

**Making Light Work of Serious Praise:
a Panegyric *zajal* by Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb¹**

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Introduction

Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1375) demonstrated a staggering knowledge of Arabic language, poetry, prose, philosophy, and religious sciences. His prodigious literary output has secured his place as one of the last great Arab writers of al-Andalus, serving as the inspiration for al-Maqqarī's (d. 1628) voluminous history, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa-dhikr wazīrihā Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb* (The Perfumed Breeze from the Tender Branch of al-Andalus, with mention of its vizier, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb). In addition to his large corpus of official diplomatic missives, travelogues, *maqāmās* (literary rhymed prose epistles), *qaṣīdas* (formal odes), and theological, philosophical, historical, biographical and literary treatises, he was also quite interested in the strophic form; he collected an anthology of *muwashshaḥs* (strophic poems) entitled *Jaysh al-tawshih* (The Army of Stanzaic Poetry), even composing a number of *muwashshaḥs* himself,² and as an admirer of the Sufi poet al-Shushtarī (d. 1269), he composed a number of *zajals* (colloquialized strophic poems) on his model (see Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1989, 238).³

In addition to the *zajals* that he composed with a religious intent, Ibn al-Khaṭīb composed one *zajal* for his patron Sultan Muḥammad V al-Ghanī bi-llāh (d. 1391), a panegyric celebrating his return to power in Granada after a three-year exile in North Africa. In this essay, I will examine this *zajal* in order to evaluate the ways in which he exploits language and form to produce a unique and effective panegyric. What interests me about this particular *zajal*, and more specifically about Ibn al-Khaṭīb's having written it, is how and why he uses this form that, after a period of vogue during

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² One *muwashshaḥ* that begins *jādaka al-ghaythu idhā al-ghaythu hamā* [May the abundant rain, when it pours down, be generous with you], an imitation of a *muwashshaḥ* by the Sevillian poet Ibn Sahl (d. 1261), is still sung today by contemporary Arab music greats Fayrūz (b. 1935), Ṣabāḥ Fakhīrī (b. 1933) and others. I thank Jonathan Shannon for this reference.

³ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī was born in the region of Granada in 1212 and died near Damietta, Egypt in 1269. He was a well-known mystic who adopted the *zajal* form for mystical expression (Corriente 1988).

the Almoravid period, was not a particularly important part of the literary canon by the fourteenth century.

Numerous poets including Ibn al-Khaṭīb himself celebrated Muḥammad V's return to Granada in 1362 using the classical panegyric *qaṣīda*, and it is interesting that Ibn al-Khaṭīb chose to treat the same subject using two distinct forms, each with its own set of rhetorical tones and conventions. Genre choice is no small matter that involves the mere swapping of outward guises. Rather it assumes a particular audience and performance context that determine thematic content, and that in turn, can shape the reality of those very contexts. As Bakhtin and Medvedev discuss, artistic genres possess "a two-fold orientation in reality" (130):

The first orientation is in the direction of real space and real time: the work is loud or soft, it is associated with the church, or the stage or screen. It is a part of a celebration, or simply leisure. It presupposes a particular audience, this or that type of reaction, and one or another relationship between the audience and the author. The work occupies a certain place in everyday life and is joined to or brought nearer some ideological sphere... But the intrinsic, thematic determinateness of genres is no less important. (131)

When Ibn al-Khaṭīb chooses to compose a panegyric *zajal*, he is well aware of the performative and linguistic conventions that the choice implies, and the generic realities that the form conveys. In utilizing this colloquial form, generally understood as a vehicle for licentious, even ecstatic expression, Ibn al-Khaṭīb exploits its jubilant potential and produces a work that is both somewhat staid by the *zajal*'s conventional standards, yet exuberant at the same time. In the following discussion, translation, and analysis, I will focus on the qualities of the *zajal* form that allow Ibn al-Khaṭīb to deliver a powerful praise lyric that sets itself apart from the ceremonial panegyric *qaṣīda*.

The Place of Strophic Poetry in Andalusī Literary Culture

The strophic form (*muwashshaḥ* and *zajal*) has been the topic of much discussion by Arabists and Hispanists alike, especially concerning its origins, metrical structure, and lines of influence, and it is not my intention to insert myself directly into those debates.⁴ Rather, I am more interested here in how the *zajal* was accepted, adopted, and exploited by a highly literate poet such as Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and how it functioned in a panegyric at the Naṣrid court. That the *muwashshaḥ* and the *zajal* were not recorded or discussed by literary critics and anthologists prior to Ibn Bassām of Santarém (d.

⁴ Cynthia Robinson discusses many of the critical issues and debates surrounding the study of strophic poetry from al-Andalus in her book *In Praise of Song*, 273-83. See also Corriente 1988; Einbinder; Monroe 1992; Rosen 2000.

