The Art of Lebanese Verbal Dueling: The Battle of Beit Mery and Beyond

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The Art of Lebanese Verbal Dueling: The Battle of Beit Mery and Beyond
The Art of Lebanese Verbal Dueling: The Battle of Beit Mery and Beyond

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the living and vibrant oral tradition of verbal dueling in Lebanon, also known as Lebanese zajal. The introductory chapter explores the historical, sociolinguistic, and musical-metrical roots of today’s Lebanese zajal contests and festivals, which feature teams of up to four poets who compete against each other in improvised, sung verse in colloquial Lebanese, carrying a sort of dialogue within which they argue opposing sides of universal themes and topics of current social interest. Though time, tradition, and culture in the Lebanese mountainside have nurtured the development of sung oral poetry into its current form and status as a national pastime, very little has been written about it in English. In the second and third chapters, the dissertation takes an inside-out approach to making the art of Lebanese zajal accessible to an English-speaking audience via a close-up view of a celebrated verbal duel that took place in 1971 at the mountain resort village of Beit Mery, Lebanon, before an audience of 40,000 enthusiasts. Following a description of the setting, the individual performers, and previous rivalries building tension before this contest, a bout-by-bout written record is laid out with running commentary and explanatory notes. Each exchange is transcribed from a taped recording obtained in Lebanon and is followed by transliterations, literal translations, and poetic translations. In the fourth and final chapter, the dissertation provides an analysis of the oral-formulaic composition strategies used by the poets and the effectiveness and interplay of prosodic and semantic features of the poetry. The final chapter also comments on current trends in the zajal tradition in Lebanon and what effects recent developments might have on its future. In addition, a side-by-side Arabic-English poetic translation and a glossary of terms are appended along with the audio recording.
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Most of all, I wish to thank and acknowledge my husband, colleague, and teacher, Adnan Haydar, without whom my research simply would not have been possible.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Adnan, my children Nadia and Kikko, my parents, and to all Lebanese *zajal* poets, past, present, and future.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“Zajal is to Lebanon as the Pyramids are to Egypt, the Louvre to France, and the Taj Mahal to India”

--Said Aql

Poetry has always been the most highly regarded form of artistic expression in Arab culture. The Arabic language itself, with its system of tri-literal roots and derived morphological patterns, almost seems to have developed for the primary purpose of producing rhymes and prosodic meters – a poetry machine invented by a poetic mind. In his introduction to the January-May, 1989 issue of Oral Tradition, which focuses on Arabic Oral Traditions, Issa Boullata aptly describes the way in which Arabic-speaking peoples throughout the ages have reveled in listening to poetry:

Arab audiences have been noted for their strong inclination to rejoice in listening to the cadences and rhythms of their language as it is used to express ideas or emotions with which they identify. They would be thrilled at the apt use of a word or an image and would respond with unrehearsed, uninhibited collective acclaim as the inevitable word or image is eventually used by the poet, particularly in a rhyming position, with unexpected ramifications of meaning. (2)

Lebanese people are no different from other Arabs in their extraordinary love of Arabic, except possibly in regard to their constant attempts to recreate and simplify the classical idiom and bring it closer to everyday life. In Lebanon, a deep and long-lived oral tradition continues to thrive to this day. In particular, the art of verbal dueling, which is composed and performed in the Lebanese dialect, is so popular in Lebanon that it has attained the status of “a national pastime” (Haydar, “The Development of Lebanese Zajal” 189). Audiences numbering in the thousands regularly attend matches between rivaling jawqas (bands or teams) of poet-singers.
They flock to these duels to watch and hear their favorite zajal\(^\text{1}\) virtuosos argue through the exchange of improvised and sung lines of poetry.

Much of the thrill that Lebanese audiences experience undoubtedly stems from the poets’ use of the Lebanese dialect and their references to current and historic events, topics, and heroes that are significant to Lebanese culture and heritage, as well as their treatment of universal human themes that connect the Lebanese to the larger global community. Moreover, the popularity of Lebanese zajal is not limited to Lebanon; jawqas regularly travel to Lebanese immigrant communities around the globe to satisfy the thirst of their expatriate brothers and sisters living abroad in a perpetual state of nostalgic longing. Indeed, one night at a “Ḥaflit Zajal” (Zajal Party or Performance) can provide a hungry Lebanese émigré with more sustenance than a whole year’s worth of eating tabbouleh and kibbeh and drinking arak. In J.L. Austin’s terms, the act of verbal dueling is “performative” and entails the “illocutionary force” of enacting in words the very meaning of Lebanese identity\(^\text{2}\). The popularity of Lebanese zajal is also not limited to attendance at live zajal events. There is an abundance of audio and video recordings available to enthusiasts, some made by professional recording studios and sold as cassettes, CDs, and DVDs in stores and market places, and plenty others recorded by individuals and shared for free on the internet and elsewhere. There are popular weekly TV shows dedicated to Lebanese zajal aired in Lebanon and online, and since as far back as the 1930’s, dozens and dozens of print Arabic-language magazines and journals dedicated to recording and publicizing

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\(^{1}\) The term zajal refers to oral vernacular poetry in general, of which verbal dueling is a sub-type. In this study, I refer to the poet-singers of Lebanese verbal dueling as zajal poets.

\(^{2}\) The reference is to terms used by J.L. Austin throughout *How to Do Things with Words.*
the verses of zajal poets have been in circulation and have enjoyed wide reading audiences in Lebanon and in Lebanese immigrant communities around the world.\(^3\)

My aim in this study of the living and vibrant oral tradition of Lebanese verbal dueling is two-fold: first, to describe its present-day form and historic development, and second, to explore, analyze, and interpret the inner workings of the oral composition process and the strategies employed by zajal poets through the lens of translation. Towards this second aim, the dissertation takes an inside-out approach to making the art of Lebanese zajal accessible to an English-speaking audience via a close-up view of a celebrated verbal duel that took place in 1971 at the mountain resort village of Beit Mery, Lebanon, before an audience of more than 30,000 enthusiasts.

1.1. Lebanese Zajal: Background and Historical Development

Though time, tradition, and culture in the Lebanese mountainside have nurtured the development of sung oral poetry into its current form and status as a national pastime, very little has been written about it in English. This is not surprising when one considers the oral and vernacular nature of the tradition on the one hand, and on the other, the immense challenges that arise when attempting to translate for an audience unfamiliar with the language. Indeed, the language barrier applies not only to westerners and other non-Arabic speakers, but even to some extent to native speakers of Arabic from nations outside Lebanon. This is due to the highly-nuanced and culturally- and linguistically-specific nature of individual poem-performances. Furthermore, translating poetry necessitates translating more than just words. It requires

\(^3\) For a comprehensive listing and description of zajal in print media, see the chapter entitled “Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-Zajaliyya: Min 1933 ila 2000” (“Zajal in the Press: From 1933 to 2000”) in Robert Khoury’s Al-Zajal al-Lubnānī: Manābir wa Aʿlām.
translating the culture and the tradition as well, in order to explain to an unfamiliar audience why thousands of Lebanese *zajal* enthusiasts would flock to an arena to watch middle-aged poets duke it out under the stars with nothing but their voices, wit, and poetic images as weaponry.

Another major reason for the dearth of scholarly studies about Lebanese *zajal* stems from the historic neglect of and overall disdain for all types of vernacular Arabic folk literature in general. Just as the *Thousand and One Nights* - that great monument of narrative folklore passed down orally across cultures and centuries through the ḥakawāti storytelling tradition - was looked down upon by the literary elite and considered too vulgar for inclusion in the literary canon, so has colloquial oral poetry been overlooked as unworthy of scholarly attention. But this does not negate the fact that throughout its history, Arabic poetry has been composed and recited in dialect and has been practiced and developed to high levels of sophistication by numerous great poets who were also great *Fuṣḥā* poets. Nor does it deter from the fact that colloquial poetry is and has always been received, enjoyed and admired by a widely appreciative listening audience.

1.1.1. Arabic Roots

Our knowledge of the origins and early development of Arabic poetry is limited and scholarship on the topic usually begins with a discussion of the pre-Islamic masterpieces known as the *Muḥallaqāt* or the “Suspended Odes.” Though little is known for certain about these poems, including whether or not they were so named for having been written on fine Egyptian linen in gold lettering and hung from the *Kaʾba* in Mecca, it is clear from those early examples

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4 It is worth noting here that only as recently as 2013 have Lebanese universities begun adding courses on Lebanese *zajal* into their Arabic literature curricula.
that by the time pre-Islamic poets such as Imru’ al-Qays, Tarafa, Labid, ḌAntara and the others were composing their poems in the 6th century AD, Arabic poetry was already a highly developed and sophisticated art form. Most importantly, this art form was an oral one. Not only were pre-Islamic poems recited and transmitted orally, but as modern scholars such as Monroe and others have shown by applying the oral-formulaic theory set forth by Parry and Lord, these poems were composed orally by their “original” composers and show evidence of having been altered to some extent by their rāwīs (reciters) and compilers whose versions were eventually written down⁵.

In addition to the inherently poetic and musical nature of the Arabic language, competition was certainly another important factor in the development of Arabic poetry in early times. Arabs used to organize large gatherings in which traders from different tribes met to buy and sell products. These gatherings were also major social and cultural events that included poetry competitions among poets representing the various tribes. The most famous of these was known as Sūq ḌUkāz or “Ukaz Market” which took place along the spice route in the center of western Arabia. The winning poem, according to legend, would be written in golden letters and suspended from the Ka‘ba in Mecca as a reward. Regardless of the validity of the practice of hanging the golden poems, one thing is for certain: the winning poem was received with great admiration by listeners who memorized, recited, and transmitted it into the furthest reaches of the Arabic-speaking world and as a result its composer (and his or her tribe) gained high respect and wide renown.

⁵ See, for example, Monroe’s “Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Problem of Authenticity.”
In addition to the kind of poetry competition described above, the practice of poetic
dueling among tribes and clans was also widespread and of great importance in pre-Islamic and
early Islamic times and beyond. Audiences relished the sounds and ideas put forth by eloquent
and strong-witted poets who used spoken words as weapons. As described in detail by Haydar,
poets used a number of well-known genres as they declaimed their metrical and rhymed verses,
including *fakhr*, or boasting about oneself or one’s tribe; *madīḥ*, or praise, usually for the host or
benefactor; *rithā’*, or elegiac poetry; and *hijā’*, a defamatory poem aimed against one’s opponent
(“Development of Lebanese Zajal” 209-210). Other competitive traditions included *al-mu’āraḍa*
(to oppose), made famous by Imru’ al-Qays and ĖAlqama and which as a term describes a poem
emulating the meter, rhyme, and aesthetic qualities of another poem. Poets engaged in *al-
mufākhara*, which derives its names from *fakhr*, involving boasting, as does *al-munāfara*,
another form of boast exchange that does not require judging by a third party. *Al-mufākhara* and
*al-munāfara* were used among Arab tribes and also between Arabs and Persians. Another type
of bragging, *al-mu’āzama*, was exemplified by the female poet al-Khansā’ in which one brags
about his or her ability to bear grief, especially the death of a loved one. *Al-Murājaza* is another
type of boasting using only the *rajaz* meter, from which it gets its name, and *al-munāqada* (to
criticize) was widespread among Umayyad poets and made famous by the trio of poets Jarir, al-
Akhtal, and al-Farazdaq. During the Umayyad caliphate, some poets indulged in a series of
poetic jousts collected as *al-Naqā’īd*. These contests principally involved Jarir, al-Akhtal and al-
Farazdaq and others. These poets took the practice of lampooning to new levels, often launching
attacks of a sexual nature against each other. (Like many parts of *A Thousand and One Nights,*
the *Naqā’īd* are generally not found in school books.) Other themes within the pre-Islamic
tradition, such as wine poems (*khamriyyāt*), hunt poems (*jardiyyāt*), and love poems (*ghazal*), emerged in later Islamic times as separate genres in their own right.

As far back as pre-Islamic times, Arab poets engaged in poetry competitions that involved verse that was composed and recited in dialect. It is also well-known that the Arabs in Andalus composed colloquial poetry and wrote many *diwans* of *zajal* poetry, the most notable poet being Ibn Quzman. Colloquial Arabic poetry also spread from early Arabia to other Arab countries, each of which had its own prominent *zajal* poets and its own particular tradition. Colloquial poetry was manifested in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen (where it is known as *Zamil* poetry), Iraq, the Gulf region (where it is known as *Nabatī* poetry), Palestine, Jordan, and in Western Syria and Lebanon, where it was practiced, developed, and received with an especially high level of enthusiasm.

1.1.2. The Lebanese Tradition

One reason for the special enthusiasm for *zajal* in the Lebanese context is that historically Lebanese *zajal* poets competed fervently with each other in the art of oral composition and they always performed their poems themselves, rather than writing them down for other singers to perform as was often the case in other Arab traditions. They composed and sang their *zajal* poetry in person at public celebrations and at evening gatherings, parties, and also at funerals. They engaged in boasting and satire and competed in verbal duels, to the point that no public occasion transpired without a *zajal* poet in attendance to entertain the guests and commemorate the event in poetry.

In his essential article entitled “The Development of Lebanese *Zajal*: Genre, Meter, and Verbal Duel,” Adnan Haydar describes the historical development of the verbal duel in Lebanon
He tells us that the tradition of Lebanese *zajal* developed in the mountain villages of Lebanon where, in the evenings, folks gathered in each other’s homes to socialize. Story-telling and singing were the most popular forms of entertainment, with the most exciting being that of the dueling poets who were often invited to perform at weddings and other celebrations. The best duelers were rewarded with money or presents. On saints’ days, traveling poets would go from village to village, accompanied by their supporters (a chorus group), and seek out opponents to duel with. Local villagers would summon their best poet-singers and soon a crowd would develop. The audience would divide itself in support of one or the other dueler and the contest would begin. The older poet would start first by shaking the tambourine (*daff*) and asking the audience for permission. He would choose a topic of his choice, a riddle or a political or social issue, and challenge his opponent to respond in verse. His opponent would be required to respond using the same meter and same rhyme. If he was unable, he would have to apologize in verse or else lose the duel. Other requirements included that the poet not be allowed to plagiarize lines of other poets in the current or previous contests; the lines must be improvised. At the end of the duel, a judge who was an established *zajal* poet was chosen by the audience to evaluate the duelers and announce the winner.

In the early 1900s there were new developments in the *zajal* tradition. Poets (*zajjāls*) began to band together and form groups called “*jawqas*”. These groups would travel around the countryside advertising their *jawqa* and would receive invitations to perform at social functions. They would begin by praising their hosts, and eventually take on a political or social topic or series of topics for debate and duel amongst themselves. Topics were most often oppositions, such as day and night, war and peace, freedom and imprisonment, and were often suggested by
the audience. A chorus (riddādi) would sit behind the team and wait for their cues to sing along and repeat “clincher” lines of each of the duelers.

The formation of jawgās helped set the Lebanese tradition apart from other Arab oral poetry traditions. It allowed them to take the practice of zajal poetry from an individual poet performing at local occasions to a much broader audience and purpose as teams of poets travelled from town to town dueling amongst themselves or against other teams, thus drumming up excitement and enthusiasm from the audience. Just as Arab poets in pre-Islamic times had their rāwīs who memorized and recited their poems, the zajal poets of each Lebanese village have their aficionados and supporters who encourage them, rally behind them, and memorize their poems whenever and wherever they compete. It is indeed this element of live competition before a demanding critical audience that has enabled the Lebanese tradition to develop into its current form and is what has not only made it popular, but kept it popular even in today’s ultramodern society with all of its technological advancements where it continues to compete successfully with other flashier and less mentally taxing forms of entertainment.

Another essential component of the development of Lebanese oral poetry is the role of music. As has already been mentioned, the modern tradition of oral poetry in Lebanon is commonly referred to as zajal, stemming from the verb zajala, meaning “to raise the voice in singing, produce a sweet, pleasing melody” (qtd. in Haydar 191). Beginning with its etymology we can easily see the importance of music to its essence. In a more general sense, zajal in the Lebanese context refers to oral vernacular poetry, of which there are numerous forms, composed in or for performance and declaimed or sung to the accompaniment of music. While Lebanese zajal is an Arabic tradition and shares some features of the genres of zajal and muwashshah (ode in classical Arabic in strophic form) that originated in Muslim Spain in the 11th and 12th
centuries, its development in modern times is probably less related to its roots in early Arabia than to its Syriac roots as set down by the early fathers of the Maronite church. The Maronite church was established centuries earlier by monastic followers of the 4th century Syriac monk St. Maron who took refuge from persecution in the mountain regions of Lebanon. The earliest forms of what has developed into the Lebanese zajal of modern times were based in writings of Maronite church fathers writing in the late 13th century. In their attempts to translate Syriac liturgical material into Arabic, they felt it was important to translate into the dialect of Lebanon at that time. As they did so, they retained some of the musical features of Syriac hymns and Syriac metrical features. At first, the zajal poems were a mixture of fushā and dialect but eventually changed to dialect only6. Eventually zajal came to be part of Lebanese folk culture practiced predominantly in the mountain regions as a cherished source of entertainment. Over time, the zajal tradition in Lebanon has developed into a rich, complex, highly entertaining grand-scale performance.

