetry of the troubadours should each be studied for their own sake, and not for the purpose of determining the influence of either literature on the other" (p. 257).

As for the bibliographical references, although generally well chosen, two points should be made. First, as I have already indicated, the exact references of the author's previous works are left uncited, especially those which are republished in this book. The second criticism is that many interesting references, particularly

recent books and articles, are absent. To give but two salient samples: O. Zwartjes, *Love-Songs from Al-Andalus: History, Structure & Meaning of the Kharija*, Leiden: Brill (1997), is a very interesting work including a detailed comparison of motifs and topics in Romance and Arabic *kharijas*, which leads the author to state that no substantial differences exist between them. This means that even Romance *kharijas* are an integral part of the mainstream of Arabic literature. A second important missing reference is F. Corriente, *Poesia dialectal árabe y romance en Alandalús*, Madrid: Gredos (1998), which includes many valuable insights into the question.

To sum up, Professor Abu-Haidar's book is a significant contribution to the much debated field of literary relationships between Andalusī stanzaic poetry and Provençal Lyrics. The author makes judicious use of the literature itself, preferring not to depart from theoretical preconceived ideas. The shortcomings and oversights which this review has alluded to (mainly the absence of an updated re-elaboration of most of the chapters) do not, however, detract from the highly interesting insights, suggestions and thought-provoking ideas which are based on common sense and a critical perspective of previous scholarship. The courtly love debate has indeed been much enriched by J. Abu-Haidar's research during the last twenty years as reflected in the work under review.

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MENAHÉM MILSON. *Najib Mahfouz: The Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo*. New York: St. Martin's Press and Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1998. 304 pp.

#### THE CRITIC AS CRYPTO-BIOGRAPHER MAHFOUZ AND HIS NAMES

Most books of criticism in Western languages dealing with Naguib Mahfouz—probably due to the absence of a published full-length biography—include a summary of his life in an early chapter before shifting emphasis toward his works. This is the first book of Mahfouzian criticism in English that, though far from a standard biography, attempts to consistently link literary analysis to events in the writer's life. In most cases Milson hits the mark, sometimes in freshly insightful ways. Even his misses are closer to reality than can be expected from a scholar whose purpose is not an actual biography of his subject.

To understand what he has done, it is vital to place Milson's work within the huge and ever-growing stream of published studies on Mahfouz. I will concentrate here on books devoted entirely to him. The list is certainly not exhaustive, and many other fine works, plus articles and chapters of books, etc., are necessarily excluded from this brief survey.

In his own chapter on Mahfouz's origins and personal development, Milson correctly points out that, "information on the personal life of Mahfouz is rather scanty." He adds, "This may seem an odd comment to make about the most famous twentieth-century Arab writer." Indeed, Mahfouz has been especially guarded about his private life, one of his best-known traits. The two main sources available in book form are both works of what might be termed "assisted autobiography," which really are collections of interviews conducted by a single person, transcribed with commentary by the interviewer. These are Jamāl al-Ghīfānī's *Najib Mahfūz . . . yata-dhakkār* (Naguib Mahfouz . . . Remembers, Beirut 1980, revised Cairo 1987), and