1147) indicates that these Andalusī innovations were not immediately accepted into an Arabic poetic canon over which the traditional metered and mono-rhymed *qaṣīda* reigned supreme. While it is true that in his anthology *al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsīn ahl al-jazīra* (The Treasury of the Charms of the People of the Iberian Peninsula), Ibn Bassām aims to omit *muwashshah* poems due to the fact that their “meters...are beyond the limits of this book of ours, as the majority of them are not in the metrical schemes (*a‘ārīd*) of the poems of the Arabs” (2),⁵ he includes a discussion of them and definition of some of their components nonetheless, and it seems that even in their exclusion, they bear mentioning (2). Thus, by the twelfth century, strophic poems were acceptable, or at least known, enjoyed, and discussed within certain strata of society and once they achieved quasi-acceptability in the Almoravid period, they served to “complete the literary panorama offered by the compositions on very-similar-but-not-identically-expressed themes preserved by Ibn Bassām and al-Faḥ [ibn Khāqān d. 1134], both of whom tend to magnify the *jidd* (serious) and accord a secondary, or even scant, place to *hazl* (joking or buffoonery)” (Robinson 283).⁶ While it makes sense (at least to this author) to argue that the strophic *muwashshahs* and *zajals* should be considered a part of the broader Arabic Andalusī literary scene, their acceptance into the canon was grudging and fleeting; as Corriente points out, “[a]fter the Almohad period, the decline begins. The *zajal* is soon barred from literary consideration and confined to folkloric use, and even the *muwashshah* loses ground and ends up by being an occasional exercise for some poets” (Corriente 1991, 66). However, although it may not have garnered the respect and prestige of more classical literary genres, it was still enjoyed at certain levels of society, and for different purposes.

Two and a half centuries after Ibn Bassām, the famous polymath Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) added his thoughts on the *muwashshah* and the *zajal*. Although he is not considered a literary critic per se, he was a highly educated person in touch with intellectual currents, and could at least give an informed impression of certain literary trends. By the fourteenth century, he states that the *muwashshah* was composed and enjoyed by all levels of Andalusī society, high and low, at least into the Almoravid period.

Poetry was greatly cultivated in Spain. Its various ways and types were refined. Poems came to be most artistic. As a result, recent Spaniards created the kind of poetry called *muwashshah*...(The authors of *muwashshahs*) vied to the utmost with each other in this (kind of

⁵ This statement is not entirely accepted as truth. There are a number of contemporary critics who hold that the meter of the *muwashshah* and *zajal* is based on variations of Arabic quantitative meter. For arguments on both sides of the issue of meter (quantitative vs. stress-syllable), see the debate that appeared across numerous articles in the pages of the journal *La corónica* through the 1980s by Armistead, Jones, Monroe, and Whinnom.

⁶ On this distinction see also Hanlon.

poetry). Everybody, the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) and the common people (*al-kāffa*), liked and knew these poems because they were easy to grasp and understand. (440)

On the *zajal*, Ibn Khaldūn was of the opinion that it was simply the colloquial equivalent of the *muwashshah*, and emphasizes the genre's even more popular appeal. Although this is not entirely accurate (there are also certain structural and slightly more complex linguistic differences, not to mention the fact that there is debate as to which came first),⁷ what is interesting is the popularity across societal and educational lines that the *zajal* seemed to enjoy.

The great mass took to [the *muwashshah*] because of its smoothness, artistic language, and the (many) internal rhymes found in it (which made them popular). As a result, the common people in the cities imitated them. They made poems of the (*muwashshah*) type in their sedentary dialect, without employing vowel endings. They thus invented a new form, which they called *zajal*. They have continued to compose poems of this type down to this time. They achieved remarkable things in it. The (*zajal*) opened a wide field for eloquent (poetry) in the (Spanish-Arabic) dialect, which is influenced by non-Arab (speech habits). (454)

Despite the popular aspect of the genre that Ibn Khaldūn asserts, it is important to note that many practitioners of the *zajal* were actually quite educated in poetry and other language arts. For example, Ibn Quzmān (d. 1160), considered *imām al-zajjālīn* (Head of the Zajalists), admits that, in order to compose a *zajal*, he “smoothed it until it became soft to the touch and its roughness became delicate...removing from it signs of declension, and denuding it of all adornments and conventions” (Corriente 1980, 1). In other words, it took education, literary skill, and trained work to compose a *zajal*. Although the *zajal* may very well have been practiced by the uneducated masses as strictly oral songs, it was only through their composition and recording by literate poets that they have been preserved. Thus, what we are generally dealing with in terms of preserved *zajals* are examples of highly literate poets choosing to compose in what appears to be a popular form, but what is actually a self-conscious “popularization” of more traditional genres. When Ibn al-Khaṭīb composes a panegyric *zajal* for the Sultan Muḥammad V, he has chosen a form that is outwardly popular, but retains many aspects of the traditional praise poem. It is the flexibility of the *zajal* form as compared to the *qaṣīda* panegyric in terms of language, structure, and performance, and Ibn al-Khaṭīb's poetic abilities and political skills in manipulating the form, that results in a unique and successful panegyric.

⁷ For a discussion of these issues, along with a useful bibliography, see Monroe 1989.

The Context

Ibn al-Khaṭīb first found himself in the Naṣrid court when his father was given a high-ranking position with the emir Ismāʿīl b. Faraj (r. 1314-25). Schooled in all branches of religious studies, language and literature, history, and philosophy, and having proven his prowess in all of them, Ibn al-Khaṭīb was appointed to the post of personal secretary to Ibn al-Jayyāb, emir Yūsuf I's (r. 1333-54) vizier. Upon the death of Ibn al-Jayyāb, Ibn al-Khaṭīb was appointed vizier and head of the chancery. From here, his life and career followed the contours of the Naṣrid sultan under whom he worked, Muḥammad V (r. 1354-59 and 1362-91), and of the political times. In general, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were marked by power struggles between the Marīnid dynasty of North Africa, the Christian kingdoms of Iberia (Aragon, Castile, Navarre, and Portugal), and the Naṣrids of Granada who were desperately trying to preserve their kingdom against internal and external threats by sometimes appealing to the Marīnids for help and other times to the Castilians, with Ibn al-Khaṭīb playing a key diplomatic role in fostering relations with both of these states.