1.2. Ḥaflit Zajal: Format and Structure

Today’s zajal contests, generally held in Lebanon during the summer months and abroad during other months of the year, are most often held in public arenas or in large restaurants or banquet halls. They attract hundreds and sometimes thousands of enthusiasts who willingly pay seventy-five to a hundred dollars or more for a ticket to attend a ḥaflit zajal (zajal party) where they can hear and watch their favorite jawqa (team or ensemble of two to four poets) compete amongst themselves or against other jawqas in four- to five-hour-long duels of sung, improvised

6 This can be seen in the early zajal poems quoted and discussed in Whaybeh’s Al-Zajal: tārīkhuhu, adabuhu, a’lāmuhu, qadīman wa ḥadīthan. In particular, see the poems of Suleiman al-Ashluhi (1270-1335), Bishop Gibrail al-Qila’l (1440-1516), Reverend Issa al-Hazar (late 16th century) and others (131-151).
poetry. The teams of poets are accompanied by a chorus of singers called *riddārī* (repeaters) with *derbakkis* (drums), *daffs* (tambourines), and sometimes electric keyboards or other melody instruments such as *mizmār* and oud, who repeat refrains and help keep the poets in tune. Audience members, who more often than not will also be enjoying dinner and drinks during the ḥaflī, also sing along and participate in the duel with clapping and whistling and shouting for poets to repeat their best lines. In fact, audience members often take advantage of their right to shout “*ūd-al*” meaning “repeat it!” This is a sign they enjoyed the verses so much that they want the poet to not only repeat the six to eight lines he just improvised, but he is required to add two more to the beginning. Certainly one can imagine the joy felt by the audience when treated to an enhanced repetition of a poetic coup and, because the audience members now know the lines, they are able to join in the fun by singing along. It is analogous to the thrill of watching an instant replay of some amazing athletic feat on the basketball court or the football field, and what is even better, perhaps, in the context of the verbal duel is that the audience can interact with the professionals seated in close proximity before them and participate in the action with their own voices.

At a typical ḥaflī *zajal* only one *jawqa* of poets will perform and duel each other according to a prescribed sequence. When two *jawqas* of poets compete against each other, it is a larger event and is called a “*Mubārāt Zajal*” (Zajal Match) or might be referred to as “*Tahaddī*” (Dare or Challenge) or “*Tahaddī Kbīr*” (Big Dare/Challenge).

*Zajal* parties follow a conventional format. In the case of a single *jawqa* performance, the four members of the *jawqa* sit on the stage before the audience, seated side by side in ranking order starting with the leader to the right, then the second-ranking poet, the third, and finally the fourth. In the case of a two-*jawqa* competition, the two lead poets will be seated beside each
other at the center of the stage with the two, three, and four poets of each jawqa seated in order to the right or left of the lead poets. Each poet has a tambourine which he will shake and raise over his head during his turn. Behind the poets are the riddādi who sit ready to sing refrains and shout encouraging comments while also providing musical accompaniment with derbakkis and tambourines as well. A brief musical prelude initiates the haflī before the lead poet delivers the opening odes segment, which is called the iftitāhiyyi, an Arabic term meaning “overture” or “prelude.” In the case of two opposing jawqas performing, the two jawqa leaders will deliver opening poems or qāṣīds, in which they normally praise their hosts and commemorate in poetry the particular location where the duel is being held. The opening qāṣīds often set the trajectory of the duels to follow by introducing key images, oppositions, and topics for debate. Towards the end of the qāṣīd, poets will set the niceties aside and get onto the real fun of taking a preliminary jab or two at their opponents.

The iftitāhiyyi segment, which lasts from fifteen minutes to a half hour, is then followed by two lines of qarrādī, an upbeat strictly-rhythmed musical meter, which are improvised also by the lead poet, leading to a refrain that is repeated by the riddādi and that requires a response. Poet number two then responds to the lead poet’s refrain, using the same qarrādī rhyme scheme and meter, and the two poets go back and forth, taking turns debating in qarrādī verses. Then the two other poets join in, or the six others in the case of two jawqas, each taking turns giving verses and refrains of qarrādī.

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7 For more about the Iftitāhiyyi segment, the qāṣīd form, and other poetic, musical, and thematic features of the Iftitāhiyyi segment, see Chapter Three, sections 3.1. and 3.1.1.
Next, the number two poet delivers a four (or more) line verse of maʿannā, another metrical-musical form of zajal\(^8\). This maʿannā verse ends with an attack or a question directed at the lead poet and provides the specific topic that the lead poet and second poet will debate, each taking an opposing side of the argument and trying to outdo the other with cleverness while undermining the other’s arguments. Once a series of exchanges is set in motion, the two poets mirror the rhyme scheme, meter, and tune of the initiator of the exchange. While one poet is singing, his opponent is listening very carefully and preparing a response. Each turn consists of anywhere from 7 to 20 lines.

As each poet delivers his lines, he is working towards a key element in his turn -- his clincher. The clincher is the final lines of his turn, and yet these are the first lines he composes in his mind while he listens to his opponent sing; the clincher also determines the rhyme pattern for all of his preceding lines. When he reaches and sings the clincher, the tune stabilizes to a familiar tune, which is then picked up by the chorus (and the audience) and repeated twice. Thus, each poet’s turn ends with a refrain that is repeated and sung twice by the riddādi. This exchange between the one and two poets is the first of the “verbal duel proper” segment of the ḥaftī. The duel between the first two poets will go on for several exchanges, lasting approximately twenty minutes or so, and is ended by closing stanzas in the qaṣīd form. Then the dueling moves to the other two poets who follow the same procedure as the lead and second poet, debating a new topic. Each poet takes an opposing side or point of view and each poet’s turn ends with a refrain that is repeated and sung by the riddādi. The dueling goes back and forth and again is ended with closing qaṣīds by each of the two dueling poets that summarize and pursue their arguments, supporting them with references to life experiences, literature, politics, religion, history, folklore, supporting them with references to life experiences, literature, politics, religion, history, folklore,

\(^8\) See Chapter Three, section 3.2.1. for a detailed description of maʿannā.
and current events, while constantly trying their best to connect with the audience and gain their support.

As mentioned earlier, throughout the verbal dueling the audience claps and sings and repeats the refrains along with the chorus and will often ask the poets to “repeat” by shouting “cīd-a!” or “cīd-a w zīd-a!” (i.e. repeat and add lines). If this request is made by someone in the crowd, the poet must deliver his lines again, word-for-word, plus add one or two new lines with the same rhyme and meter at the start (i.e. he much change the matlaʾ, or proem).

When the verbal duel segment of the zajal party finally runs its course, it is common for the poets to take turns with ghazal or sung, improvised love poems (during which the poets inevitably take one more opportunity to boast about themselves or attack their opponents). These stanzas are initiated by the lead poet and introduce the required metrical form and end rhyme. The other poets then contribute verses of the same form and same rhyme introduced by the lead poet.

When the ghazal segment is over, the party begins to wind down and the lead poet (or each of the lead poets) closes the party with odes in qasīd form commemorating the occasion and thanking the hosts and sponsors and the audience. In his final lines, the lead poet almost always bids good-bye by expressing his desire to meet again soon, under the stars, at a future zajal party.

To keep the party lively and the audience engaged over the course of the several hours (usually beginning at ten o’clock at night) it takes for the haflit zajal to unfold, poets incorporate a wide variety of musical and poetic meters that range from long forms like maʿannā filled with melisma and other ornamentation of the voice, to short, rhythmic forms like qarrādi with traditional tunes familiar to the audience. They incorporate a number of verbal tricks and engage
in well-known, traditional genres of sung poetry such as the homonym-based ʿatābā and intricately rhymed and patterned mkhammas mardūd. The poets are well-versed in history and current events and often weave important historical or folkloric figures and events into their arguments, another way they are able to connect with the audience and establish their virtuosity.

In zajal parties nowadays, there is no declared winner. While individual poets certainly have their fan bases of supporters who will always declare their poet as the winner, in reality both sides win and the audience wins the biggest prize of all – an evening of pure enthrallment.

When two jawqas compete in the bigger “Mubārāt” events, the sequence of events follows a similar pattern. Rather than dueling amongst themselves, however, the lead poets of the opposing jawqas will duel each other, as will the number two poets, number three poets, and the number four poets. Since the lead poets are the most skilled and experienced pair, their duel is usually saved for last. Thus, the number four poets duel first, then the threes, the twos and finally the ones for a grand finale. This, of course results in a longer verbal duel segment and an opportunity for the poets and audience to engage in an even wider variety of topics and themes.

In the late 1960’s and through the 1970’s, the “Mubārāt Zajal” was judged by a panel of judges and a winner was declared. However, ever since the legendary battle at Beit Mery in 1971 when the judges were so impressed by the quality of the performances of all the poets from both jawqas that they were reluctant to choose a winner, no official declaration of the winner has been made.

1.3. The Battle of Beit Mery: Setting

What I have been referring to as “The Battle of Beit Mery” was a major once-in-a-generation type of cultural event that took place in the mountain resort village of Beit Mery, Lebanon on July 21, 1971. It is known to Lebanese by a few different names, including Ḥaflit
Beit Mery or Mahrajān Beit Mery (Beit Mery Festival), or also as Ḥaflit Dayr al-Qalʿa or simply Ḥaflit al-Qalʿa owing to the specific venue of the event at the historic Dayr al-Qalʿa (literally Monastery of the Fortress) fortress in Beit Mery. The zijal duel at Beit Mery pitted the jawqas of Lebanon’s two most prominent zijal poets and fiercest competitors – Zaghloul al-Damour and Mousa Zoghayb - against each other in a seven-hour battle attended by an estimated forty thousand fans. This well-known zijal battle was chosen for this study because of its major popularity among Lebanese all over the world who either had the great fortune of being among the forty thousand spectators estimated to have been in actual attendance, or who have memorized its exemplary lines, storing them away as valuable gems, having heard them quoted on the lips of their fellow countrymen and women for generations. In fact, The Battle of Beit Mery, a kind of Lebanese Woodstock, was just one of a number of high caliber zijal events of the 1970’s to which zijal enthusiasts flocked by the tens of thousands. It serves as a fine example of the level of greatness achieved by the best rivaling poets of their day as well as the level of enthusiasm of their followers. I chose the Battle of Beit Mery as a focus of this study because it provides a perfect model, a gold standard of sorts, through which to present the vibrant living tradition of Lebanese zijal to the world outside Lebanon.

In his (Arabic language) articles about luminary zijal poet Zaghloul al-Damour and the Beit Mery duel, George El-Hage gives a personal account of the 1971 event in Beit Mery⁹. He begins by noting that Zaghloul and Mousa competed with their respective jawqas – Jawqat

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Zaghloul al-Damour (The Jawqa of Zaghloul al-Damour) and Jawqat Khalil Rukuz (The Jawqa of Khalil Rukuz10) – many times before and after Beit Mery, at Mishrif, Chtoura, al-Madīnī al-Riyyādiyyī (Sports City Complex), Mayrouba, al-Mtayn, and many other locations in and outside Lebanon; but the duel at Beit Mery remains the most well-received and most memorable over the course of time. In his words:

Everyone who listens to zajal and who attended the duel at Beit Mery (also known as Ḥaflit Dayr al-Qal‘a or Ḥaflit al-Qal‘a) or who has listened to the recording of it, or who called in to express their opinions on Sawt al-Arab radio show when it hosted Zaghloul, all critics of zajal, aficionados of zajal, and even the zajal poets who sang at Beit Mery themselves, including Mousa who attested to it, and Zaghloul, who stated that the numerous other contests that took place between himself and Mousa before and after Beit Mery “did not achieve the same resounding level of success and excitement” …all share the opinion that what happened at Beit Mery was a one-of-a-kind event which, in Zaghloul’s words, “brought all of Lebanon together…and took place before the war…was attended by some 40,000 people…it didn’t end until 5 o’clock in the morning, and even then the people didn’t want to go home…Despite the twenty or so other zajal parties that took place…Ḥaflit Beit Mery remains the most significant one.” (14-15)

El-Hage goes on say that “at Beit Mery, for one reason or another, the god of poetry descended upon the poets” (15) and that all eight poets – Zaghloul al-Damour, Zayn Sh‘ayb, Tali‘ Hamdan, and Edouard Harb; Mousa Zoghayb, Anees al-Fghāli, Jiryis al-Bustany, and Butrus Deeb – gave the best performances of their lives, excelling at the top of their art. No one won or lost the contest; even the judging panel was awestruck by what they heard and witnessed. This decision by the judging committee not to officially declare a winner was another factor contributing to the mystique and lore of the Battle of Beit Mery. It only served to fire up the rivaling camps of

10 Mousa Zoghayb’s jawqa is named after the late great zajal poet Khalil Rukuz who was Mousa’s mentor and long-time jawqa leader and colleague prior to his death in 1962. After the Beit Mery duel, Mousa’s jawqa was renamed to Jawqat al-Qa‘a (Jawqa of the Fortress).
supporters for Zaghloul’s or Mousa’s jawqa as everyone had a strong opinion to express claiming victory for their heroes.

According to El-Hage, July 21, 1971 was “a day like no other in the history of Lebanese zajal…A day when “blades embraced blades” and “swords clashed against swords” – the blades of zajal and the swords of improvisation” (15). He reports having walked from his home in al-Mansourieh to Beit Mery (around 5.6 kilometers or 3.5 miles) because from about noontime that day the main road was closed due to the uninterrupted line of parked cars stretching from the outskirts of Mansourieh all the way to the entrance of the Beit Mery fortress where the duel was to take place. El-Hage also reports that the price of a ticket reached 150 Lebanese pounds based on his witnessing the (black market) sale of two tickets for 300 LL\(^\text{11}\). Approximately forty thousand people were in attendance, “many more standing than seated.”

The members of the judging panel were seated in the front row supervising the start of the party. They included: Ahmad Makkii, Said Aql, George Jirdaq and Tawfiq al-Basha. All of the poets had arrived to Beit Mery except for Zaghloul. El-Hage describes the extraordinary beginning to this extraordinary event:

When it got to be 9:00 pm, the scheduled time for the party to begin, the crowd began to get impatient and began demanding for the party to begin and questioning the cause for the delay; suddenly a man was heard on loudspeaker saying that all the poets had arrived except for Zaghloul; everyone was aghast; “except for Zaghloul? Why? How could that be? Where was Zaghloul? Was he sick? Was he in an accident?” Rumors spread that the party was going to be canceled or postponed, which started an uproar. Soon enough we heard the voice of the same man on the loudspeaker (who might have been one of the organizers of the big event)

\(^{11}\)Roughly 55 USD in 1971; $1.00 in 1971 had the same buying power as $5.86 in 2014, making the 150 LL ticket in 1971 roughly equivalent to paying about $300 today.
assuring everyone that Zaghloul was on his way and clarifying that the reason for his delay was due to the poet’s brother having passed away the night before and informing everyone that Zaghloul was now undoubtedly in a deep state of mourning and grief. This was a huge blow; the poet had been with his family up until the end and had left the moment the funeral was over and only after eulogizing his brother with tear-jerking verses. Despite this tragedy, Zaghloul bid his brother final farewell only hours ago and was now making his way to be with us tonight as expected…

This news landed on us like a bomb; no one knew whether Zaghloul’s arrival would make us happy or sad; we worried how he would be able to participate in the duel…

Around ten o’clock some noise and commotion rose up from the main entrance to the fortress and we heard people shouting, “Zaghloul is here! Zaghloul is here!” We looked and saw the poet being carried in on the shoulders of people in the crowd, he was exhausted and obviously grief-stricken as well as awestruck by the emotional reception from the crowd. A path was made for him to pass through the crowd on the shoulders of people and police officers; everyone was clapping and whistling and shouting; his entrance was extraordinary, the entrance of victorious conquerors.(3)

1.3.1. Zaghloul and Mousa

The significance of the Beit Mery duel is also tied to the personalities and excellence of the two lead poets, Zaghloul al-Damour and Mousa Zoghayb. Most Lebanese would agree with El-Hage when he says “an encounter between Zaghloul and Mousa is the peak of zajal encounters; both are extremely talented and both are masters of the manbar [stage] with fervent and numerous fans; verbal duels between them have their own special flavor and long-lasting reverberations” (“Part One” 15). Zajal poet Antoine Saadeh described to me in a personal interview on the topic of the Beit Mery duel how Zaghloul and Mousa actively encouraged their perceived rivalry by refusing to appear together in public and by fanning the fire with boastful statements about themselves and attacks on each other. Saadeh describes the level of loyalty among supporters of one or the other poet as being fervent and all-pervasive, to the point that “if
by way of conversation a Mousa fan discovered himself seated next to a Zaghoul fan, at a ḡaflit zajal or anywhere else in public, say at a restaurant, theater event, or some other place, he would immediately get up and find another seat. Fans of Mousa or Zaghoul wouldn’t “be caught dead” next to each other. Some details about these two zajal greats are included here, though the biographical information provided is by no means exhaustive.

1.3.1.1. Zaghoul al-Damour

Born Joseph al-Hashem in al-Bouchrie, al-Metn, Lebanon in 1925, Zaghoul began improvising zajal at age 9. He spent most of his free time at school composing poetry rather than playing with other children, so much so that his teachers and classmates noticed this about him and referred to him as “that boy, the one from al-Damour, the “mzaghla” one (little one; also etymologically related to zaghoul, baby bird),” which is how he got his nickname “Zaghoul al-Damour” (Songbird of al-Damour) at the young age of 9. Zaghoul grew up to become the zajal poet “in whom all the elements of creativity have been perfected…upon whom the creator bestowed the gifts of eloquence, cleverness, quick inspiration, presence of memory, and a silken voice…THE poet of all of Lebanon…the Prince of the Manbar” (El-Hage, “Part One” 8). In addition to his omnipresence at all special occasions in Lebanon, Zaghoul earned the nicknames “Sindbad of Zajal” and “Ambassador of Lebanon to the Emigrant Lands” for his numerous travels abroad, beginning in 1953, that took him to places in Africa and Europe, to Argentina, Australia, Canada, North American, South America, Mexico, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and others. Zaghoul laid the foundation for modern-day zajal, setting the rules for zajal parties and organizing jawqas and zajal events; he had a major impact on the development of Lebanese zajal during his generation. Dozens of great zajal poets learned under his wing as members of his jawqa and got their training from him. His proverbial
beautiful singing voice is considered the highest standard of excellence. In 1958 he founded the zajal magazine Al-Masrah (The Stage) which for twenty-five years was a favorite resource for zajal enthusiasts and poets. He has published books of his poetry and has received many honors and awards, most notably the Lebanese Medal of Honor in 1974. Although today Zaghloul’s health keeps him out of the public eye, he continues to be held in the highest esteem among Lebanese and his name is synonymous with Lebanese zajal.