In 1359 Muḥammad V was deposed by his half brother Ismāʿīl II (r. 1359-60) who was then promptly killed by his cousin and co-conspirator Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad (afterwards known as Muḥammad VI; in the Spanish accounts, he was known as *el Bermejo* for the redness of his hair). Muḥammad V and his retinue (including Ibn al-Khaṭīb) took refuge in the Marīnid capital of Fez where they were received graciously by the sultan Abū Sālim (r. 1359-61). During this time, Muḥammad V continued to receive the support of the Castilian King Pedro I (d. 1369), and in 1362, they joined forces in Casares, marched together toward Granada and forced Muḥammad VI to flee, later to be executed by Pedro I. With his adversary dispatched, Muḥammad V reassumed control of Granada where he would rule as one of the most successful Naṣrid sultans for another twenty-nine years.

Muḥammad V's return to Granada was a momentous occasion. In his official account, Ibn al-Khaṭīb writes:

When he ascended the mountain –the mountain of the Alhambra– the sky practically fell prostrate upon the earth on account of the raised voices of the sandy-haired women who had come from the city to catch a glimpse of him; they filled the vast space as if snow had piled up there...and for him, God caused mercy and excitement and friendliness to fill all hearts such as He had not done for anyone before. When he arrived at the Alhambra's door, he stopped there covered up and cloaked, hidden from all inside...then the doors opened for him before noon on Saturday 20 Jumādā II, 763 [April 6, 1362]. (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1989, 124)

As part of the pageantry that accompanied the occasion, a number of poets presented panegyric odes to the once-again sovereign including Abū Jaʿfar b. Ṣafwān (d. 1362), Abū Ishāq b. al-Ḥājj (d. 1367), Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Sharīshī (d. 1375), Abū Bakr b. al-Faqīh al-Kātib Abī al-Qāsim b. Quṭba (dates unknown), and others (125-136). Indeed Ibn al-Khaṭīb also composed a long panegyric *qaṣīda* that he includes within his narrative of the event.⁸ In addition to these “official” gifts to the sultan Muḥammad V, at least two *zajals* were also composed to mark the occasion - one by Ibn al-Khaṭīb and one by his former student and eventual rival Ibn Zamrak (d. 1394).⁹

Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s *zajal* appears in a small collection of his *zajals* in *Nufādat al-jirāb* (Shaking the Dust off the Rucksack), and according to Saʿdīya Fāghīya, the examples that Ibn al-Khaṭīb includes here represent an important addition to his oeuvre in that “he was known as a composer of *zajals* without any of them having come down to us” (19). Thus, this panegyric *zajal* represents an important yet somewhat little known aspect of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s literary production, it also provides an opportunity to experience his poetic skill both within the formal courtly setting in a panegyric for his sovereign, as well as in a unique contrast to that same setting in the poem’s language and form. Below, I provide an English translation of the *zajal* followed by a commentary on its imagery, language, and significance. By looking specifically at performance and language, I aim to investigate what makes this *zajal* a unique and effective addition to more standard examples of praise for Muḥammad V.

*Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s zajal celebrating the return of Muḥammad V to Granada*¹⁰

I composed an example of *hazl* while on the way back [to Granada]:

0. Rejoice and delight / the enemy of God has gone / and His beloved has been restored
1. The country and its people / greatly desired him.
They had not seen light in the daytime / nor anything good after he had gone.
How is it that [the country] / had become a widowed stranger.
Oh God, where can I find him?
I had my share of longing
when he disappeared.
2. The people, from grief / without drink are drunk.

⁸ *al-ḥaqqu yaʿlū wa-l-abāṭilu tafṣulu / wa-llāhu ʿan aḥkāmihī lā yusʿalu* (The truth rises up whereas falsehoods descend. / God is not questioned about his judgments). See Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1985, 287-97.

⁹ Both of these *zajals* are discussed in Corriente 1990. Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s is from *Nufādat al-jirāb*.

¹⁰ The English translation is mine.

Their eyes are flowing water springs; / their hearts are perplexed.
 Whoever among them grasped / a letter or a package,
 Has placed it close to his heart
 to perhaps extinguish his passion
 and calm the beating in his breast.

3. This event was a stumble, / an error in the celestial sphere.
 Because of it the world fell; / it fell to no good.
 That ruler asked for help / from Fuengirola to Baza,
 But no one answered him
 across the whole country,
 the uncivil with the highborn.
4. The Islamic faith fell sick / until its eyes were almost covered over.
 No one had tasted sleep / nor had anyone been able to close their
 eyes.
 Everyone had surrendered / themselves to fate,
 Until the doctor came
 and the pain and suffering subsided
 from those who were afflicted.
5. With Moulay Muḥammad / is the strength of the faith of
 Muḥammad.
 Islam has returned with him / as it was laid out thus.
 And the world saw in him / that which it was used to:
 A union where the watcher is absent
 and a happiness that endures
 in his son's sons.
6. Relief comes down when / hardships end,
 And God, for these people, / is in the habit of doing good deeds.
 What country has seen his protection / and favors more?
 Its stranger is restored
 wrapped in the cloak of God,
 the innocent with the suspect.
7. If not for the compassion of the sultan, / may God grant him
 assistance,
 Then mankind's left would not have been joined / to its right.¹¹

¹¹ The Arabic reads *mā jma^c shmal insān fihā ma^ca yamīnu* and recalls al-Shushtarī: *anjama^c shamli^c biyya wa-anā ma^cī maṭbū^c* / My totality is made whole in me, and I am, with me, fashioned as one

Nor would anyone be able to enjoy his worldly deeds / or his pious ones;
 The one who is skillful with whom he speaks
 said to Alfonso [Pedro I]: “No matar,
 ya señor, cautivo.”

8. And he said to al-Andalus: / “I wanted to enumerate your bad qualities,
 Then after that I would return / to renew our union.
 Really, how can you forget me? / How can you suffer it?
 God takes account
 of everyone who cheats on his intimate
 or who leaves his lover.”

9. He who is ungrateful for favors / will watch as they pass away.
 The chicks of a mother who has abandoned her young / will peck at
 the egg of their brother.
 He will regret something that has passed / once it is difficult to
 respond.
 His milk will go sour
 and he will see the difference between a son
 and a stepson

10. He has returned, thanks to God; / that which was unlawfully taken
 is back with its owner.
 May God remind you how to give thanks / for that which He has
 given.
 What happiness, what joy! O lovers of God!
 Rejoice and delight
 the enemy of God has gone
 and his beloved has been restored. (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1989, 244-45)

(Corriente 1988, 86; *zajal* 48). The sense in both verses is the completion of the whole. This could be understood in terms of mystical union, love union, political union, or a combination of all three.

Commentary

Both the placement of this laudatory *zajal* in *Nufāḍat al-jirāb*, and its superscription are significant, revealing, or at least hinting at Ibn al-Khaṭīb's ambivalence toward the *zajal* as a vehicle for official expression. The poem is relegated to a short section of *zajals* at the end of a larger section devoted to more official examples of writings (poetry and prose) that he composed after his return to Granada. He introduces the poem as “an example of *hazl*” (*min al-hazl*), a term that is understood in the Arabic literary tradition to mean “jesting” when used in contrast to *jidd*, or “seriousness.” However, as Jareer Abu-Haidar demonstrates, *hazl*, when not used in contrast to *jidd*, refers to the *zajal* –a form that uses language, themes, and imagery to express a tone of “merriment, pleasantry, facetiousness, wry humour, satire, ridicule smartness, wit, waggishness, etc.” (112). As discussed above, by the twelfth century in al-Andalus (in Ibn Quzmān's time and after), although not necessarily held as equivalent to high literature, the *zajal* as a genre comes to be deemed worthy by literate writers for purposes of satire, mystical expression, or otherwise. Thus highly educated poets chose the *zajal* form not necessarily to reject official culture and contexts outright, but rather to speak to that society in a light, comical, and / or ecstatic manner that allowed them to more poignantly achieve their poetic goals. In separating the *zajals* from the *qaṣīdas* and rhymed prose epistles (*rasā'il*) that make up the collection of writings following his return to Granada, and that grace his official description of Muḥammad V's return to power, Ibn al-Khaṭīb makes clear the divisions between the more official forms, and forms such as the *zajal* that, by his own time, had become secondary. However, I will argue that, in fact, this panegyric *zajal* serves goals that Ibn al-Khaṭīb is acutely aware of and careful to achieve.

The occasion of Muḥammad V's return to power in Granada was a serious one, to be sure, and was marked by the expected official offerings. However, the lighter tone and colloquialized Arabic of the *zajal* allow the poet a more natural and evocative way to praise Muḥammad V than with the more formal *qaṣīda*. Additionally, the performance of the form and use of Hispano-Romance distinguish it quite clearly from the *qaṣīda*, even if, on a superficial level, the poetic intent (*gharaḍ*) appears to be the same. The *zajals* composed by educated poets were not meant for “wide release” to the masses, nor did they necessarily circulate widely outside of cultured circles. While it is likely that the orally performed and transmitted *zajals* that circulated before Ibn Quzmān's time made the form famous (Stern 1974, 170),¹² later *zajjāls* (*zajal* poets) were first and foremost literate “poets-for-hire,” with Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn Zamrak serving the highest levels of Andalusī society; even Ibn Quzmān, despite the decidedly

¹² In his literary treatise *al-Muqtaṭaf min azāhir al-ṭaraf* (Plucked selections from blossoms of the learned), Ibn Sa'īd (d. 1286) points out that “*zajals* were composed in al-Andalus before Abū Bakr b. Quzmān, but it was only in his time that their jewels appeared, their meanings gushed forth, and their elegance became famous” (263).

lower status that poetry enjoyed during the Almoravid period as compared to the more lucrative periods of the Cordoban Caliphate and the Taifa period (*Mulūk al-tawāʾif*), still composed for patrons and was of the educated class. In fact, “Ibn Quzmān’s contributions are not popular *zajals*, but rather adaptations of a popular tradition” (Monroe and Pettigrew 2003, 163). This adaptation allowed the poet to use a language that more closely mirrored the linguistic situation in al-Andalus at the time, and in the hands of a skilled poet such as Ibn al-Khaṭīb the *zajal* held great potential to express the excitement that he claimed gripped all of Granada when Muḥammad V returned to the Alhambra, and the significance of the event.