1.3.1.2. Mousa Zoghayb

Mousa Zoghayb was born in Hrajil, Lebanon, in 1937 and began his zajal career at age 17. He is nicknamed “al-Malik” (the King). He sang alongside the great zajal poet Khalil Rukuz until Rukuz’s death in 1962, after which he was the lead poet of Jawqat Khalil Rukuz. After the Battle of Beit Mery, the name of Mousa’s jawqa was changed to Jawqat al-Qal’a (Jawqa of the Fortress (of Beit Mery)). Mousa Zoghayb is considered a leading authority of verbal dueling who chooses his opponents carefully, refusing to duel many. He is known for the depth and difficulty of his poetry, as if he is “chiseling in stone,” a style that sharply contrasts that of Zaghloul who seems to be “ladling from the sea” due to the fluidity and ease with which his lines pour out of him (El-Hage, “Part One” 15). Mousa is considered a stubborn and menacing opponent of many stratagems on the manbar. At the time of the Beit Mery duel in 1971, Mousa was still a young zajal poet on the rise with much less fame and seniority than Zaghloul. Today Mousa is probably the first name in zajal poets in Lebanon, having attained a great deal of celebrity not only from his participation in zajal parties and contests but also from his regular appearance on television shows and as a judge at poetry events. He currently hosts a very popular television show entitled “Owf!” which airs weekly on the Lebanese station OTV and features zajal recitals and competitions for young poets of zajal.
1.4. Orality and Improvisation

Lebanese *zajal* poets have to be able to compose publicly on the spot, often without knowing the topic of the duel prior to the event. *Zajal* poets must therefore be able to compose quickly without breaking the musical or poetic meter and without going off topic. In order to do this, the poets rely on the rules of oral-formulaic composition which, as Lord has described, is a kind of language of its own with its own “grammar within a grammar” (36). Where speakers of regular language are able to spontaneously use nouns and verbs and other words to form phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to express ideas and sentiments, oral poets composing spontaneous verse are able to string together metrical formulas and use formulaic systems and substitutions to express their ideas and images in verse.

A poem or a *zajal* verse only becomes unforgettable when recited by its composer. Its charm and durability are tied to the personality of the poet, his voice, the excellence of his recitation, the quality of his delivery, and his ability to be inspired by the occasion and “capture the image in the frame of spontaneity and eloquence at one and the same time” (El-Hage, “Part One” 2). However, memorization of specific *zajal* verses is the work of listeners, not poets. Often when poets are asked to quote lines that are memorable to listeners and often quoted by *zajal* aficionados, they aren’t able to do so. In a 1989 interview on ART, Zaghloul was asked about the question of memorization, to which he responded, “The *zajal* poet says his verses and goes on…he doesn’t remember or memorize every verse or ode he says, nor does he want to remember most of what he says, to avoid falling into the trap of repeating himself…The poet says his lines and forgets, because his poetry is improvised and produced on the spot…as for the audience, they remember the lines because they repeat them over and over again and they get stuck in their memories for a long time” (qtd. in El-Hage, “Part One” 15).
Zaghloul describes improvised zajal poetry as “the hardest poetry” and explains that only a gifted and experienced poet firmly entrenched in the “embrace of rhyme and meter,” and only with tremendous exertion of effort on his part, is capable of singing alongside those greats, those master poets who have dedicated their lives to the art of improvisation and who “have rhyme and meter under their thumbs” (qtd. in El-Hage, “Part One” 16).

Zaghloul’s comments confirm the notion that zajal verses composed during verbal duels are improvised, not prepared in advance or memorized or delivered from memory. Indeed it seems this would be much more difficult an endeavor. Instead, the main preparation work that zajal poets do takes place over the course of years and decades of apprenticeship during which they internalize and master the “grammatical rules” of the language of oral composition. As far as what kinds of preparations might come before a scheduled zajal party or zajal match, certainly zajal poets can prepare themselves the way a professor prepares before giving a lecture – not by writing down word-for-word, but by preparing bullet notes (in this case mental notes rather than written ones) and an outline of the logical presentation of arguments and ideas. A zajal poet will know ahead of time some very important names and images about which he can prepare verses. Not to mention that the Arabic language itself provides a resource of limitless rhymes. These rhymes are associated in the poet’s mind with topics. For example, the topic of “war” immediately brings to the poet’s mind a storehouse of related words that rhyme with each other, such as ḥarb (war) and ḍarb (hit) and gharb (west). In a similar way, a zajal poet has stored up a lifetime of rhyme words that rhyme with his own name or nicknames and can easily recall lists of rhymes for any other poet’s name or nickname or for place names or names of hosts and sponsors.
Zajal poets prepare for performances in other ways as well. Based on conversations I have enjoyed with great Lebanese zajal poet Antoine Saadeh, lead poet of Jawqat al-Masraḥ (Jawqa of the Stage), zajal poets belonging to the same jawqa usually meet once or twice during the weeks leading up to a performance in order to plan the main themes and topics to be treated as well as to assign roles to individual jawqa members and to share ideas. When two jawqas are scheduled to duel against each other they will also meet ahead of time to plan the sequence of events and determine some of the main themes and topics. This type of preparation is important for all of the poets, but most of all for the younger, less experienced ones. For the sake of the art of zajal and all those concerned with it, poets want to avoid at all cost any snags, any lapses in their ability to continue singing on the stage as the occurrence of such a breach would be disastrous. But no matter how well-prepared poets might be, they cannot simply rely on this type of preparation to carry them through an actual appearance on the zajal stage. One never knows when an impromptu topic will be suggested by the audience or when one might be asked to “repeat and add” improvised lines. A case in point took place in Calabria, Italy in 2009 at the Vis Musicae Festival on oral poetry of the Mediterranean region to which poets Antoine Saadeh and long-time jawqa companion and fellow poet Elias Khalil were invited along with a small group of riddādi to perform a Lebanese zajal party. The poets had prepared a shortened version of a typical zajal show ahead of time in order to give the unfamiliar audience a taste of their art; translators were available for translation into Italian, Spanish, and English. Although the conference was taking place during the summer, the weather all week in the mountain village of Villagio Mancuso at Sila Piccola National Park where it was being held had been very cold. The nights were even colder. As nightfall approached, everyone was complaining with teeth chattering about the frigid temperatures. Just as the show was about to begin, someone from the
audience shouted a request for the two poets to duel each other on the topic of “cold versus hot.” While this took Antoine and Elias by surprise, each took on one of the oppositions and they were quickly able to trade several stanzas without delay and without the least bit of difficulty, much to the delight of the shivering crowd.

The ability to adapt to this type of unforeseen circumstance is what makes a *zajal* poet worthy of appearing on the stage. And once a poet has attained the status of a *manbar* poet, he never knows when he might suddenly be called upon in the community at large to eulogize a lost loved one or commemorate an important social event in *zajal*. A poet simply cannot prepare for these moments that catch him off guard except by practicing the art of improvisation day in and day out. This is why it is common to see *zajal* poets often standing off to the side, humming verses to themselves, or for one to suddenly withdraw from conversation to quietly work out an inspired idea in verse.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Translating the art of verbal dueling in Lebanon, which is the essential endeavor of this study, will involve multiple layers of translation, many of which are not of the verbal or linguistic sort. The project must include a translation of verbal dueling itself as a cultural practice familiar and second-nature to a Lebanese yet absolutely foreign to a Western, English-speaking audience. To this end, I take an inside-out approach that begins with an analysis of a specific and well-known major verbal duel that took place in the beautiful mountain resort town of Beit Mery, Lebanon, in 1971. I follow a line-by-line transcription, transliteration, and translation from Lebanese dialect into English of the *Iftitāhiyyi qaṣīds* (Introductory odes), *Jawlat al-taḥaddi* (verbal duel exchange), and *Ikhtitāmiyyi qaṣīds* (Closing odes) of Mousa Zoghayb and Zaghloul al-Damour (penname of Joseph Hashem) as performed and recorded at the 1971 Deir al-Qal’a Festival in Beit Mery, Lebanon. 12 As mentioned already in the Introduction, this well-known *zajal* battle was chosen for this study because of its major popularity among Lebanese all over the world and its prominence in the history of Lebanese *zajal.

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12 I have restricted my translation to the portions delivered by the *jawqa* leaders Mousa Zoghayb and Zaghloul al-Damour. The event at Beit Mery began at around 10 p.m. and did not conclude until around 5 a.m. the next morning. In the course of my discussion I will summarize the duels between the other members of each *jawqa* and quote some of the more memorable lines and stanzas.
2.1. Transcription and Transliteration

In my attempt to capture and convey a large portion of the Battle of Beit Mery to an English-speaking audience, I begin with a set of materials that include a live audio recording (supplementary audio CD included) and Michel Ziadeh’s Arabic transcription published in his book entitled, *Lubnān al-Zajal fī akbar al-mubārayāt: Dayr al-qal’a 1971 wa al-Madīni al-Riyādiyyi 1972*. I also make reference to a partial transcription published in Antoine Butrus al-Khuwayri’s *Tārīkh al-Zajal al-Lubnānī* published in 2011. I follow the Arabic spelling conventions used by Ziadeh and al-Khuwayri and edit their transcriptions based on what is heard on the actual recording, making note of any discrepancies. I have included a personal copy of the CD recording given to me by poet Antoine Saadeh as an essential component for the reader’s appreciation of the poetic-musical performance, and for convenience I have noted where to cue the recording at every line. A running commentary is included in the form of footnotes which are intended to be read in conjunction with each line of transcription and its successive transliteration, trot translation, and improved translation.

For the transliteration, I am following the Library of Congress standard. In particular, long vowel *alif* (ا) (pronounced like the “a” in the English word “dad”) is represented as ā, long vowel *wāw* (و) (pronounced like the “ou” in the English word “You”) as ū, and long vowel *yā* (ي) (pronounced like the “ee” in the English word “keen”) as ī. The so-called emphatic Arabic consonants, other consonants with no English counterpart, such as *’ayn* (ع), and the glottal stop *hamza* (ـ) (pronounced as the sound at the hyphen in the English expression “Uh-oh”), are represented as given in the chart below:
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Note that the consonant qāf (ق) has two possible pronunciations among Lebanese speakers. It is pronounced as “q” as in fūṣḥā primarily by Druze\(^{13}\) and as glottal stop by all others. In the Arabic transcription, words will be spelled with qāf (ق) and the pronunciation by the individual poet will be clear through the transliteration.

Because the Arabic transcription does not include the short vowel diacritics fatḥa (ـَ) (pronounced as the “u” in the English word “but”), dāamma (ـُ) (pronounced as the “oo” in the English word “good”), and kasra (ـِ) (pronounced as the “i” in the English word “give”), an important component of my transliteration is the inclusion of the letters ą, u, and ı, respectively.

\(^{13}\) One of the six major confessional groups in Lebanon. While the Druze are often grouped as Muslims or described as an offshoot of Islam, they are actually neither Muslim nor Christian, but a somewhat mysterious and secretive religion of their own. The Druze are mountain-dwellers and thus have participated throughout their history in the practice and development of Lebanese zajal. Most often, a jawqa will include one member who is a Druze.
to transcribe these when they occur. For purposes of metrical analysis, a topic I will briefly return to later, a careful transcription and transliteration of the poet’s actual utterance is essential.

Footnotes have been inserted in the transliteration line for two main reasons: to point out a discrepancy between the published transcriptions and the actual recording or to make note of prosodic features of the Arabic/Lebanese words and phrases that have poetic impact (which, by definition, are tied to the original language.)

2.2. Trot Translation

Beneath each line of transliteration I have included a literal trot translation into English. Footnotes are added in the trot line to identify historical figures, place names, and other culturally-specific references. Other footnotes are included in the trot line for the purposes of explanation, interpretation, or general commentary on the syntax, intended meaning, idiomatic meaning, or multiple meanings that might arise in a given line. All commentary on the meanings and references associated with each line is restricted to the trot translation so that the final translation will be free of footnotes and thus more readable.

2.3. Second Translation

In the second translation line, my aim is to present a serviceable rendition of the original that is more pleasing than the trot and captures the main thrust of the poet’s meaning. Certain nuances will necessarily be lost as a result but will remain available to the reader through reference to the commentary. Also lost in the second translation will be the rhyme patterns and metrical form of the original. Rather than attempting to mimic the rhyme schemes of the original, which would be nearly impossible and likely unpleasing in English if it were somehow carried out, I prefer to convey the catchiness and musicality of the original with an ear to Old
English verse forms that moved musically and rhythmically through alliteration and regular beats. Alliteration in particular, it seems to me, remains even in today’s English to be a “fan favorite” among methods for producing phrases with a ring. One does not have to look very far to find a catchy title, headline, or advertising jingle whose secret to success is alliteration. I have tried to avoid overdoing alliteration, though, knowing that too much would trivialize the poetry and nudge it into the realm of cliché. In terms of meter, I have tried to follow a mostly iambic stress pattern and to place important words and images where they will give and receive the strongest syllabic impact.

2.4. Side-by-Side Arabic-English Translation

While the purpose of this project is not necessarily to produce a stand-alone translation of the original but rather to provide a combination of notes, commentary, and live recording that will hopefully allow the unfamiliar ears and eyes of the listener/reader to appreciate an otherwise inaccessible artistic performance, I do feel a third translation is in order. For this reason, in addition to the line-by-line transcription, transliteration, trot translation, and second translation, I also present, in the form of an appendix, a side-by-side Arabic-English translation in stanza form that is free of footnotes, references, and commentary. In this last version of the English translation, I take one more step towards an improved, poetic, stand-alone rendition, taking some additional liberties now that the imposing presence and details of the original have been removed. For readers interested in literary translation, the project with this added appendix might offer a unique look inside the creative process as it affords the reader not only the opportunity to see, hear, interpret, and appreciate the original, but also invites participation in the translation process itself. Theoretically, given the detailed notes provided about the original,
interested literary translators with no knowledge of Arabic or Lebanese culture could try their hands at shaping their own renditions.
CHAPTER THREE

THE BATTLE OF BEIT MERY

3.1. *Iftitāhiyyi*: Introductory Odes

The Lebanese verbal duel always begins with an introductory segment referred to as the *Iftitāhiyyi*, a word stemming from the verb *iftataha*, meaning “to open, inaugurate, or to introduce.” During the *Iftitāhiyyi* segment, the leaders of the two competing *jawqas* take one long turn each delivering a number of stanzas of the *qaṣīd* form, which is described in detail in section 3.1.1 below. The determination of which *jawqa* leader has the honor of going first depends upon whether or not the two poets have dueled before. If so, whichever poet closed the previous encounter will open the current one. It is also customary for the second poet to close the current encounter and thus earn the privilege of opening the next battle that might ensue. There might be other factors involved in determining which poet opens a verbal duel event, one being the relative ages and lengths of experience of the two leaders, in which case the elder, more experienced poet will have the honor of going first. This might be a simple way of determining which leader will open a first encounter between the two, and undoubtedly the topics of age versus youth and experience versus inexperience will be brought up during the duel proper. Another factor that might be taken into consideration is the location of the verbal duel. If one of the *jawqa* leaders has special ties to the particular town, for example, then he might be given the honor of opening or closing the duel.

Both *jawqa* leaders can be expected to include a number of thematic ingredients in the content of the six to ten stanzas of the *Iftitāhiyyi*. First, it is of primary importance to thank and show gratitude to the sponsor(s) of the duel. The poet will also recognize the venue by
mentioning the host town by name and complimenting its beauty and its important history. This
deferece to the host is a good way to begin the all-important task of gaining the support of the
audience, which is each poet’s main goal throughout the evening. The poet can also be expected
to sing of the importance and uniqueness of the tradition of oral poetry and of his individual
importance as another great poet in the long line of prodigious zajal poets who preceded him.
Each poet can be expected to devote many of his lines to boasting about himself and many others
to insulting and taking jabs at his opponent. The last stanza of the Iftitāhiyyi usually includes a
mention of the other members of the leader’s jawqa as a way of introducing them to the
audience.

There are many advantages to opening the Iftitāhiyyi. Since the first poet leader will be
delivering the introductory lines, he can prepare these stanzas ahead of time, filling them with
striking imagery, witty insults, and fine words of praise for himself, for the members of his
jawqa, and for the host town and sponsors. He can infuse his lines with numerous examples of
his erudition and worldly knowledge. He can plan out how to work a rich pun into his verses,
especially one that might play on his own name or the names of other poets who will be present
at the duel. It is an opportunity to shine and to leave a lasting impression on the audience and the
judging panel. Moreover, his images and arguments will shape the trajectory of the verbal duel
as a whole, beginning immediately with the Iftitāhiyyi delivered by the second jawqa leader.
Indeed, the second leader will be listening very carefully to the first leader’s opening stanzas and
will be preparing himself as he listens, composing lines that respond to insults directed at him
and finding ways to turn the first poet’s own words against him. The images, arguments, and
topics introduced in the Iftitāhiyyi segment become clay in the hands of the poets which they
shape and reshape throughout the evening.
3.1.1. *Qaṣīd* Form: Rhyme and Meter

Each poet’s *Ifitāḥiyiyi* consists of several sung stanzas (usually six or seven of variable length, anywhere from five to twenty lines) of the *zajal* genre known as *qaṣīd*. The term *qaṣīd*, a shortened form of *qaṣīda* (classical ode form), is derived from *qaṣada*, which means both “to intend, mean” and “to sing.” The *zajal* poet uses this particular genre to fulfill the specific purpose or intention described above: opening the duel, acknowledging the sponsors and honored guests, appealing to the audience, boasting, jabbing at the opponent, and introducing the members of his *jawqa*.