The tone of Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s *zajal* is emphasized immediately in the *maṭlaʿ* (opening line and refrain) and the performative and inclusive aspect, or at least conceit, of the genre, is emphasized. The command to “rejoice and delight” (*afrahū wa-ībū*), directed at an audience or assembled group, separates this *zajal* panegyric from more gnomic examples of official panegyrics that tend to speak in generalities and absolute terms. These formal, ceremonial odes may celebrate specific rulers and even specific events, but “[t]he purpose of [*qaṣīda*] poetry . . . is to confer perpetuity” (Stetkevych 253). A fine example is Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s own panegyric *qaṣīda* written to commemorate this same event. The language of this long *qaṣīda* is of an elevated quality that displays the poet’s skill in ornamental *badīʿ*, and, according to al-Maqqarī (d. 1632), “it is said that the sultan ordered this *qaṣīda* to be inscribed in his palaces in the Alhambra, so pleased was he with it. And to this day it remains written in these palaces that the unbelieving enemy has taken over, may God, exalted is He, return them to Islam” (al-Maqqarī 1968, 6: 478). Thus, the panegyric was to be inscribed in stone as a testament to Muḥammad V’s greatness for all time, reflected in the timeless quality of the words themselves. The monumental *qaṣīda*, which runs two hundred lines, was in fact, composed *avant la lettre*, as Ibn al-Khaṭīb states: “I had composed it [prior to my return to Granada] while in Salé [Morocco], as if the unknown had been revealed to me, or I had gazed into the future” (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1989, 151). The poem clearly fulfills a high ceremonial function and assumes a highly educated audience. In his introduction to it, Ibn al-Khaṭīb says:

I present this *qaṣīda* in order to fill everyone with good cheer and encouragement; upon the completion of the matter [of Muḥammad V’s return to power], its utility and intention will be there for he who explores the literary arts (*al-ādāb*), is very fond of exquisite qualities (*kalāfa bi-l-faḍāʾil*), and who raises his eyes toward rhetorical manners and themes (*wa-tashawwafa ilā al-anḥāʾ al-balāghiyya wa-l-maqāṣid*). (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1985, 287)

This *qaṣīda* is intended for performance for the sultan, to be enjoyed by him and the cultured class of *udabāʾ* (litterateurs) who surround him, and later to be carved into

the walls of his palace. It directly addresses the sultan, focusing attention on him and all of his majesty:

O Muḥammad, praiseworthiness from you comes naturally;
with all its ornaments, among men, it is made beautiful.

As for your good fortune, it is without rival;
A pact, by the rulings of Fate, it is recorded.

You possess the most noble qualities and traits
The most remarkable of which the imitator tries to imitate.

You possess sedateness when the hills quake
and the towering heights shake in fear.

You possess a cheerful countenance, and those who
catch a glimpse the completeness [in you] surrender
themselves over to you. (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1985, 288)

In contrast, the *zajal* assumes a different audience, performance, and reception, and its performative conceit and bilingualism “[set] up, or [represent] an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood” (Bauman 292). While this *zajal* was composed by a single author, the plural imperative of the *maṭla*^c, and its choral repetition between each strophe implies a participatory, and thus contributive role on the part of the audience. Although the themes, imagery, and conventions follow those of the formal panegyric *qaṣīda* as will be shown, the mood conveyed is one of jubilant celebration of the moment, rather than the pomp and ceremony aimed at the permanent edification of the ruler. Adding to the shifted focus from the sultan to the audience/participants, the *mamd*ʔh (object of praise) is perpetually present, but only indirectly addressed in the rhyme vowel –ʔ (meaning “his,” or sometimes “its”) of the *maṭla*^c and last line of each strophe. Thus Muḥammad V is constantly referred to as the object of praise throughout the performance of the *zajal*, but it is the group that is emphasized in each choral repetition of the refrain “Rejoice and delight”. While this is clearly a panegyric, the focus is less an exaltation of the *mamd*ʔh and more an expression of the celebratory atmosphere surrounding his return.

The first four strophes serve as an introduction to the main panegyric, with swift movement from one theme to the next. The language in the first strophe is elegiac in tone, with each line emphasizing either desire and longing, or loss, thus evoking and combining the *nasīb* (erotic prelude) and *rithā*^ʔ (elegy) themes of the classical *qaṣīda* in a general description of the deprived state of Muḥammad V’s dominions during his exile. Within these conventions, the comparison in line 3 of Naṣrid Granada to a

widowed stranger (*armula gharība*) departs slightly yet significantly from the trope of the separation of lovers and from that of the traditional elegy. In the *nasīb* of the traditional *qaṣīda*, it is common to find young lovers separated by the movement of the beloved's tribe or more generally by Fate, as in this example from Imru' al-Qays' (d. ca. 544) famous pre-Islamic ode:

Halt, my two friends, and we will weep over the memories of a beloved
and a campsite that was at the sand dune's rim, between al-Dakhūl
and Hawmal.

And Tūḍiḥ and al-Miqrāt, whose traces have not been effaced by the
weaving of the north and south winds.

You see antelope droppings in the former courtyards
and in their enclosures, [scattered around] like pepper seeds.

It was as if—on the morning of separation, on the day that they loaded
up amid the acacias— my eyes welled up like one cracking open
bitter colocynth pods.