Musically, the *qaṣīd* form is of the *nathr al-naghamāt* (musical prose) style of Arabic music, which is characterized by a free rhythm and a tendency towards long and frequent use of melisma, coloratura, and other forms of vocal embellishment. As described and elaborated upon by Haydar in his seminal articles\(^\text{14}\) and forthcoming book on the metrics of Lebanese *zajal*,\(^\text{15}\) *qaṣīd* is one of a number of *zajal* genres whose musical renditions fall under the *nathr al-naghamāt* category. In general, these *nathr al-naghamāt* genres are used by poets during the

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\(^{14}\)Four articles by Adnan Haydar on the topic include: “The Development of Lebanese Zajal: Genre, Meter, and Verbal Duel,” “Al-Ḥida, Al-Nadb, Al-Hawrabah and Al-Nawḥ in Lebanese Zajal Poetry: A Study of Meter and Rhythm,” “ʿAtābah and Miḥānā in Lebanese Zajal Poetry,” and ”Mkhammas Mardūd in Lebanese Zajal.”

\(^{15}\)Haydar’s completed manuscript and forthcoming book entitled “The Metrics of Lebanese Zajal” examines and brings into question all of the existing scholarship on the complex and controversial topic of *zajal* metrics and offers an original approach to classifying the various genres of Lebanese *zajal* that takes into consideration the interplay among syllabic versus quantitative poetic meter, poetic and linguistic stress patterns, prosodic features of *fushā* versus ʿāmiyya, and the previously neglected yet crucial role of musical tunes, beats, and accents. His classification and description of a number of genres of Lebanese *zajal* can be found in the articles listed above. At this time, his section on the *qaṣīd* form referred to here can only be found in the book manuscript.
more serious portions of a zajal performance to convey a meaningful point or present an argument or complex idea. If we imagine poetry and music to be in a kind of competition over which aspect of the delivery will control the overall rhythm, the freer musical style of nathr al-naghamāt defers to the poetry, or in other words, the poetry writes the music. In contrast, other forms, such as the popular and upbeat qarrādī genre, fall into the second Arabic musical style known as nazm al-naghamāt (ordering of tones), which is often employed at some midway point during a long verbal duel in order to awaken new interest or insert a tone of levity. The nazm al-naghamāt musical style is characterized by a regularly rhythmed underlay. It is used for treating lighter and even sometimes nonsensical subjects and the pervasive rhythm in this case imposes itself on the poetry; we might say that in nazm al-naghamāt the music writes the poetry.16

In terms of its stanza and line patterns, the ḡiftīṭḥiyi qaṣīd consists of several stanzas of varying numbers of double-hemistich lines with the same end rhyme employed throughout each stanza. In the opening line of a stanza, which is called al-maṭlaʾ, literally “the starting point,” both hemistichs end with the same rhyme. This same type of maṭlaʾ was used in the Classical Arabic qaṣīda (ode) and is referred to as taṣrīʿ. In the successive lines of a stanza, which are called al-dawr, literally “the round” or “the turn,” the ends of every first hemistich share another fixed rhyme throughout the stanza. In Arabic poetry consisting of double-hemistich lines, the first hemistich is called al-ṣadr, literally the “chest” or “front part,” and the second hemistich is referred to as al-ʿajz, literally the “rump.” Thus, each stanza of qaṣīd is composed of a variable number of lines in which al-ṣadr and al-ʿajz of the first line and al-ʿajz of the second and all successive lines have the same end rhyme (rhyme a) and al-ṣadr hemistichs of all successive lines share a different end rhyme (rhyme b). The fact that the number of lines of a stanza of

16 See Haydar’s aforementioned articles on zajal metrics.
qaṣīd is variable may have given rise to the versatile closure technique used in the stanza of qaṣīd, which ends with a line featuring an ājz without end rhyme (rhyme x), called al-kharja, literally “the exit,” followed by one final ṣadr hemistich that maintains the original ṣadr end rhyme (rhyme a), called rujūʿ, or “return”. This combination of the free rhyme signal and single hemistich finale functions as a type of punctuation, indicating the conclusion of the stanza and its rhymes. Unless the poet has completed his set of Iftitāḥīyyī stanzas, he will now begin a new stanza with new end rhymes. Putting all of this together then, a typical stanza of qaṣīd will conform to the following rhyme scheme (the number of lines can vary from five to twenty):

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
\text{ṣadr} & \text{ājz} \\
\text{matlaʿ} : & \text{a} \\
\text{dawr} : & \text{b} \\
\text{b} & \text{a} \\
\text{b} & \text{a} \\
\text{b} & \text{a} \\
\text{b} & \text{x (kharja)} \\
\text{a} & \text{rujūʿ} \\
\end{array}
\]

The opening of Zaghloul al-Damour’s Iftitāḥīyyī [12:48-13:53], which is a brief but heart wrenching stanza consisting of only five lines, provides an excellent example of the rhyme scheme under discussion. For purposes of illustration, it is presented here in transliteration with the rhymes in bold text. The Arabic transcription, annotated translation and commentary will be taken up in the translation section below. The stanza begins at the 12:48 mark on the audio recording. When listening along, it is helpful to note that there is not a pause in singing between hemistichs:
While the rhyme scheme of the qaṣīd form is relatively easy to detect and to describe, the other important prosodic feature – that of meter – is difficult. The reasons for this come mostly from three important features of Lebanese zajal: it is composed and delivered orally, it uses the vernacular idiom, and it is sung to a number of well-known traditional folk tunes. Scholars and critics writing on the topic of metrics have tried to describe and classify the genres of Lebanese zajal using either a syllabic or a quantitative meter approach or a mixture of the two, invoking scansion systems developed for fuṣḥā or borrowing from Syriac meters, though up until Haydar, none has taken the important role of music into consideration, nor has anyone factored in the important role of oral composition. The most important and striking feature of the qaṣīd genre of zajal is that it belongs to the nathr al-naghamāt (musical prose) style. In addition, some correspondence with al-Khalil’s rajaz, wāfir, and sarī meters can be found. However, because zajal poetry involves a special combination of linguistic and musical features, any metrical analysis is at best only an approximation of metrical content. What is most important to keep in

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**Translation:** Ākh… Ākh… I’m sorry, O letters of the alphabet/If I am unable to fulfill my duties/I lost my brother, who gave so generously to my children/And to me…Like my mother and my father/He has been gone five hours, not more/Now is not the time for me to start forgetting/But after mourning my brother I also consoled my own heart/Because all of you/Now that my brother is gone, have taken the place of my brother

Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad first codified the meters of Arabic poetry in the 8th century. Each of al-Khalil’s meters is based on quantitative metrical feet consisting of combinations of short and long syllables. Using the symbols — and - for short and long, respectively, the meters mentioned here are described as follows: rajaz — — — — | — — — — | — — — — ; wāfir — — — — | — — — — | — — — ; sarī — — — — | — — — — | — — —.
mind is that poets of zajal, like all good poets composing any type of poetry in any language, be it from within a written or an oral tradition, do not create their art according to a rule book of metrical prescription. To do so would be to travel down the doggerel road to poetic suicide. Rather, poets of zajal learn their craft by living and breathing in its atmosphere, by imbibing and internalizing the tunes, melodies, and rhythms, and by memorizing the great examples of their predecessors. When they create new poetry, they create lines that conform to an underlying prosodic system that, although it is obvious to the audience and the poet himself when the meter is broken, does not have precise rules about how to produce that which is correct. Music, rhyme, and poetic meter based on a combination of quantitative and syllabic-accentual systems together set a basic foundation, a sturdy post to which the poet is tethered. But as the poet wanders out into the unknown world of his particular free creation, he is at liberty to go in numerous directions, take endless twists and turns while still feeling the tug of that tether tying him to proper form.

3.1.2. The Iftitāḥiyyi of Mousa Zoghayb: Background

On the occasion of the Beit Mery festival, the opening Iftitāḥiyyi is given by Mousa Zoghayb. The reason for this is that in a previous encounter that took place in the Lebanese town of Mishrif ten months earlier, Mousa gave the closing qaṣīd. Afterwards, Mousa claimed victory, pointing specifically to the fact that he “got the last word,” a kind of coup on his part. It seems there were words spoken in public by both Mousa and Zaghloul in regards to this incident, something both poets refer to in their opening odes at Beit Mery. Part of the reason for the massive public interest in the encounter at Beit Mery stems from this history of artistic animosity and true rivalry between the two poet leaders. Each had his fervent supporters who came to
cheer him to victory in this encounter which, as becomes clear in the *Iftīḥāyyī*, was just one in a series of encounters between Mousa and Zaghloul.
3.1.3. *Iftitāḥiyī* of Mousa Zoghayb: Transcript, Transliteration, Trot, and Translation

**First Stanza [0:00 – 02:19]**

00:00  
1a) Īkh, Īkh, Īkh¹⁹ (#)²⁰ … ‘Anā intū, ‘anā lā tis‘alūnī  
La shū ṭall-il-‘asa b-i‘ḍit-i-jfūnī²¹  
1b) Owkh, Owkh, Owkh… I am you²², I – don’t ask me  
Why pain/grief peeks through my eyelids  
1c) Owkh, Owkh, Owkh .. *You and I are one, don’t ask me*  
Why sadness haunts my eyes

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¹⁹ An emphatic expression that is used by *zajal* poets to open a line and to express their charged emotions. More often, the poets will sing “Ōf” rather than “Ōkh.” Both “Ōf” and “Ōkh” are used in everyday speaking to express dismay or as a painful outcry akin to “alas” or “ouch.” During the *zajal* contests poets sometimes lengthen the “Ōf” to underscore their emotions, to show off their voices, and to take extra time to compose their lines. Note that the audience responds with a loud “Ōkh” as well.

²⁰ The symbol (#) will be used throughout the *Iftitāḥiyī* section to track instances of repetition (echoing back) or fervent applause coming form the audience and the chorus. These will help identify particularly successful moments in the poet’s delivery.

²¹ The poet extends this opening end rhyme with a long melisma. Note also that the chosen end rhyme (*ūnī*) is conducive to quick composition as (*nī*) is the object pronoun “me” when added to a verb and (*ī*) is the possessive pronoun “my” and can be added to a noun ending with (*ūn*), which is also very common.

²² Mousa’s opening words, “I am you,” are both literally and figuratively the poet’s attempt to establish a connection with the audience and gain their favor, compassion, and support.
2

Yijū ḥabbi-w-ḥabbi ynaʿūdūnī 23

I weaned my generosity after being a threshing floor
They came grain by grain pecking at me

That threshing floor they pecked grain by grain

Min il-ḥilm 24 - il 25 - am ydāʿāʾib znūnī

Than the dream that is toying with/caressing my thoughts 26

Than the dream teasing my thoughts

23 This end rhyme is also extended with melisma.

24 Mousa uses the comparative ‘aʿšar (shorter) as the ṣadr rhyme at the end of the first hemistich, which leads to an example of enjambment across the hemistichs as he completes the comparison at the start of the second hemistich with the phrase Min il-ḥilm (than the dream). In oral formulaic poetry, such enjambment is not common despite the frequent absence of a pause between hemistichs. While enjambment between hemistichs occurs occasionally, enjambment at the line break almost never occurs except at the end of the final full line of the stanza which often runs semantically into the closing single hemistich.

25 Min il-ḥilm-il 25 - (Than the dream that-) It is common in Lebanese dialect to shorten the relative pronoun “illī” (that, which) to “il-,” as is the case here and provides the poet with an easy way to reduce a two-syllable word to a one-syllable word when he feels the need to do so for the sake of meter.

26 The meaning of znūnī is imprecise: “my thoughts,” or “my beliefs,” or even “my doubts/suspicions.” This suggests it may have been chosen to fit the rhyme and meter.
4a) [W]mā ‘idrit ‘a-s-srīr ‘il-‘imm tis-har

Law ma tishtirī ya’zīt-i-‘yūnī (#)

4b) The mother would not be able to stay up at [her infant’s] bedside

If she didn’t buy the alertness/smarts of my eyes

4c) *No* mother could spend long nights over a *cradle*

*Without* buying some alertness from my eyes

صاروا يرفعوني ويرفعوني

5a) Ōkh, [‘i]ṭla’it fikrī b-jawāniḥ nisir ‘asmar

Ṣārū yirfaʿūnī-w-yirfaʿūnī

5b) Owkh, *I* fired my thought on the wings of an olive-brown eagle

They raised me up and raised me up

5c) Owkh, *I* sent my thoughts on the wings of a dark-feathered eagle

And they lifted me higher and higher

---

The poet chooses the color *asmar* (olive-brown; tawny) here to fit the *sadr* rhyme (rhyme b), which in this stanza is “ar.” It is an interesting word choice. Usually the color *asmar* is reserved for describing skin color, particularly the dark olive skin tone of many Lebanese. Mousa Zghayb himself is known for his dark complexion. Thus, he makes a subtle metaphorical equation here connecting himself to the “olive-colored eagle.”
6 a) Ḩatta ṣirit shūfī-l-‘arḍ ‘azghar

Min-illī28 ʾat-taḥaddī-b- yiṭulbūnī (#)

6b) Until I became able see the earth/ground smaller

Than they who asked me to duel

6c) Until the earth below me shrank, getting smaller

Than those who dared me to a duel

7 a) Ŭkh, w-ṣirit29 min ḥārsīnī-n-nār ‘akfar

W-jannanti-l-ʿawāṣīf min-i-jnūnī

7b) Owkh I became more blasphemous than the guardians of fire30

And I drove the tempests mad with my madness

7c) Owkh, I became more blasphemous than the guardians of fire

My madness drove the tempests mad

28 Again Mousa uses a comparative adjective at the end of the first hemistich ‘azghar (smaller) that is completed with Min-illī (than they who…) at the start of the second hemistich. It is another example of enjambment. It is worth noting also that in both cases the comparative adjective was followed by Min-illī (than they who). This construction is what Parry and Lord termed a “formulaic system” (Lord 30-67). It is one of the many substitution strategies oral poets use to compose their lines.

29 Note formulaic use and repetition of the verb (ṣirit), literally “I became”. It appeared in line 6 (Ḥatta ṣirit), and in plural form in line 5 as part of the phrase (Ṣārū ʿirfāʾūnī), they started lifting me up.

30 ḥārsīnī-n-nār literally “guardians of the fire” could be an allusion to Dante’s Guardians of the Inferno.
فقط أهل المعنى كفروني

٨/ ما كفرني الزمان ولا المقدر

١٠١:٤٢ ٨ا) مَا كَفَّرَنِي ‘ىٍ-ذَ-زَمَان-و-ل-أ-ي-م’-دَدَر
Fa’at ‘ahl-‘li-ma‘annā kaffarūnī (#)

٨ب) It wasn’t Time or the fates that drove me to blaspheme

٨c) Neither Time nor the Fates drove me to blaspheme

١٠١:٥٣ ٩ا) [iw] Ma jāyi briﬁt ‘iz-Zaghlūl ‘iikbar
٩ب) I haven’t come here with Zaghloul to make myself bigger

٩c) I didn’t come here to grow bigger in Zaghloul’s company

عَا أَحْلَامُ الَّقِسَاوِيِّ وَاللِّيْوِيِّ

٩/ وما جاَبِي بِرِفَقَةِ الزَّغِلُولْ إِكْبَر

٨١٣-١٣٤١-١٣٤١-١٣٣١-١٣٣١-١٣٣١-١٣٣١-١٣٣١

٩) ‘اَهْلَامْ ٣٣ ْيَلْوْ و ْلَايِنِّ

١٠١:٥٣ ٩ب) On the dreams of harshness and softness

٩c) Crooning of harsh or tender dreams

٣١ This extra short vowel is the result of Mousa’s short pause after “kaffarnī”. The regular meter would not require this short vowel. It is an example of “poetic license” employed by zajal poets under the pressure of live improvisation.

٣٢ Ma‘ annā is being used here as a metonymy for zajal. The term ma‘ annā المعنى can also be used to refer to the common subgenre of zajal which, with qarradi القرادي, is one of the two most common genres of zajal. In oral poetry performances, poets use the words zajal and ma‘ annā interchangeably as synonyms.

٣٣ The long alif (ā) is extended with melisma here. This is another means by which the poet will give himself time to think as well as display and draw attention to his voice.
02:05 10a) Jāyi [i]b-jaw’tī tawwij-ıl-manbar

10b) I’ve come here with my jawqa to crown the manbar And leave [s.th.] in the hearts of this generous judging panel

10c) I’ve come with my jawqa to place a crown on the manbar And enter the hearts of this honorable panel

البعد ما بيعرفوني يعرفوني

11a) [i]L-ba‘id ma-b-yaa‘irfunī ya‘irfunī (#)

11b) So those who still don’t know me will know me

11c) So those who still don’t know me will know exactly who I am

34 Note that the poet has changed the end-rhyme here (from ūnī to īmi). This is the ‘ajz non-rhyme (rhyme x) that signals he has reached the end of his stanza. His next and final line will be a single hemistich featuring a return (rujū‘) to the original rhyme a, the characteristic closure technique used in the qaṣīd stanza form.

35 The jawqa is the team of poets. Mousa Zoghayb’s jawqa was called the Jawqa of Khalil Rukuz with members: Mousa Zoghayb, Anees al-Fghāli, Jiryis al-Bustany, and Butrous Deeb. Joseph al-Hashem (penname Zaghloul al-Damour) leads the Jawqa of Zaghloul al-Damour with members: Joseph al-Hashem, Zayn Sh‘ayb, Tali‘ Hamdan, and Edouard Harb.

36 Manbar, literally “stage” or “pulpit” also refers figuratively to the courageous act the zajal poet performs when appearing on the stage singing improvised verses before a large, live, critical audience.
Second Stanza [2:21 - 4:13]

02:21  
1a) Kān-i-sh-shi'r mina-b-lā manāra

1b) Poetry used to be a seaport with no lighthouse

1c) Poetry was once a seaport without a lighthouse

W dahab madfūn bi-zwāya-l-[‘i]mghāra

Gold buried in the nooks of the cave

Gold buried in the crannies of a cave

02:30  
2a) Riji Mīshāl ha-l-ḥafli tbanna

2b) Michel\textsuperscript{37} came back to adopt this \textit{zajal} party

2c) Then Michel came along to sponsor this duel

Li’a mḥībbīn mishṣaf’it tijāra

A meeting of true enthusiasts not just a money-making venture

A meeting of aficionados, not wheelers and dealers

\textsuperscript{37} The reference is to Michel Ziadeh, a \textit{zajal} aficionado and sponsor of the Beit Meri event. He is also the author of the book \textit{Lubnān al-Zajal: Fī Akbar al-Mubārayāt – Dayr al-Qala‘a 1971 wa al-Madīna al-Riyādiyya 1972}, which contains the Arabic transcription of the Battle of Beit Mery referenced in this study.
3a) Wi-l kānū yihirbū bi-l-ʿamis minna
3b) And those who used to flee from us in the past
3c) And people who used to flee from us before

4a) ‘Ijū yit’akkadū ‘innu-l-[i]maʿannā
4b) [They] came to make sure that maʿanna
4c) Have come here to make sure that maʿanna

5a) Yā Zaghlūl law-l-mawt-i-mtahānnā
5b) O Zaghloul even if we are tested by death
5c) O Zaghloul, even if we are tested by death

---

38 Mousa is making reference here to the lower status and in some cases disdain for oral vernacular folk poetry in the eyes of literary critics in contrast with their high regard for Fushā as the superlative artistic mode.

39 In Ziadeh’s transcript الدهر ad-dahr (eternity; a lifetime) was given as الموت al-mawt (death). They are synonymous in context and are metrically identical.

40 Mousa is bringing up the topic of death because Zaghloul’s brother died only a few hours before the duel.
6a) Ana i’layyi-l-fanā ‘ablak tajanna (x 2)
6b) I, perdition incriminated me before you
6c) Perdition struck its blow on me long before you

And plucked from me the son of the lily of purity
And plucked from me that tender child, that pure lily blossom

---

41 Note that Mousa repeats this hemistich once. Such repetition is allowed and is a common occurrence and strategy poets use to give themselves time to mentally compose without pausing their singing. Note also the extra word “Ana” and inverted syntax of this hemistich, both to help achieve the proper meter and rhyme. The repetition also draws attention to the hemistich for its meaning and because what he is about to say next is important.

42 Mousa is making a reference here to having lost his young son, Rabee, who drowned as a child. This sad memory is likely another reason why Mousa repeated the first hemistich, because he was choked up at the remembrance of that old wound. Also, Mousa is reminding the audience of his own tragic experiences because he knows Zaghloul is arriving to the manbar only a few hours after the death of his brother. Certainly Zaghloul will have the audience’s sympathy, so Mousa is trying to preempt this with his own sad story to elicit sympathy and gain the audience’s support.
03:23  7a) Wi-sh-shāʾir dawn yimṣhi ʿal-ʿasinna
A smile on his lips and in his heart bitterness
7b) The poet, all the time walks on nails
With a smile on his lips and bitterness in his heart
7c) A poet walks a long road of nails

03:33  8a) Zajalnā mlāhin Flastīn ghanna
And uncovered all the ‘borrowed faces’
8b) Our zajals sang the epics of Palestine
8c) Our zajals sang the epics of Palestine

---

43 The extended melisma on end word marāra (bitterness) helps to emphasize its meaning and draw attention to the poet’s hardship.

44 In Ziadeh’s transcript this hemistich is given as: ʿa timmu-d-ḏiḥik-w- bʿalbu-l-marāra (#) (The poet’s road is wounds and nails).

45 Note the inverted word order in this hemistich. Natural word order would be “Ghana zajalna mlāhin Flastīn” or “Zajalna ghanna mlāhin Flastīn” but neither one would put the rhyme word “ghanna” at the end of the hemistich. This flexibility of Arabic syntax is one of the main reasons this type of composition is even possible. Of all the tools and strategies available to the poet of zajal, veering away from natural syntax in order to arrange rhymes is without a doubt the most frequently used.

46 The term wujūh mustaʿāra, literally means “borrowed faces.” Figuratively, it means “masked faces,” “false faces,” or “hypocrites.”
عِبارة للرَّئيس وَلِلوزراء


9b) And I have, in the name of ma‘anna in our homeland An expression for the President and for the Ministry

9c) In the name of the ma‘anna of our homeland I would like to say to the President and his Cabinet

والو عا مَوطَنُو شَوق وحَرارة

03:50 10a)47 ‘Izā mhājir bi-‘arḍī-l-gharb janna48 [W] ‘īlu ćā mawṭānu shaw’-w-ḥarāra49

10b) If an émigré in the land of the West makes a fortune And he has for his homeland longing and a fever

10c) If an emigrant finds fortune in the West But has a feverish longing for his homeland

47 Both hemistiches of this line were left out of Ziadeh’s transcription.

48 Another instance of inverted syntax.

49 Inverted syntax here also.
11/ ًاذَا بَدْكُن يِرجَعُ عَنًا

11a) ‘Iza badkun yirja l-‘in-na

Waddū- lu b-‘ism Libnān shā‘īn

11b) If you want him to come back to us

Send him in the name of Lebanon a poet

11c) And you want to help him find his way home

Send him a Poet in the name of Lebanon

12/ ًحَاذَا تَدّولو سَفارة

12a) Ka’ann-kun ʿami-twaddū- lu safāra (#)

12b) As though you were sending him an embassy

12c) You would be sending him an entire embassy

Ziadeh’s transcript writes ًاذَا كَان يِدْكُن ‘Iza kān baddkun, which means the same thing but uses an extra word.

Inverted syntax; also note once again the breaking of the end rhyme to signal the coming of the final single hemistich and end of the stanza.

In addition to the allusion to the tradition of Lebanese zajal poets traveling abroad to perform for Lebanese immigrant communities around the world, Mousa is making a plea to the Lebanese government (whose officials may well be in the audience) to provide financial support to zajal poets for this purpose and to support their art in general.
Third Stanza [4:14 – 7:00]

فَرَضْ عَا كِل مَوقَف إعتِبارو

أوَخ، زَجَل نَا احْتَلّ ذروِة إزدِهارو

1/ Faraḍ ۚā kill maw’af ۚi’tibārū

04:14 1a) Ōkh, Zajal-nā ۚiḥtall zirwīt izdihārū

And imposed upon every situation its importance

1b) Owkh..Our zajal has reached the peak of its flourishing

Imposing its importance in every situation

1c) Owkh..Our zajal has flourished to the fullest

04:25 2a) [i]Nṭala’ ۚa-l-kawn min sijnu-l-[i]m’abbad

In order to give people an idea about its standards

2b) It was released into the universe from its life imprisonment

So everyone could know of its high standards

2c) It was released into the world from life imprisonment

انتطلق عا الكون من سجنو المؤبد

تَا يُعطي النّاس فِكرَة عنِ عْيارو
Jabra’il Ibn al-Qila’i was the Lebanese-born bishop of Nicosia and a Maronite apologetic who was born in the Lebanese town of Lehfed, in Jbeil district, between 1445-1450, and died in 1516. Well-versed in Arabic and Syriac, he was also a poet of zajal, a “poet-priest”, who popularized Catholic dogma and Maronite church history in vernacular poetry. An eye disease left his face disfigured and gave rise to the nickname “al-‘amīṣ” – drippy-eyed. He excelled at zajal from an early age and maintained his passion for it throughout his life, using it to express his ideas and publicize them. Not only was he an excellent zajal poet, but his fame rose on account of his theological writings that were translated and adapted from Latin and which were used widely in Maronite clerical schools and were the sole resource for an entire century. In his zajals, he often addressed villages in the north, the Jbayl region, Kesrouan, naming specific villages, including Beit Mery (Khoury 35-36).

The municipality of Lehfed is located in the Byblos district of Lebanon. It is a mountainous area with strong ties to the Maronite Church and Lebanese history. It is the locale of the summer residence of the Archdiocese of Byblos, the summer residence of the President of Lebanon, and the birth place of Lebanese Saint Father Estephan Nehme.

Note the tangled syntax and the confusion around whose dignity was exalted – the Bishop’s or Zajal’s? Clarification can be found in that wi’ār (high dignity) is usually associated with religious figures.
4a) W-il-Batrak il-Ā’ūrī twaddad
4b) And Patriarch al-Aquri had great affection
4c) And Patriarch Aquri had great affection

5a) W-ḥatta Mār İfrām [‘i]b-kill ma’bad
5b) And even Saint Ephrem in every temple
5c) And even Saint Ephrem’s songs, in every place of worship, became pious hymns of prayer

Patriarch Yohanna al-Aquri (died 1647) was bishop and resided at Mar Yohanna monastery in Kesrouan, Lebanon beginning in 1643. A forty-six-page remnant of a book of his zajal compositions was found containing numerous incomplete verses to St. Marina, a girl who disguised herself as a boy in order to enter the monastery but was later discovered (Whaybeh 142).

First rhyme in this stanza whose “ū” ending doesn’t mean “his”; it is the past tense third-person plural suffix. In this case, “they became.” This is also another repetition of the formulaic verb “to become” mentioned earlier.

Ephrem the Syrian was a Syriac deacon and a prolific Syriac-language hymnographer and theologian of the 4th century. His works are hailed by Christians throughout the world, and many denominations venerate him as a saint. The Maronite liturgical service is taken mainly from Saint Ephrem’s hymns and songs. (Catholic Online/Saints)

Note again the tangled syntax, beginning with the end of the first hemistic: W-ḥatta Mār İfrām [‘i]b-kill ma’bad//‘Anāshīdu ṣalā li-d-ḏīn šārū. (And even St. Ephrem in every temple//his songs prayers for religion became). Untangling the syntax: And even St. Ephrem’s songs became hymns of prayer in every temple.
04:57  6a) ‘il-Mīr [‘i]Bshīr bi-l-‘azjāl ʿaddad

6b) Emir Bashir⁶⁰ [in] zajals made numerous⁶¹

6c) Emir Bashir was a prolific zajal poet

And his ode to the mountain shook its stone

His ode to the mountain shook its foundation

⁶⁰ Note that in Ziadeh’s transcript, the name is given as فخر الدين Fakhreddine rather than ‘il-Mīr [‘i]Bshīr . Emir Bashir Shihab (1767-1850) was a Lebanese prince who established hegemony over Lebanon in the first half of the 19ᵗʰ century (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online). Emir Fakhr ad-Din II (1572-1635) was a Druze prince and Lebanese ruler from 1593-1633 who united the Druze and Maronite districts of the Lebanon Mountains. He is frequently regarded as the father of modern Lebanon (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online). Both Emirs composed zajal poems and both are familiar names to the audience symbolizing the greatness of Lebanese history and identity.

⁶¹ Syntax again is inverted.
7a) W Nāṣīf –l-Yāzji-l-baḥrayn ‘awjad
Ribi b-damm-u-l-[i]ma’anna-w-ma-sta’ārū

7b) And Nasif al-Yaziji who set down “al-Bahrāyn”
Grew up with ma’anna in his blood and didn’t borrow it

7c) And Nasif al-Yaziji, great composer of “al-Bahrāyn,”
Was born with ma’anna pulsing through his veins

---

Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871) was a Greek Catholic author and leading figure from Mount Lebanon. He began composing poetry at age 10. When he finished his studies Emir Bashir called upon him to serve as one of his scribes. He served in this role for twelve years. One of his greatest and most celebrated works is his collection of \textit{maqāmāt} (genre of Arabic rhythmic prose) entitled “Majma’ al-Bahrāyn” literally, “The meeting of the two seas.” Mousa alludes to this work in the same line. In addition to his numerous literary contributions, he composed many \textit{zajal} poems, some of which were preserved after his death (Whaybeh 91).

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8a) ['iw] Ibin Nakhli nashīd-i-l-arz ‘anshad

8b) And son of Nakhleh⁶³ the cedars anthem he composed⁶⁴
Language was raised on the yeast⁶⁵ of his dwelling places

8c) And Rashid Nakhleh composed the anthem of our cedars
Language itself rose by the yeast fermenting in his home

9a) [W]‘illā bi-l-[i]ma‘anna ma-stashhad
‘Amīrū-w-sayydū-w-rāfī‘ shī‘ārū (♯)

9b) And only with ma‘anna could he cite his sources⁶⁶
[He was] Its prince and master, holding up its banner

9c) The only references he cited were verses of ma‘anna
He was its prince and lord and bearer of its banner

⁶³ Rashid Nakhleh (1873-1939): Known as Emīr al-Zajal al-Lubnānī (Prince of Lebanese Zajal), he was a prolific Maronite poet who also wrote the Lebanese national anthem. He was so outspoken about his nationalism and love for Lebanon that he was exiled to Turkey for several years by the Ottomans. In 1926, his entry won the National Anthem competition. The music was composed by the famous musician Wadee’ Sabra. Nakhleh refused to accept the award money, requesting that it be given to charity and orphanages. His poetry remains very popular and well-known among Lebanese today (Khoury 398-399).

⁶⁴ Syntax

⁶⁵ The idiomatic expression “ribi-l-‘ajīn” means “the dough has risen,” that is, after the yeast has done its job making the dough rise.

⁶⁶ Syntax
جناحو من سما بدادون طاروا

10ا) [W] a ‘iyāmu ‘ija-sh-shahrur ‘As‘ad

Jnāhu min sama “Bdādūn” tārū

10b) And in his days came the Shahrour (blackbird) As‘ad

His wings from the sky of Bdadoun flew

10c) And in those days came Shahrour al-Wadi

Whose wings took flight from the skies of Bdadoun

على كرّة قصيدو وابتكارو

11ا) [W] ‘aynayn-il-malak Fārū’ jammad

‘ala karrit ‘aṣīdu-w-‘ibtikārū

11b) And the eyes of King Farouk he froze

On the tune of his qasid and his innovation

11c) And King Farouk’s eyes were mesmerized

On hearing those verses so full of invention

---

As‘ad al-Khoury al-Faghali (1894 – 1937): Known as Shahrour al-Wadi (Blackbird of the Valley), born in Bdadoun, a town in Mount Lebanon. He began learning poetry at a very young age in a home filled with zajal, as his father Louis al-Faghali, was a great poet. At the young age of ten he made his debut as a zajal poet when accompanying his father at a wedding celebration he responded to an attack by another poet against his father. He founded the first organized zajal jawqa in 1928 and laid down the foundation of the zajal “manbar” (pulpit). The famous singer Sabah was one of many popular artists to sing his folk compositions, and she was proud to claim her relation as Shahrour’s niece. (Khoury 90-91) Several zajal poets are given birds’ names as nicknames in order to suggest the excellence of their voices. Mousa’s opponent, Zagliou al-Damour, (Baby Dove of Damour) is another example.

68 King Farouk I of Egypt (1920-1965), king of Egypt from 1936 to 1952.
12) And the road of poetry with the jawqas he paved

So that all could follow in his footsteps

He paved the road of poetry for our jawqas

So all could follow in his footsteps

Note the use of the cognate accusative, a literary rhetorical device used to emphasize the intensity of the verb both semantically and acoustically through repetition: tamarrad (verb) tamarrud (gerund), literally “rebelled a …rebelling”. In this construction, the gerund is always modified with an adjective or descriptive phrase. In this case, “He rebelled the rebelling/rebellion of a sword whose blade is on fire.” With the mention of the beloved and well-known great zajal poet Khalil Rukuz (see next footnote) coupled with this emphatic cognate accusative construction, Mousa gets a fervent applause from the audience with this line.

69 Khalil Rukuz (1922-1962). Despite his lack of schooling beyond age ten, he developed his incredible talent for zajal poetry at a young age. He met Joseph al-Hashem (Zaghloul al-Damour) in 1950 and they developed a strong relationship that soon led to the creation of a Jawqa including Rukuz, Zaghloul, and Zayn Sh’ayb (also present at the Beit Meri battle as part of the Jawqa of Zaghloul al-Damour). In 1954, Rukuz established Jawqat al-Jabal (Jawqa of the Mountain) which came to include Mousa Zoghayb. Mousa’s jawqa at Beit Meri is called Jawqat Rukuz after this great, prolific, and highly influential zajal poet who died at the young age of 40 from complications after surgery (Whaybeh 362).

70
06:04  14a) [W] ba’d ma ta’ammam-w-tawwar-w-jaddad  
14b) And after he nourished, developed, and renewed [za'jal]  
14c) And after nourishing za'jal, developing, and renewing it  
[W] nāl min-i-si’a ‘iklīl ghārū  
And earned from trustworthiness his wreath of laurels  
And earning a wreath of laurels for his trustworthiness  
من التَّلج، اسْتَلَأوا الْعِلْقُوا وْتَبَاروا

06:11  15a) [‘i]Ftataḥ darb-it-taḥaddi b-‘alib ‘abrad  
15b) He opened the path of verbal dueling with a heart colder  
15c) He forged the path of verbal dueling with a heart colder  
Min-i-talj, ‘is’alū-l-‘il’ū-w-tbārū (#)  
Than ice, ask those who got ensnared in a contest  
He forged the path of verbal dueling with a heart colder than ice, just ask anyone who got caught in a contest

71 Note another instance of enjambment between hemistichs again using a comparative construction “colder/than ice.”

72 Mousa is bringing up Zaghloul’s past and his relationship with the great Rukuz. While Zaghloul and Rukuz began as partners in the same jawqa, Zaghloul later on became one of Rukuz’s major opponents. This is Mousa’s first jab at Zaghloul in this stanza.
06:21 16a) [iW] bi‘î-l-jaw‘-l-Khalīlī ḥuṣun ‘ašmad

16b) And the Khalili⁷³ jawqa remains as a fortress sturdier

16c) Rukuz’s jawqa remains as a sturdy fortress, sturdier

١٦/ وبقي الجوق الخليلي حصن أصْمَد

06:29 17a) Bi‘-aflit ḥājbu fī layl ‘aswad

17b) Upon the knitting of his eyebrows there is black night

17c) When he wrinkled his eyebrows a black night settled in

١٧/ بِفَقْلَةِ حاجبو في ليل أسْوَد

---

⁷³ The reference is to Rukuz’s first name, Khalil.