There, my companions stopped their camels, saying to me: “Don't die
of grief; bear it patiently.” (al-Tibrīzī 20-26)

Rather than the movement of the beloved's tribe that is responsible for the separation of lovers, in this *zajal*, it is a symbolic (and temporary) death. Moreover, the separated parties are not young lovers, but a married couple (not usually the characters of love poetry). This “widowhood” emphasizes the elegiac quality of these first lines, and the pain of the separation. Marriage is rarely a topic for literary attention, except perhaps, in elegies for spouses where “elegy for one's wife came to form a distinct subgenre” (Homerin 250), and in misogynistic treatments of marriage (see Rosen 2003, specifically Chapter 5 “Domesticating the Enemy”). In early examples of *'udhrī* (unrequited love poetry) and later courtly love poetry, union with the beloved was essentially impossible, representing the end of the love affair. Marriage was a paradox; the lover was in constant pursuit of the ideal, pure beloved, but were the love act to be consummated in marriage and/or sex, that purity would be compromised. The ideal beloved was always just out of reach as

[the] prerequisite of [the beloved] being desired is that she be
perfect, ideal, complete unto herself, without imperfection or lack,
and therefore without desire; the *sine qua non* of loving, therefore,
is that one not be loved in return. The lady must be a virgin in
order to be loved; the desire for the virgin represents an ideal or

idea...as a desire for the absolute, which in this case subtends a profound wish for identity with the other, for self-identity. (Bloch 151)

The theme of eternal separation of lovers initiated by the pre-Islamic *nasīb* that is so common in the traditional love lyric, and the elegy for the spouse are combined in this *zajal*.

It is important here to touch upon the intersection of mystical and poetic language, wherein mystical sensibilities and poetic emotion inform and express one another in such a way as to make it difficult to neatly separate the two. Early mystics (ca. ninth century) drew upon an existing poetic language that expressed love, intoxication and the fleeting nature of union with the beloved. Just as pre-Islamic poets wept and remembered past trysts and were forced to journey through an often hostile desert to reach the safety of the protector, or as *udhrī* poets in the early Islamic period literally went mad (*majnūn*) seeking union with their impossible beloveds, mystic poets used these themes, along with the imagery of wine poetry to express such mystical ideas as separation (*firāq*) ecstasy/finding (*wajd*), union (*jam*^c or *wiṣāl*), and drunkenness (*sukr*),¹³ as in, for example, these lines by the famous mystic poet Ibn ^cArabi (d. 1240) describing his lovesickness and longing for the divine:

I echo back, in the evening, in the morning, echo,
the longing of a lovesick lover, the moaning of the lost.

In the grove of Gháda, spirits wrestled,
bending the limbs down over me, passing me away.

They brought yearning, breaking of the heart,
and other new twists of pain, putting me through it.

.....

I profess the religion of love; wherever its caravan turns
along the way, that is the belief, the faith I keep.

Like Bishr, Hind and her sister,
love-mad Qays and the lost Láyla, Máyya and her lover
Ghaylán. (Sells 2000, 151-52)

Although it is often difficult to distinguish between mystical and earthly love and wine imagery, to ignore its potential to express deeper layers of meaning is to do so at the

¹³ For a clear and comprehensive discussion of the languages of Islamic mysticism, see Sells 1996.

peril of a fuller appreciation of the poem. Taking into account Ibn al-Khaṭīb's Sufism (manifest in his treatise on divine love, *Rawḍat al-ta'rif bi-l-ḥubb al-sharīf* / The Garden of Instruction in Noble Love, as well as in his other writings), his unique take on the separation of man and wife (that is, Muḥammad V and al-Andalus) is rather interesting given the implication that the two had once been together in a state of union before their separation. The clever manipulation of this theme actually points to an extended period of union (marriage!) that far exceeded the limited union of young lovers. In this "marriage," Ibn al-Khaṭīb lengthens the period of bliss that so often lasts but a short while in both earthly love and Sufi love of the divine. Thus, in the hyperbolic language of the panegyric, and with allusions to mystical uses of love imagery, Ibn al-Khaṭīb places the period of Muḥammad V's rule in the context of this extended, and nearly impossible, love union.

In the second strophe, Ibn al-Khaṭīb continues to combine the themes of mourning, bewilderment, and the separation of lovers, and in the third and fourth strophes, he begins to focus the lyric on the fall and exile of Muḥammad V who, according to Ibn al-Khaṭīb, was the true defender of Islam which suffered an illness and near death experience in his absence. As the fourth strophe ends with the arrival of the doctor (*ṭabīb*), there is a seamless transition (Until his doctor comes / and gets rid of the pain and suffering / of those who were afflicted) into the main panegyric that will occupy the last five strophes of the *zajal*. The fifth strophe celebrates the return of Muḥammad V and of life in Granada to that which it should be, and the sixth elaborates on that theme.

The final line of strophe 6 (*anjabar gharībū* / Its stranger is restored) cleaves nicely (in terms of rhyme, repetition, and antithesis) with the last part line of the *maṭla*^c (*wa-njabar ḥabībū* / His beloved has been restored), as the beloved (Muḥammad V) and the stranger (al-Andalus) are the two halves that make the whole. Also, the stranger of strophe 6 recalls the stranger of strophe 1 who was widowed from the mate; reunion has finally been realized in a "union where the watcher is absent / and happiness endures" (5/4). By exploiting the unique structure of the *zajal* with the choral refrains of the *maṭla*^c, Ibn al-Khaṭīb emphasizes that the impossible, through God's intervention and the return of Muḥammad V, is made possible; death is overcome and union is once again achieved.

Turning now to the inclusion of non-Arabic (Hispano-Romance) language in strophe 7, it bears mentioning that the presence of Hispano-Romance was not uncommon in a *zajal*. What is notable is the way in which Ibn al-Khaṭīb, (a well-educated high government official who had served as an envoy to Castile) uses Hispano-Romance to draw attention to a historical event, and to skillfully articulate a particular historical-political context. When Ibn al-Khaṭīb says: "The one who was skillful with whom he speaks / said to Alfonso:¹⁴ 'No matar, / ya señor, cautivo,'" we

¹⁴ Pedro I.

wonder how an Arabic-speaking audience would react to such language, and what is intended by the poet?