⁷⁴ Note another enjambment across the hemistichs using the comparative construction “sturdier/ than the fortress.”

⁷⁵ The battle Mousa might be referring to is when Alexander the Great attempted to besiege Tyre in south Lebanon. Alexander was enraged because of the staunch resistance of the fortress city.

⁷⁶ Mousa is subtly referring to Zaghloul and his troupe as “these blind folks.” This is a second jab at Zaghloul for which Mousa gets a fervent applause from the audience and the riddādi.
06:37  18a) Hawni binṣaḥ-i-Zaghlūl yib‘ad

‘Ashraf ma ytallit ‘inkisārū (#)

18b) Here I advise Zaghloul to stay away

Better for him not to triple his losses

18c) Here I would advise Zaghloul to stay away

And not risk losing for a third time

06:47  19a) [W] bi-‘ākhir multa‘a Allāh b-yishhad

b-‘alb-id-dayr ‘ayya jaw’ minnā

19b) At the last meeting God is witness

Inside the monastery which jawqa among us

19c) At the final meeting, with God as our witness,

Inside this monastery, which of our jawqas

20a) Baddu ylūḥ bayra’ ‘intiṣārū (#)

20b) Will wave the banner of its victory

20c) Will get to fly the victory flag?

---

77 This is a direct jab at Zaghloul, Mousa’s third jab in this stanza and the main theme of the remaining hemistiches: our jawqa is going to annihilate your jawqa. The audience responds with a burst of laughter.

78 Mousa is referring to previous verbal duel encounters between Zaghloul and himself where Mousa claimed he was the winner.
Fourth Stanza [07:01 - 08:12]

07:01 1a) ‘Ishhadī bi-d-dayr yā ‘a’dam [i]’lā”ī⁷⁹

1b) Bear witness in this monastery, O most ancient citadel

1c) Inside this monastery, O most ancient citadel, bear witness

To the might of the fourfold jawqa of “Bu-l-Khull”⁸⁰

الظهر منك على البث الاذاعي

07:13 2a) [W] yā Zaghlūl mā b-yiswā-t-tajannī

2b) O Zaghloul, it is not good to make false accusations

2c) Zaghloul, it isn’t right to make false accusations

[Like those] that came from you on the radio broadcast⁸¹

Like the ones you broadcast on the radio

Note the repetition of this word, [i]’lā”ī which was mentioned earlier, in third stanza, line 3, first hemistich: “Bishop al-Qila’i.”

i.e. Khalil Rukuz

Mousa here is referring to some remarks made by Zaghloul against him in the press.
3/ 2

07:21 3a) ʿIṣḥāt ḥaddī ʿawāṣif mistakinnī

3b) You lived beside me with concealed emotions

3c) You lived under my wing with concealed emotions

And in my hand you were more obedient than my pen

And in my hands you were more pliant than my pen

07:28 4a) Lākin min baʿid mā bʿidit ʿannī

4b) But after you went away from me

4c) But after you went away from me

Embarrassed by your tongue were the tongues of vipers

Vipers would be shamed by your tongue’s venom

07:37 5a) ‘Izā ʿa-n-nāṣir jāyī timtiḥinnī

5b) If concerning victory you are coming to test me

5c) If it’s about victory you’ve come here to test me

‘Anā [i]wās[i]-n-naṣir shaʿlit82 [i]kwāʾî

I, the arch of triumph, my elbows hold it up

Know that triumphal arches are propped up on my elbows

82 Note that this word (shaʿlit) is a Lebanese colloquial words which means “the lifting of” or “to lift”
انوص عمر الزمان بطول باعي

6a) [iW] kitir mā-d-dahī bi-l-khubra ʿajannī
6b) And so much did Time with experience knead me
6c) Time kneaded into me so much experience

That the age of the universe is an extension of my arm span

وكرت ما الدهر بالخبرة عجنِي

6/ وكتر ما الدهر بالخبرة عجنّي

07:44

7a) [iW] shū baddak ijtghannī tā-t-tghannī
7b) What do you want to sing in order to sing
7c) Go ahead and sing, but what could you sing?

I am a sea and you are a shell in my seabed
When I’m the sea and you’re a shell on the floor of my sea

7/ وشو بذك تغني تا تغنّي

07:52

8a) [W] ṣirit ayish ʿā hajis rʿib minnī
8b) And you’ve come to live in an anxiety of fear of me
8c) You’ve come to live in a constant state of fear

The vision of me frightens you even if you are asleep
The vision of me terrifies you when asleep

8/ وصارت عاش عا هاجس رعب مني

08:00

83 Note that this word d-dahīr (time; eternity) is repeated. It appeared earlier, in the second stanza, line 5, second hemistich.

84 This is yet another repetition of “ṣirit” which appeared earlier in the first stanza in lines 5, 6, and 7.

85 Note the complementary noun and verb of same root: rʿib (fear) and yirʾibak (frightens you). The repetition of sounds and of words with related meanings stemming from the same root increases both the semantic and musical impact of the verse.
9a) [W] ‘ismī bi-yri‘bak law kinit wā‘ī (#)

9b) And my name frightens you even if you are awake.

9c) And mere mention of my name terrifies you when awake.

86 Note the game of opposites in the two final hemistiches. This is a useful strategy and gives rise to a large applause and laughter from the audience, especially since the parallel structure along with the rhyme scheme enables the listeners to anticipate the clincher line and they are able (and quite willing) to actually sing along with Mousa. This is very exciting for the audience as it allows them to participate in the action.
Fifth Stanza [08:15 - 09:50]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:15</td>
<td>ابتدا عا شيبتك يشفق شبابي</td>
<td>My youthfulness has begun feeling sorry for your graying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a)</td>
<td>Økh, Økh, (#) shifit ū jibihtak masḥit kʿābī</td>
<td>My youthfulness has begun feeling sorry for your graying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b)</td>
<td>Owkh..owkh..I saw on your forehead a touch of sorrow</td>
<td>My youthfulness has begun feeling sorry for your graying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c)</td>
<td>Owkh..owkh..I see a touch of sorrow there on your brow</td>
<td>My youthfulness has begun feeling sorry for your graying</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>احتجز حملانك بقلب العمارة</td>
<td>Before my wolves are let loose on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a)</td>
<td>[i]ḥṭijiz ḥimlānak [i]b‐ʿalb[i]‐l‐ṣimāra</td>
<td>Before my wolves are let loose on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b)</td>
<td>Pen up your lambs inside the building</td>
<td>Before my wolves are let loose on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c)</td>
<td>Pen up your little lambs safe inside this building</td>
<td>Before my wolves are let loose on them</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:39</td>
<td>حتى يخبروا جوقك تبارى</td>
<td>With the jawqa that never misses its mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a)</td>
<td>Ḥattā ykhabbirū jawʿak tabāra</td>
<td>With the jawqa that never misses its mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b)</td>
<td>So they can spread the news that your jawqa competed</td>
<td>With the jawqa that never misses its mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c)</td>
<td>And for them to report that your jawqa competed</td>
<td>With the jawqa that never misses its mark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4a) Baddak tilmāral-l-ʿazrā-l-ʿazārā
And rebel against the earthen clay

4b) You need to take refuge in the Virgin of Virgins
And rebel against the very clay of your being

5a) [W] min[l]-l-burkān tstaʿrid ḥarāra
And from the volcano [you need to] borrow some heat

5b) And from the volcano [you need to] borrow some heat
And from the boulder borrow some hardness

5c) From the volcano you’ll need to borrow some heat
And from the boulder you’ll need to borrow some hardness

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87 Repeated word. It was used earlier as part of the cognate accusative phrase “tmarrad tmarrud” in Line 13 of the Third Stanza, “He rebelled a rebellion…”

88 Beginning with this line, the poet begins a list of things his opponent will need to “borrow” (tstaʿrid) in order to be able to compete with him in the verbal duel. This listing strategy allows the poet to go on for a number of lines using a parallel structure and each time introducing new images that will draw a favorable reaction from the audience.
6a) [iW] min[i]-s-sab‘ayn tsta’riḍ jasāra
6b) And from the two lions borrow courage
6c) From the two lions borrow some courage

7a) [iW] min[i]-l-khiyyāl tsta’riḍ mahāra
7b) And from the knight borrow skill
7c) And from the knight borrow some skill

8a)[i]Nsarajt [i]d-dahir ḥattā tshinn ghāra
8b) If you saddled Time so it could launch an attack
8c) If you were to put Time up on a saddle to launch an attack

89 Mousa uses the dual ending here to fit the meter – another example of poetic license and a useful strategy for quick improvisation. The image of two lions also alludes to the symbolic portrayal of a pair of lions as symbols of power, courage, protection, and royalty.
قسم كورس قسم يعزف ربابي

9a)  "Okh, init muṭrib mā‘ak jaw‘it tijāra (#)  ‘Usum kawras  ‘usum ya‘zif rabābī (#)

9b)  Owkh..you’re singer, you have with you a commercial jawqa  One part is a chorus and another part plays the rabāb 90

9c)  Ookh..you’re a mere singer crooning with your jawqa-for-hire  One part is the chorus and the other plays the rabāb

10a)  [W] ‘izā mu‘jab bi-ṣawtak ʿan jadāra  ʿalayk-il-ōf w-il-Bāsha-l-mulaḥḥin

10b)  If you are enamored of your voice for its worthiness91  [Then] you take on the “Owf” and let al-Basha92 the composer

10c)  If you are so enamored of your voice  Then go ahead and do the “Owf” but let al-Basha

---

90 Rabāb (or rabābah) is a traditional, simple bowed string instrument. It has a membrane belly and usually only two or three strings. Though valued for its voice-like tone, the rabāb has a very limited range. Mousa is making a jab at Zaghloul and his troupe by comparing their musicality to a primitive string instrument with limited range.

91 Mousa is playing devil’s advocate here. He is well aware of Zaghloul’s fame as possessing one of the most beautiful singing voices and holding the record for the longest “Owf” melisma. In the clincher of this stanza Mousa acknowledges Zaghloul’s voice while simultaneously cutting him down to a hollow entertainer with no substance and no poetry-writing ability. Note also that the exact meaning of the phrase ʿan jadāra (out of worthiness) is unclear but necessary for the rhyme.

92 The reference is to Tawfiq al-Basha (1924-2005) a great Lebanese composer and one of the “Gang of Five” composers whose musical genius was behind the legendary Baalbak International Festivals established in 1957. The “Gang of Five” included ‘Asi Rahbani, Mansur Rahbani, Zaki Nasif, Tawfiq al-Basha, and Tawfiq Sukkar, whose aim was to create authentically Lebanese music (Asmar).
11a) ʿAlayhi-l-lāḥin-w-[i]laynā-l-kitābī (#)

11b) Be responsible for the music and us be responsible for the writing

11c) Compose the music and we will write the words
Sixth Stanza [09:51 - 10:49]

ولا تتلّت فضيحة عا فضيحة
Wa lā-t-tallīt faḍīḥa ʿā faḍīḥa

09:51 1a) [I]stiḥī mn-il-baḥīr yā naḥṣa shḥīḥa
Wa lā-t-tallīt faḍīḥa ʿā faḍīḥa
1b) Be ashamed by the sea, O [you] trickling/dried up spring
And don’t triple disgrace upon disgrace
1c) Cower before the sea, you dried-up spring
Don’t triple your disgraces one after another

بملوك العاميّة والفصيحة
By the kings of the vernacular and of classical Arabic

10:03 2a) [I]l-ʿayn [i]mfattḥa ʿalaynā bi-ʿināyi
[i]B-mulūk-il-ʿāmmiyyi w-il-faṣīḥa
2b) The eye/water source is open on us with attention
By the kings of the vernacular and of classical Arabic
2c) All eyes are watching us with scrutiny
The kings of the vernacular and the classical

ولا خرج المباراة الصحيحة
Wa lā kharj il-mubārāt i-ṣḥīḥa

10:11 3a) Init bi-sh-šiʿr mush min mustawāyi
Wa lā kharj il-mubārāt i-ṣḥīḥa
3b) You in poetry are not of my caliber
And not suitable for a real match/competition
3c) In poetry you are nowhere near my level
And have no place in a real match like this

93 The phrase [I]l-ʿayn [i]mfattḥa ʿalaynā has a double-meaning. The primary meaning is “the eye is open on us” or “the eye is watching us,” referring to the audience and the judging panel’s careful scrutiny of their duel. The secondary meaning is “the water source is open to us,” which extends the image in the previous line when Mousa addressed Zaghloul as a “dried-up spring” with which Mousa’s troupe is now being contrasted.
4a) Init bi-t-talfazi kharj-d-di‘āyi

10:18 4a) Init bi-t-talfazi kharj-d-di‘āyi

4b) You on television are good for commercials

4c) You’re good for doing TV commercials

4) وعطيتك للهرب آخر نصيحة

5a) [W] ba‘id mā kinit⁹⁵ nahnahtak⁹⁶ [i]kfāyi

10:29 5a) [W] ba‘id mā kinit⁹⁵ nahnahtak⁹⁶ [i]kfāyi

5b) And after I pampered you plenty

5c) After I’ve pampered you plenty

⁹⁴ Poets always gain the audience’s approval when they insert proper names and brand names as Mousa does here. Ninex is a tissue-paper brand and Bata is shoes. It is also interesting to note how he is able to fit such words into the musical and poetic meter.

⁹⁵ Kinit (I was) is a formulaic word that is often repeated or inserted to fill metrical space.

⁹⁶ In Ziadeh transcript = nabhaṭak, literally “I warned you.” On the recording it is nahnaṭak, literally “I pampered you”. Both scan the same metrically.
10:36  

6a) Bi ‘ayyi ‘alib yā Zaghlūl jāyi⁹⁷

6b) With what heart, O Zaghloul, are you coming [here]  

6c) With what kind of heart, Zaghloul, are you coming here  

7a) [W] bi-aynu ghaḍbit-il-labwi-j-jāriḥā (#)

7b) And in his eye the anger of a wounded lioness

7c) And the anger of a wounded lioness in his eyes?

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⁹⁷ jāyi (I have come here, am coming here) is another example of a formulaic word.
Seventh Stanza [10:50 – 11:53]

على التطمن ببعثلك رسالي

10:50 1a) [W] halla’ yā Abū Rūkuz-il-ghālī x 2 (98) (#)
1b) And now, O cherished Abu Rukuz,
1c) And now, most beloved Abu Rukuz,

بطانة تاجنا نجوم الليالي

11:06 2a) Lā tifza c tā yrūḥ-it-tāj minnā
2b) Do not be afraid that the crown will go from us
2c) Have no fear of our losing the crown

على التطمن ببعثلك رسالي

1/ وهلق يا أبو روكز الغالي
cala-t-taṭmīn (99) bibc’atlak risālī

To put you at ease I am sending you a letter

To set your mind at ease, I am sending you a message

لا تفزع تا يروح التاج منا
Bṭānit tājnā njūm-il-layālī (#)

The lining of our crown is the stars of the nights

Its very lining is the star-studded night

---

98 The hemistich is repeated.

99 It is not idiomatic to use the preposition c’ala (on) here in the phrase c’ala-t-taṭmīn. The proper idiom uses li (for, in order to): li-t-taṭmīn, meaning “to put you at ease.” The poet uses c’ala to fit the meter, an example of poetic license and a strategy that facilitates quick oral composition.