In terms of the linguistic situation in al-Andalus, the contours of language borders were affected by education, social status, and religion, and there were changes over time. The Muslims who arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in 711 found a population who spoke some form of Latin, albeit with a local accent. It was generally the case that Arabic usage followed conversion to Islam, although Paul Alvarus' famous complaint that the "Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs...and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves" (Menocal 66), reflected a perceived threat of Arabic culture that came to dominate, in varying ways, intellectual life in al-Andalus, regardless of religion. In terms of Muslim knowledge of Romance, there were instances of Romance being used by Muslims in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (López-Morillas 46). This is not to mention the many examples of *kharjas* in *muwashshahs* and the inclusion of Romance words and phrases in *zajals*. However, as Corriente points out, although there was a presence of bilingualism in the earlier Andalusī period, the dominant Arabic culture "tended toward monolingualism that was totally realized in the thirteenth century" (1992, 33-34). By the Naṣrid period, the Muslim inhabitants of Granada were almost completely Arabic speaking. Thus, Ibn al-Khaṭīb's insertion of Hispano-Romance is clearly aimed at a monolingual Arabic audience who had limited, if any knowledge of this language. However, this is not to say that these "foreign" words would fall flat. The Hispano-Romance statement is rather simple, and the sense of it would very likely have been understood by an audience familiar with strophic love poetry. In fact, although the sentence alludes to a historical event that I will discuss below, the language and imagery recall that of the Romance *kharja* of the *muwashshah*, evoking the conventional theme of love as death at the hand of the lover. Consider, for example, this *kharja* from a *muwashshah* by al-A^omā al-Tuṭīlī (d. 1130), in Arabic and Hispano-Romance:

ʾmān ʾmān yālmīḥ gār brqy nw qrsh yāllah mttār

(amān amān yā al-malīḥ GĀRE BORQE TU QERESH yā-llāh
MATĀRE)

Mercy! Mercy! Oh beautiful one, tell me: Why do you want, by
God, to kill me? (Corriente 1997, 276)

Or this one by Ibn Arfa^o Ra^osuhu (eleventh century)

b^onāysh lmḥt ʾn lḥt km hlsh mn ydy bwn blāsh mtār ʾwbḥt mm
ʾn kfry

(bi-ināysh lamaḥta in luḥtu kam hawlESH min yaday BON
bilāshi MATTARE awbaḥtu MAMMA GĀR KE FAREY)

With bad intentions you notice, if I appear: how many problems
do I have? The handsome one, for no good reason, kills me.
Mamma, tell me what to do. (299)

Imprisonment as a trope in love poetry was also not unknown, as, for example, in this *kharja* in Andalusī Arabic by Ibn Sahl:

qulūb al-khalqi asrāk / wa-qalbi waḥdu mathwāk
fa-f°al fa-lghayri ma tahwā / wa-akrim bayti suknāk

People's hearts are your prisoners / but only my heart is your
abode,
So do with the others' what you desire / but honor the house as
the one where you live. (203)

Thus, it is clear that Ibn al-Khaṭīb's line in Hispano-Romance contained familiar elements of strophic love poetry, and he has skillfully woven a *kharja*-like line into the middle of his *zajal*. However, it is not just a clever manipulation of strophic genres that he accomplishes here. His language play also serves a political function, and the intersection of the two calls to mind Caton's discussion of power, poetry, and persuasion (Caton 155-79) according to which composing in a specific poetic genre (Caton talks about the Yemenī *zāmil* poem, but his analysis applies more generally as well)

in accordance with the conventions of poetic tradition is to have
the power to enter into a certain kind of discourse in which honor
is created or defended by the poet and persuasion is exercised. This
aspect of power has to do with the construction of conventionally
recognized verse. (178)

Further, in his discussion of persuasion and identification in rhetorical discourse, Burke notes that "[you] persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55). As the poet operates within social, political, and poetic contexts understood by all, he utilizes all the literary tools at his disposal to express existing power relations, as well as to attempt to manipulate them.

The event alluded to by Ibn al-Khaṭīb is the capture and ultimate execution of AbŸ
°Abd Allāh Muḥammad VI al-Ghālīb bi-llāh (el Bermejo). As it is told in the Spanish chronicle, Muḥammad VI, feeling that his chances of victory were slim against the

alliance of Muḥammad V and Pedro I,¹⁵ took the advice of Idrīs b. Abī al-°Ulā° and other advisors and decided to “place himself on the mercy of the king of Castile, and in his power” (Ayala 126). He did so, but unfortunately, mercy was not forthcoming. After receiving Muḥammad VI and his entourage graciously, even throwing them a banquet that lasted for two days, on April 25, 1362,

King Pedro brought him out to a large field in Seville, near the castle, which they call Tablada, riding an ass and wearing a scarlet robe [and Pedro] struck the first blow with his lance and said: “Take that”...When el Bermejo was struck, he said to the king in his Arabic: “What a deed of little chivalry you have done (*pequenna caualgada feziste*)”. (128)

Indeed, Pedro I’s once loyal chronicler and later detractor, Ayala, is critical of the king’s ruthlessness, chalking it up to reasons of political retribution as well as “greed for the treasures that the king Bermejo had brought” (128).