100 Mousa is addressing his late mentor Rukuz, whose son is also named Rukuz, giving rise to the traditional nickname Abu Rukuz (Father of Rukuz).
Sārīnā tā waṣīlnā lil-‘ālī

3a) Ōkh..[w]mitil mā ḥkīt lammā ghibit ʿannā
3b) Owkh..and as you said when you were absent from us
3c) Owkh...And as you said when you left us

‘ālīmā al-būṭūlā il-basālī

11:17

We stayed up until we reached the heights
We stayed up nights to reach the highest of heights

11:26

On the dreams of heroism and courage
And dream of valor and courage

11:34

The masters of the pen and improvisation too

Note the formulaic phrasing ʿā ʾahlām-il-buṭūlī wa-l-basālī (On the dreams of heroism and courage). This same phrasing was used in the first stanza, line 9, second hemistich: ʿa ʾahlām il-ʿasāwī w-il-liyūnī (On the dreams of harshness and softness).
6a) [W] ‘izā [i]b-yitgharbalū rjāl-il-ma’annā

Min-ish-shi‘cār ma b[i]-yḍall ‘illā

6b) And if they sift the men of ma‘annā

From the poets the only ones to remain

6c) And if they put the men of ma‘annā through a sieve

The only poets who will remain

7a) ‘Anā-w-Jiryis-w-Buṭrus w-il-[i]Fghālī (#)

7b) I and Jiryis and Butrus and al-Faghali

7c) Are myself, Jiryis, Butrus, and Faghali

102 It is customary for the jawqa leader to mention the names of the members of his jawqa in the Iftitāḥiyi (Prelude) in this way, as a way of introducing them. Undoubtedly, Mousa based this stanza’s rhyme scheme on the name of his colleague al-Faghali which comes at the end. As Haydar has pointed out, poets compose their stanzas backwards, always with an eye for the final “clincher” whose rhyme adds to its strength and impact. Poets would do well to prepare a variety of stanzas based on the names of the poets in their own jawqa as well as opposing jawqas.
3.1.4. *Iftīḥiyyi* of Mousa Zoghayb: Summary and Analysis

In his *Iftīḥiyyi* Mousa Zoghayb delivers seven *qaṣīd* stanzas consisting of 11, 12, 20, 9, 11, 7, and 7 lines respectively, for a total of 77 lines. His *Iftīḥiyyi* lasts approximately eleven minutes and fifty-three seconds; each line lasts an average of slightly more than 9 seconds. The specific rhyme endings he used are outlined as follows, where Rhyme a refers to the ʿadr and ʿajz of *al-maṭlaʿ* and ʿajz rhymes of *al-dawr*, Rhyme b refers to the ʿadr rhymes of *al-dawr*, and Clincher rhyme refers to the *rujūʿ* rhyme of the closing single hemistich:

Stanza 1: Rhyme a = -ūnī  Rhyme b = -ar  Clincher = yaʿīrfūnī (they know me)
Stanza 2: Rhyme a = -āra  Rhyme b = -annā  Clincher = safāra (embassy)
Stanza 3: Rhyme a = -ārū  Rhyme b = -ad  Clincher = ʿintīṣārū (his victory)
Stanza 4: Rhyme a = -āʾī  Rhyme b = -nnī  Clincher = wāʾī (awake)
Stanza 5: Rhyme a = -ābī  Rhyme b = -āra  Clincher = kitābī (writing)
Stanza 6: Rhyme a = -iḥā  Rhyme b = -āyi  Clincher = jarīḥā (wounded)
Stanza 7: Rhyme a = -ālī  Rhyme b = -nnā  Clincher = Fghālī (Faghali)

It is clear that in most cases Rhyme a features a final long vowel ā, ū, or ī. These endings are indeed highly conducive to rhyming because they correspond to a variety of common suffixes. In addition to the pronunciation of any word ending in long alif (ـا) or alif maqṣūra (ـى), the final long vowel ā, for example, corresponds to the Lebanese dialect pronoun suffix meaning “her” or “its” or possibly “their”/ “them.” The pronoun suffix (ـا) nā, meaning “our” or “us” also ends in long vowel ā. The long vowel ī at the end of a word is very common, too, as it is the pronoun suffix (ـي) -ī meaning “my” or the end of the pronoun suffix (ـني) –nī meaning “me.” It is also the suffix (ـي) –ī used to form a *nisba* or relative adjective such as *Libnānī* (Lebanese). Furthermore, because the rhyme falls at the end of a line and thus completes a semantic clause, it
is natural for the poet to lengthen a final vowel that might otherwise be pronounced as short. In other words, poetic license allows short vowel endings to be treated as long vowels and thus be considered equivalent and acceptable rhymes. In the case of a short vowel ending of a or i arising from the presence of the feminine suffix tā marbūṭa the short vowel will be extended to ā or ī, respectively. This means the poet can also fulfill the rhyme requirement of ā or ī with a feminine noun or adjective ending in tā marbūṭa. If the poet is using an “a rhyme” that ends in long ū, there are also several types of words and suffixes that enable him to find rhymes with ease. The long ū is a verb suffix for second and third person plural forms in both past and present tense in Lebanese dialect. The long ū is also the Lebanese dialect pronunciation of the pronoun suffix meaning “his” or “him.” Given all the possibilities and poetic license allowing the extension of short to long vowels, it is no wonder Mousa and other zajal poets employ rhymes ending in long vowels.

In the case of the Rhyme b choices in Mousa’s Iftitāḥiyyi, we find that only three of the seven stanzas employ a final long vowel, three employ short vowel endings, and two of his Rhyme b choices end in a consonant rather than a vowel (Stanza 1 = -ar and Stanza 3 = -ad). The decrease in rhymes ending in long vowels in the “b rhymes” owes to the fact that poets do not usually pause at the end of the first hemistich even though most hemistichs are complete clauses. The occasional enjambment across the separation between hemistichs often coincides

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103 In Lebanese dialect, the feminine suffix tā marbūṭa will be pronounced as short vowel fatḥa (a) (as is the rule in fuṣḥā) or as short vowel kasra (i). In general, when the tā marbūṭa is preceded by an emphatic consonant such as sād or hāʾ it will end with fatḥa (as in rkhīṣa (cheap) or mnīḥa (good)) and when the tā marbūṭa is preceded by non-emphatic consonants such as bāʾ or lām it will end with kasra (as in ‘arābī (blood tie) or risālī (a letter, message)).
with a “b rhyme” that ends on a consonant. This is the case as noted in Mousa’s *Ititāhiyyi*, which occur in Stanzas 1 and 3 in which the b rhymes were -ar and -ad.

Arabic syntax rules are very flexible, an important characteristic that allows the poet to place rhyme words at the end of a hemistich without jarring the meaning beyond comprehension. Unlike English, which has a much stricter set of syntax rules compared to Arabic, it is equally acceptable to express a sentence containing a subject, verb, and object in the order V S O or S V O. For example, natural Arabic syntax begins with the verb and one might say, “Ate the boy the apple.” Alternatively and for grammatical reasons, for emphasis, or to draw attention to the subject of the verb, one might say, as in English, “The boy ate the apple.” In the case of poetry, it would be acceptable as well to say, “The apple the boy ate [it],” or even “The apple/ ate [it]/ the boy,” without losing the sense of the intended meaning. This flexibility in syntax is a necessary linguistic characteristic that makes it possible for poets to correctly place rhyme words with ease.

Already at this point in the *zajal* performance we are able to see numerous aspects of oral-formulaic composition at work. The rhyme choices that take advantage of Arabic’s inflected nature are formulaic, what Parry and Lord termed a formulaic “system” into which the poet can easily substitute a large variety of words that will automatically fit the poetic mold (Lord 30-67). Playing with syntax to serve purposes of rhyme and meter is also part of the oral-formulaic procedure in which metrical chunks are placed strategically like the pieces of a puzzle to form acceptable lines. I have also pointed out (in footnotes) a number of specific words (formulas) that are often repeated by Mousa (and as we will see by other *zajal* poets), such as *sirit* (I became), *kinit* (I was), *ad-dahr* (time eternal), *al-ḥilm* (the dream), *zajal*, and *maʾannā*, and stock constructions such as the comparative phrases used by Mousa in his first and third stanzas (“shorter than the dream that…”; “smaller than those who…”; “colder than ice…”; “sturdier than
Listing strategies, in which a poet begins or frames a series of lines using the same word, such as in Mousa’s fifth stanza when he delivers a series of lines revolving around the word *tsta’rid* (to borrow) and lists all the items Zaghloul will need to borrow to be able to compete with him, are also formulaic rhetorical devices that enable a poet to improvise quickly while maintaining rhyme and meter with ease. Conditional phrases are another favorite strategy often employed by poets to facilitate oral composition not only of numerous lines, but to create a crescendo of ideas and images leading up to a clincher, as in the conclusion of Mousa’s final *Ifiṯihiyyi* stanza that begins with the conditional proposition, “And if they put the men of *ma’ anna* through a sieve…” Another favorite strategy, which is part and parcel of the oral-formulaic method of composition, is the pairing of synonyms, as in Mousa’s second stanza *’adwa-w-marara* (enmity and bitterness), or the pairing of opposites, as in Mousa’s first stanza *’a ’ahlam il-’asawi w-il-liyun* (On the dreams of harshness and softness). Poets also draw on Arabic morphology patterns and use the strategy of pairing words with shared roots to enhance both the semantic impact and the musicality of their verses, as in Mousa’s third stanza *tamarrad* (verb) *tamarrud* (gerund), literally “rebelled a …rebelling”. Formulas also abound in thematic content, especially here in the *Ifiṯihiyyi* segment. The names of places, people, historical figures, and *zajal* poets past and present are poured into the mix as essential ingredients and are spiced up with allusions to current events and popular topics of the day. Indeed, all *zajal* encounters are date-stamped thanks to these thematic formulas.

Before moving to Zaghloul’s *Ifiṯihiyyi* segment, a few words on audience reaction are in order. A verbal duel is a competition, after all, and the poet’s primary goal from beginning to end is to endear himself to the audience and gain its favor. One way to gauge his success is to listen to the background sounds coming from the *riddadi* (chorus, literally “group of”
repeaters/responders”) and the audience. Tambourines, drums, whistles, shouts, ululations, and laughter can be heard in various degrees. These sounds are an essential and integral component of the verbal duel. I have indicated instances of audience and chorus response in the transcription line using the symbol (#). One easy generalization to be made is that there is always an audible response from the audience at the end of a stanza. This, of course, is a natural place for applause, but it is also directly related to the composition process. According to Haydar, poets construct stanzas with the final clincher rhyme as a starting point and mentally work backwards to the lines leading up to it (“The Development of Lebanese Zajal” 208). The result is that every line, with its fixed rhyme ending, helps build energy and momentum that is released in the clincher. In many cases, the combination of semantic expectations and well-established end rhyme makes it possible for the audience to anticipate part or all of the clincher hemistich when it comes. The joy of recognition, of having expectations fulfilled and of being able to sing along with the poet, is what is expressed by the audience and vocalized in the form of singing, shouting, ululating, laughing, and clapping. These are moments when the audience becomes one with the poet and is able to share in the joy of the creative process.

The audience also responds positively to Mousa whenever he jabs at Zaghloul. Any type of attack on the opponent is met with strong approval and bursts of laughter. The crowd is also impressed by Mousa’s knowledgeableitàe, especially in his list of names out of zajal history. And they also like it when he mentions familiar places and events, things with which they can identify and to which they can relate. They also respond to striking imagery and craftily-formed lines and stanzas that put Mousa’s strength as a poet on display.
3.1.5. *Iftitāḥiyyi of Zaghloul al-Damour*: Background

Now that Mousa has completed his *Iftitāḥiyyi* segment, it is time for Zaghloul to take his place on the stage. As mentioned earlier, this particular day in Zaghloul’s life is a difficult and sorrowful one. He arrives at Beit Mery coming directly from his dear brother’s deathbed. On the recording, Mousa’s *Iftitāḥiyyi* concludes at the 11:53 mark. The *riddādi* (instrumental chorus) claps and plays tambourine and beats the *dirbakki* drums while making vocal outbursts until Zaghloul begins his *Iftitāḥiyyi* at the 12:48 mark.
3.1.6. *Iftitāḥiyi* of Zaghloul al-Damour: Transcript, Transliteration, Trot, and Translation

First Stanza [12:48-13:53]

1a) Ākh.. Ākh 104 (#) Īʿzūrīnī yā ḥirūf-il-ʿabdīyyī ‘Īzā mā baʿmil-il-wājib ʿalayī (#)

1b) Aakh… Ākh Forgive me, O letters of the alphabet If I do not fulfill my responsibility

1c) Aakh... Aakh Forgive me, O letters of the alphabet If I am unable to fulfill my duties

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104 Zaghloul opens with a heart wrenching “*Owf*” that lasts a full 12 seconds. It elicits a fervent echo from the chorus. He, too, pronounces the “*Owf*” with a final “*kh*” rather than “*f*” (as Mousa did) but he also pronounces the long vowel as “Ākh” rather than “Owkh.” This expression, “Ākh” is the word “Akh” (brother) with an extended opening vowel. In Arabic, when a person is in pain, he or she cries “Ākh” as if to call out to his or her brother for help. In this particular situation, Zaghloul’s long, heartfelt, melismatic “Ākh” takes on special meaning since, as was noted earlier, he has just lost his brother only a matter of hours before the duel begins. Just as Mousa had seemed worried Zaghloul would do (as evidenced in Mousa’s attack on Zaghloul’s singing voice and in particular trying to trivialize the importance of a well-sung “*Owf*”) Zaghloul starts his *Iftitāḥiyi* with a powerful and emotional cry that immediately draws in the audience and judges. As Zaghloul continues to deliver his opening lines, he showcases his beautiful singing voice by extending long vowels with lengthy and melodious melisma and the timbre of his voice reveals sincere grief and occasionally breaks as on the verge of tears. Note also that it is clear from the opening hemistich that the rhyme scheme is set up for the final word in the stanza, “*khayyī*” (my brother). Indeed, Zaghloul repeats the word *khayyī* four times in this short stanza.
وعليي، مثل أمي ومثل أبي

2) خسرت خيي المفضل عاولادي

2a) [i]Khsirit khayyī-li-mufḍīl ʿā-wlādī

W-ʿalayī…١٠٥, mitil ʿimmī w mitil bayyī (#)

2b) I lost my brother the bestower of benefits to my children
And to myself…Like my mother and like my father

2c) I lost my brother, who gave so generously to my children
And to me…Like my mother and my father

ما حلّو يبتدي النسيان فيي

3) خمس ساعات صر لو مش زيادي

3a) Khamis sāʿāt šar lū mish [i]zyādī

Mā ḥallu yibtidī-n-nisyān fiyyī

3b) Five hours have passed on him not more
It hasn’t been long enough for forgetfulness to start in me

3c) He has been gone five hours, not more
Now is not the time for me to start forgetting

١٠٥ This melisma lasts a full 3 seconds, emphasizing “me”.
4) [i]B-`azā khayyī ṭalits ʿazzī fū`ādī  
Li`annī b`itībir kill shakhīṣ minkun

4a) At my brother’s mourning ceremony I consoled my heart, too  
Because I consider each one of you

4b) But after mourning my brother I consoled my own heart  
Because I consider each one of you

5) بعد ما غاب خيّي محل خيّي

5a) Ba`d mā ghāb khayyī mhall khayyī (#)

5b) After my brother left, in the place of my brother

5c) Now that my brother is gone, to be my brother

106 Ziadeh writes منكم (minkum), using the Fuṣha spelling of the object pronoun “you (plural)” rather than its counterpart منكن (minkun) in Lebanese dialect.

13:58 1a) [iW] ya ‘al¢it Bat Miri-l-ma b-tijhalînî  
‘Anā ‘ibni [i]w-‘intî b-ta¢irfînî…(#)

1b) O citadel of Beit Mery who isn’t ignorant of me
I am your son and you know me

1c) O Citadel of Beit Mery who is not ignorant of me
I am your native son and you know me well

14:10 2a) Ḥimilnî wāldî min-i-sh-shûf khîl‘a  
[W] na’alnî min madînî ‘a madînî107 (#)

2b) My father carried me from Shouf [as] an infant108
And transported me from city to city

2c) My father carried me as a baby from the Shouf mountains
And took me from city to city

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107 The repetition of the word madînî (city) in this common idiom min madînî ‘a madînî (from city to city) adds to its musicality and is another example of word choices the audience can predict, allowing them to participate in singing.

108 Zaghloul is reminding the audience that he is no stranger to Beit Mery and that he is from the beautiful Shouf region that comprises the Christian town of Damour, part of Zaghloul’s penname, Zaghloul al-Damour (Baby Dove of Damour).
14:22 3a) [i]Khli’it bi-jdaydtik\(^{109}\) w-ṭlaʾit ṭalʾa\(^{110}\)  
3b) I was born in your “jdeidi”\(^{111}\) and climbed a great climbing  
3c) I was born in your town and climbed high  

Ta shift-i-sh-shams ‘awṭā min [i]jbīnī (#)  
Until I saw the sun lower than my forehead\(^{112}\)  
So high the sun was below my brow

\(^{109}\) Ziadeh’s transcript has جيرتك (your environs) rather than جديدتك jdaydtik (your town).

\(^{110}\) The pairing of these two words stemming from the same root, ṭlaʾit (I went up) and ṭalʾa (a climbing; a hill), add again to the musicality of the hemistich. Moreover, this is an example of the grammatical construction “cognate accusative” which Mousa used in Line 13 of his third opening stanza. The combination has the effect of emphasizing the verb’s action.

\(^{111}\) Zaghloul is referring to Jdeidet el-Metn, his hometown in Damour. Many Lebanese towns and villages have the prefix “Jdeidet” and thus it carries the sense of “Town of” or “Area of” or possibly “Suburb of.”

\(^{112}\) Note that Mousa used this formulaic idiom previously in Line 8 of his fifth stanza: ‘awṭā min [i]rkābī (lower than my knees.)
مشوا خواريف عا شمالي ويميني

14:30  4a) [iW] min-i-sh-sha'ār kam shal‘ā bi-shal‘ā Mishū khwārīf c‘a shmālī w-yamīnī (#)

4b) And of poets how many flock after flock113 Walked [like] sheep to my left and to my right114

4c) And many a poet, flock after flock, Passed like sheep to my left and to my right

عطتي للتحدّاني بعريني

14:40  5a) Ya ‘al‘it Bat Miri law ‘alif bala‘115  c‘Ataytī lil-it-taḥaddānī b‘arīnī…(#)

5b) O Citadel of Beit Mery even if a thousand gulps You were to give to those who dared me in my lair

5c) O Castle of Beit Mery, even if you gave a thousand gulps Of courage to those who would dare me in my lair

113 Another example of immediate repetition of a word adding a sing-song element to the verse: shal‘ā bi-shal‘ā (flock after flock). Note also that the word shal‘ā is not a fuṣḥā word.

114 Audience can easily sing along with this predictable idiom of lexical opposites that fits the rhyme: c‘a shmālī w- yamīnī (to my left and to my right).