The event as described by Ibn al-Khaṭīb in *al-Lamḥa al-badriyya fī al-dawla al-Naṣriyya* (Moonlit Glimpse of the Naṣrid State) and quoted by al-Maqqarī is similar in spirit, albeit a bit more elaborate in its judgment of Pedro I:

[Muḥammad VI] came to the strange resolution of throwing himself on the mercy of [King Pedro I] and repairing to his court. He might just as well have thrown himself into the mouth of a hungry tiger thirsting for blood; for no sooner had the infidel dog cast his eye over the countless treasures which Mohammed and the chiefs who composed his suite brought with them, than he conceived the wicked design of murdering them and appropriating their riches; and on the 2nd day of Rejeb, 763 (April 27, A.D. 1362), he was assassinated, with all his followers, at a place called Tablada, close to Seville. (al-Maqqarī 2002, 361)

It seems that Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Muḥammad VI (el Bermejo), and Ayala adhere to the same chivalric code, as they all decry the killing of the prisoner, at least as the event was described in the chronicles. In the *zajal*, when Ibn al-Khaṭīb has his patron Muḥammad V, who is “skillful with whom he speaks,” seek clemency for the imprisoned Muḥammad VI, he aims first and foremost to emphasize his patron’s own sense of mercy and righteousness, who argues for the life of his former rival. Of course, his entreaties fail to persuade Pedro I, but this is not the point. Rather, Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s *zajal* is speaking to the Granadans *after* the event, not during it. His goal is

¹⁵ The (in)famous Pedro I has been the subject of much fascination and myth-making, appearing in texts as disparate as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and Thoreau’s *Walden*. For a study of Pedro I’s biography and some of the critical historiographical issues surrounding it, see Estow.

not to actually save the life of Muḥammad VI, but rather to show that the sultan Muḥammad V attempted to do so, in Hispano-Romance. As Muḥammad VI complains to Pedro I “in his Arabic” and Ibn al-Khaṭīb has Muḥammad V speak to the Castilian king in *his* Hispano-Romance, the result is a rather interesting intertextual, multilingual exchange. I am not implying that Ibn al-Khaṭīb or Ayala read one another, but in reading both sources, it seems that Pedro I was impervious to any entreaties, regardless of language. By embedding this *kharja*-like line into the middle of the *zajal*, Ibn al-Khaṭīb skillfully manipulates a strophic poetry convention to articulate a historical moment when the Naṣrid hold on Granada is strong, tenuous as it may seem. He betrays a confidence in his own Arabic culture by presenting an Arabic *zajal* interposed with Hispano-Romance and although at this time, power relations between the Muslims and Christians in Iberia are uneven at best, Ibn al-Khaṭīb emphasizes the dominance of Arabic. Within the reality that the poem conveys, Arabic culture, headed by Muḥammad V, is strong, noble, and holding firm against any threats.

In the eighth strophe, Ibn al-Khaṭīb has Muḥammad V turn to al-Andalus and address it directly, chastising it in the manner of a spurned lover. After a separation of nearly three years, he is eager to “renew [the] union” between himself and his kingdom, careful to remind anyone who may have supported his rival that “God takes account of everyone who cheats on his intimate or who leaves his lover.” In the next strophe, Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s voice returns and he elaborates on the importance of loyalty. Comparing the Andalusīs to ungrateful and misguided “chicks,” Ibn al-Khaṭīb emphasizes the importance of proper rule and order. As well, it appears that he is unable to resist taking a jab at the ultimately failed attempt by Ismā‘īl (Muḥammad V’s half-brother –their father was Yūsuf I but they had different mothers), Ismā‘īl’s mother Maryam, and Muḥammad VI (married to a daughter of Maryam) to wrest control of Granada from Muḥammad V, the failure coming as the result of having come from the wrong mother. Having moved from the panegyric strophes 5-7, followed by complaint about separation and stern warning against disloyalty in strophes 8-9, the final strophe returns to the jubilant and celebratory mood initiated by the *maṭla*^c, repeated between each strophe and again in the last line of the *zajal*.

Conclusions

The panegyric ode “far from being merely descriptive, prescriptive, or abjectly sycophantic...plays an active role in the ritual exchanges, the sensitive negotiations, and the mythopoesis of the Arabo-Islamic court” (Stetkevych ix). By combining conventional tropes and creative expression, the panegyrist reiterates and strengthens the bonds that join supplicant, object of praise, and society. In celebration of the return of Muḥammad V to power in Granada, Ibn al-Khaṭīb composed a mono-rhymed panegyric ode in accordance with the conventions and expectations of the genre, as did a number of other poets. However, Ibn al-Khaṭīb went further and composed this

other panegyric, a *zajal*, for reasons that went beyond mere jest (*hazl*). By utilizing a form with avowedly more flexible metrical structure and multi-vocal performance potential, Ibn al-Khaṭīb shifts the focus of the panegyric from the monumental ode that immortalizes the ruler, to a public and collective performance that celebrates the event as an outward display of joy. While the intent is to edify the sultan, the edification occurs out loud, in a language all can understand, and ostensibly sung by many. Moreover, the insertion of Hispano-Romance that reads like a *kharja* while at the same time articulating, or at least imagining a historical event, underlines Ibn al-Khaṭīb's skill with the strophic genre and allows him to use language in ways that are both entertaining and politically expedient. This *zajal*, composed by one of the greatest Arabic stylists of the medieval period, displays a clear understanding of the genre and masterfully re-casts classical panegyric, love, even mystical themes into a lively and public celebration for the return of his patron, the sultan Muḥammad V.

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