115 Note the internal rhyme: ‘al‘a (citadel) and bala‘ (gulp)
14:51  6a) Ta khalli-ṣ-sawt min ‘al-fā li-‘al-fā
Yidwī mitil ʿinbilt-il-fajrāhā

6b) In order to let the voice from citadel to citadel
Explode like the bomb that was blown up by

6c) I would let my voice ring out from castle to castle
Exploding like the bomb

/7

7a) L-ʿAmirkānī b-Hirūshīma-l-ḥazīnī (#)

7b) The American on sad
Hiroshima

7c) The Americans dropped on sad Hiroshima

116 Another example of repetition: min ʿaṟ fa li-ʿal-fā (from citadel to citadel)

117 Here Zaghloul draws our attention back to his state of grief by ending on the rhyme word “ḥazīnī” (sad). However, he has branched out into the larger sphere by mentioning the horrific event and human catastrophe of Hiroshima, thus taking himself into the universal realm of human suffering and taking the duel outside Lebanon to a wider geographic sphere.
Third Stanza [15:09-16:13]

الحكم بين القساوي والليوني

1/ ويا سنة الواحد وسبعين كوني

15:09  a) [iW] Yā sint-il-wāḥad-w-sab‘īn kūnī  
       b) O year of nineteen-seventy-one, be  
       c) O year of nineteen-seventy-one, you be

L-ḥakam bayn-il-‘asāwī w-il-liyūnī118

The judge between harshness and softness

The judge between harshness and tenderness

118 Zaghloul is using the exact phrasing used by Mousa in his first stanza, line 9, second hemistich: ʕa  ‘ahlām il-‘asāwī w-il-liyūnī. This also means he will be using the same end rhyme Mousa used in his opening stanza. This strategy is something akin to political spin whereby one rival takes the exact words of his opponent and finds a way to turn them against him. In this case, Zaghloul seems to be equating Mousa with harshness (il-‘asāwī) and himself with softness (il-liyūnī), that is, the bad versus the good. Needless to say, this repetition and idiom of lexical opposites, again allows the audience to predict and participate in the singing of the line.
15:18 2a) ‘Is-harī ʿā jawʿt-il-marhūm maʿnā

Mitol ma b-tis-har-il-imm-il-ḥanūnī (#)

2b) Stay up late\(^{119}\) with the jawqa of the deceased\(^{120}\) with us

Just as the affectionate mother\(^{121}\) stays up late

2c) Stay up late with us, tending to our dear deceased’s jawqa

Just as the tender-hearted mother spends the nights awake

15:28 3a) [iW] Yā Mūsā baʿidma-l-“mishrif” jamaʿnā

[W] ʿaṭaynākun ʿa ʿashr [i]-sh-hūr mūnī…\(^{122}\) (#)

3b) And Mousa, after “al-Mishrif”\(^{123}\) brought us together

And we gave you all ten months’ worth of provisions

3c) And Mousa, after we got together at “al-Mishrif”

And we stocked you up with ten months’ worth of provisions

\(^{119}\) Again Zaghloul repeats a word used more than once by Mousa in his opening lines: ‘Is-harī (Stay up late). Zaghloul is addressing the year 1971.

\(^{120}\) The deceased is Rukuz who everyone in the audience knows was also Zaghloul’s dear friend and colleague in zajal.

\(^{121}\) With this reference to “the affectionate mother” Zaghloul establishes some metaphorical connections. First, he is reusing Mousa’s previously sung words and images to his own advantage (Mousa conjured the image of the mother staying up late over the cradle in his opening lines). Second, the way the line is expressed, this “affectionate mother” is equated with “us” from the previous hemistich. Thus, Zaghloul has turned Mousa’s image into an opportunity to equate himself with “the affectionate mother,” the ideal image of love and affection and further emphasizes his personal suffering having now lost his brother who was like a father.

\(^{122}\) Zaghloul’s long melisma here draws applause from the audience.

\(^{123}\) The last encounter between Mousa and Zaghloul took place ten months earlier in al-Mishrif, a town in the Shouf district.
4a) Mūnī ...l-mūnī khīṣit ṡ-nihīnā ṣyīnā

4b) The provisions are depleted and we have returned

4c) The provisions are all used up and we have returned

البسونا بصدرك قوني وقوني

5a) [i]Shbaṣū niḥnā ‘abil minkun shbi‘nā

5b) Satiate yourselves we before you satiated ourselves

5c) Satiate yourselves, we filled up long before you

|Mūnī lubūnī yā yatāmā b-tūjadūnī (#) | Ask for me, O orphans, and you will find me |
| Ask for me, poor orphans, and you will find me | |

اشبعوا نحننا قبل منكن شبعنا | Wear us on your chest, icon and icon |

Wear us on your breast like a chain of icons |

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124 The repetition of mūnī (provisions) is an allowable pausing strategy that also gives the poet a chance to show off his singing voice, which Zaghloul also enhances with a long and beautiful melisma which again draws applause from the audience.

125 Note the gratuitous extra rhyme word ‘Uṭlubūnī (Ask for me). Considering Zaghloul is reusing Mousa’s end rhyme in this stanza, he is clearly showing off by throwing in extra rhymes this way.

126 A Christ-like image, to which Zaghloul is connecting himself.

127 Once again Zaghloul uses sing-song repetition on the rhyme with the phrase ‘ūnī-w-‘ūnī (icon and icon). Note also the additional Christian image of the icon, suggesting that Zaghloul and his jawqa are like saints to be venerated by Mousa and his jawqa.
6a) Ḥṣudū niḥnā karāmitkun zaraʾnā
6b) Reap, we your honor/vineyards128 planted
6c) Go ahead and reap the harvest of honor we planted for you
You’ve gotten used to eating me in a blind night

7a) ʿala šyāḥ-id-diyyūk [i]b-tinikrūnī (#)
7b) And on the crowing of the roosters you deny me129
7c) And denying me as soon as the cocks begin to crow

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128 The primary meaning of karāmitkun is “your honor” or “your dignity.” It can also mean “for your sake.” Also, when coupled with the verb zaraʾnā (we planted/sowed/cultivated) which comes at the end of the hemistich, the related word karm (pl. kurūm), meaning “vineyard” is also conjured by the syntax. Either way, Zaghloul is claiming to have sown the seeds of Mousa’s livelihood and success as a poet of zajal and implies that Mousa still depends on Zaghloul for sustenance in that domain.

129 Zaghloul makes a clear reference to Christ being denied by Peter, his dearest disciple. Thus it appears that the previous hints at Christian imagery were all leading up to this clincher ending which equates Zaghloul with Christ and Mousa with Peter’s denial. Large applause is heard.
Fourth Stanza [16:16- 17:16]

ضروري تناصروا موسى عليي

16:16  1a) [iW] yā anšār-iz-zajal\(^{130}\) w-il-\(^{-}\)ab’ariyyī

1b) O supporters of zajal and creativity/genius

1c) O supporters of zajal and ingenuity

It is necessary to support/give Mousa the victory\(^{131}\) over me

You should give Mousa all your support over me

نا يوصل عالسماوات العلية

16:27  2a) Li-‘annū ba’id baddū kťir yiṭla\(^{c}\)

2b) Because he still needs a lot to rise up

2c) Because he still has a long, long way to go

Ta yūṣal ʕa-s-samāwāt-il-ʕaliyyī (#)

To reach the high heavens

Before reaching these heavenly heights

\(^{130}\) Ziadeh’s transcript gives انصار الشعر anšār ish-shī‘r (supporters of poetry) rather than انصار الزجل anšār iz-zajal (supporters of zajal).

\(^{131}\) Note that the word anšār (supporters) of the previous hemistich and this word tnāšrū (give victory to) share the same root. It is once again Zaghloul’s way of showing his linguistic ad poetic acumen and emphasizing the message he is delivering.
ضروري يشوف جنب الاكثرية

3a) Darūrī tza’fūlū b-kill maṭla

3b) It is necessary for you to clap for him after each maṭla

3c) You should clap for him after each opening hemistich

Darūrī yshūf janbū il-‘aktariyyī

It is necessary for him to see next to him the majority

And he should feel he has the majority on his side

صلاة الصبح افضل من عشية

4a) Darūrī ḍāyyūnū-ḍ-daww yiṭla

4b) It is necessary that on his eyes the light rises (morning comes)

4c) It is important for his eyes to see the dawn

Ṣalāt-iṣ-ṣibih ʿafḍal min ʿashiyyī (#)

Prayer in the morning is better than at night

Morning prayer is better than at night

132 Note Zaghloul’s repetition of the word Darūrī (It is necessary that). The repetition, which is another manifestation of oral formulaic composition, allows Zaghloul to build a crescendo of lines quickly and easily and to simultaneously emphasize the notion that “It is necessary” to let Mousa win, the way a parent might let a child win a game to build his confidence. In other words, Zaghloul is patronizing Mousa and implying that any points he might gain are merely the result of letting him win or that it is okay to help Mousa the amateur gain confidence, because he needs all the help he can get to be able to compete with Zaghloul.

133 Note that Mousa can be heard responding to Zaghloul with the expression “āl” here, literally, “Great,” by which he means, “Okay. Let’s go. I’ll show you.”
5) Ana nattir khamir-ishi’ir yitla c
5a) Anā nāṭir khamīr-ışhi’ir yiṭla c
5b) I am waiting for the yeast of poetry to rise
5c) I am waiting for the yeast of poetry to rise
5a) Ma ḥaṭ ḫaṭa’ ālā mī ẗariyyīn
5b) I will not break the fast on a tender morsel
5c) I won’t break the fast on a tender morsel

16:55

6) Wa’adā khu’u‘alā Musā biṭla shi c
6a) [W] ‘izā khil’ī’ alā Mūsā byiṭla c
6b) And if my ire on Mousa rises up
6c) And if I get fed up with Moses over here
6b) Ta ‘īḥdum ṭūr Mūsā ʿa Ḥarājīl
6c) I’ll bring Moses’ whole mountain down upon Harajil

134 With the exception of line 3, Zaghloul is using the exact word yitla c (rise) as the sadr rhyme word throughout this stanza. He does this to show his skill at using the same word to mean something new each time in a game of homonyms. In two cases, Zaghloul makes use of common idioms: yitla c id-daww (literally, the light rises; figuratively, dawn breaks or the sun comes up) and yitla c khil’ī (literally, my physical constitution/essence rises; figuratively, I get fed up or My ire rises). In both cases, the syntax has been reversed in order to place the rhyme word yitla c at the end of the hemistich.

135 This is a particularly witty and powerful line. Mousa is the Arabic version of the name Moses and here Zaghloul is referring to the Biblical Moses and is saying he will topple the Mountain of Moses (i.e. where Moses went to get the Ten Commandments) down on the town of Harajil, Mousa Zoghayb’s hometown in the Mount Lebanon region. With this name game, Zaghloul also associates Mousa with the Jewish people by analogy. He gets a large applause from the audience.
7a) [W] ‘abil Yāring ‘inhīlū-l-‘aḍiyī (#)

7b) And before Jarring I will end the matter for him

7c) And finish him off before Jarring comes to save him

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136 The reference is to Swedish diplomat Gunnar Jarring who was appointed by the UN Secretary-General U Thant as a special envoy for the Middle East peace process (1967-73), which was called the “Jarring Mission,” and his methods were in use at the time of the Beit Mery verbal duel in 1971. Zajal poets often bring current events into their duels, which serves the purpose of showing they are erudite and up-to-date on worldly matters. This strategy also brings the audience into the conversation as all are concerned with and affected by social and political happenings of the day.
Fifth Stanza [17:19- 18:39]

ختم موسى عليي مش بعيدي

17:19 1a) [iW] ‘izā bil-Mishrif [i]b-‘ākhir ‘aṣīdī

Khatam Mūsā ʿalayī mish [i]bīdī

1b) And if at Mishrif with the last poem

Mousa ended on me (i.e. had the last word) it’s not far off

1c) And so what if with the final qaṣīd at Mishrif

Mousa got the last word, it’s not a stretch to say

وعا ذوقو بلش يصف الجريدي

17:28 2a) ‘Anā tnāzalt ēn ġa’ī w-ēṭaytū

[W] ʿa zawū ballash yiṣif-’il-jarīdī (#)

2b) I surrendered what I had a right to and gave it to him

And according to his whims he started setting the newspaper

2c) That I let him have what was rightfully mine

But he fabricated the news story according to his whims

____________________

137 At the last encounter between Zaghloul and Mousa, Mousa gave the closing qaṣīd. However, Zaghloul is saying here that even though the normal protocol would have been for Zaghloul to deliver the closing qaṣīd, he generously gave the honor to Mousa. In the second hemistich Zaghloul states that Mousa misinterpreted that as a coup when really Zaghloul was just being magnanimous.

138 i.e. interpreting things how he liked and publicizing his version of the story
17:38 3a) [W] ‘inidma b-‘ākhir-il-jawlī la’aytū
\[W\] ‘Am yidabdib mitil ūfî waḥīdī
‘Am yidabdib mitil ūfî waḥīdī
\[W\] Crawling around like a (female) baby all alone
            Crawling around like a (female) baby all alone

3b) And when at the end of the round I found him
3c) And at the end of the round when I saw him

لقيت الضرب اغلى من الطريدي
            عصرت دمات عاطفتي وسقيتو

17:46 4a)[i] ṣarit dammāt ‘ātifī w-s’aytū
La’ayt-iḍ-ḍarīb ʿaghīlā min-i-ṭrīdī (#)
I wrung out the blood of my sympathy and gave him to drink
I found that hitting was more expensive than the prey

4b) I wrung out the blood of my sympathy and gave him to drink
4c) I squeezed out the blood of compassion and gave him to drink

And discovered the bullet was worth more than the prey

17:58 5a) Ōf.. Ōf..Nafakh ḥālū ‘inidma'\(^{140}\)-n-kabb zaytū…
[W] shamakh bū-l-ḥinn bi-jnāḥū [i]n-nbīdī (#)
Even though his oil was spilled
And paraded around, a robin with wine-colored wings

5b) Owf..Owf..He puffed himself up when his oil was spilled
5c) Owf.Owf.Even though his oil was spilled he puffed himself up

And paraded around, a robin with wine-colored wings

139 Zaghloul is saying that the round of ammunition necessary to kill him was more expensive than Mousa himself, in other words, the bullet was more valuable than the prey he could kill with it; it wasn’t worth shooting him.

140 In Ziadeh’s transcript ‘inidma (when) is given as بعدما ba’dma (after).

141 The common idioms “inkabb zaytū” (his oil was spilled) and خلص زيته “khiliṣ zaytū” (his oil was all used up) mean “He’s finished,” or even, “He died.”
6a) [iW] bidi-y’arrim ‘alā ‘atfāl baytū

Mtit muṭrib bi-iyyām-il-ḥaṣīdī (#)

6b) And he started heaping [himself] up on the children of his house

Like a singer in the days of harvest

6c) He started bragging before the children of his household

Like a singer at harvest time

18:18 7a) [iW] ta yitkhallaṣ min [i]ghrūrū da‘aytū

Cʻa ha-l-ḥafī, Cʻa ha-l-ʻarkī –ij-jīdī

7b) And in order for him to get rid of his vanity I invited him

To this party, to this new battle

7c) And to help him get over his vanity I invited him

To this party, to this new battle

142 Zaghloul again uses a word, μτηρβ, (singer/entertainer) used earlier by Mousa in Line 9 of his Fifth opening stanza: Ŭkh, init muṭrib maʻak jaw’it tijāra (Ookh..you’re a mere singer crooning with your jawqa-for-hire). In this way, Zaghloul returns the favor to Mousa, calling him a mere μτηρβ also. The image of a singer at harvest time is an interesting one. We can view the singer as being in a precarious situation; he can sing during harvest time, but what about the rest of the year? Also, the singer can be seen as lazy; he sings while others labor, doesn’t deserve credit for the bounty.
18:26  8a) ‘Ish-hadū ‘layyī-w-'a ha-l-ḥakī-l-ḥkaytū

8b) Bear witness to me and to the speaking I have spoken\(^{143}\)  On my hand\(^{144}\) be forbidden the tambourines of ma‘annā\(^{145}\)

8c) Bear witness, everyone, to the words I have spoken  And let my hands be forbidden from tapping the tambourine

9a) ‘Izā ma-b-bawwis-il-maghrūr ‘īdī (#)

9b) If I don’t make the vain one kiss my hand

9c) If I don’t make this conceited fool kiss my hand

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\(^{143}\) Again Zaghloul uses a pair of cognates for emphasis and for the musicality of the repeated sounds: ha-l-ḥakī-l-ḥkaytū (this speaking I have spoken).

\(^{144}\) This is another instance of an extra rhyme word added at the beginning of the hemistich (rather than the end). It is also the same word Zaghloul uses to end the stanza, thus giving the word ‘īdī (my hand) emphasis and drawing attention to the power of his own hands. This helps to solidify his argument that Mousa’s claim to victory in their last encounter is unfounded and if he won anything it was only because Zaghloul let him “by his own hand” and that instead Mousa will now be forced to “kiss his hand.”

\(^{145}\) When a poet raises and shakes or taps the tambourine, he indicates he is ready to take a turn. He may also tap the tambourine while singing or when closing a stanza or a turn. The tapping of the tambourine is part and parcel of the act of singing zajal. The mere carrying of the tambourine defines one as a poet of zajal.
Sixth Stanza [18:40-21:07]

وَبِنَاكِ بِيْتٍ عَالِٰبِرَ ارْبَعَ زَوَايَٰٓا

18:40  
1a) [iW] yā Mūsā-l-ḥażẓ ‘addamlak hadāyā
   [iW] banālak bayt ‘a-l-‘arba‘ zawāyā

1b) O Mousa, luck has presented you with gifts
   And built for you a house with four corners

1c) Luck has given you many gifts, Mousa
   And even built you a house with four solid walls

الكساكن عندما كنتوا عرايا

18:49  
2a) Naṣībak māt nisir-il-‘awwalānī
   L-kasākun ʿinidmā kintū ʿarāyā (#)

2b) [It was] Your luck the eagle of primary importance\(^{146}\) died,
   Who clothed you (plural) when you were naked

2c) It was bad luck for you when that eagle and frontrunner died
   Who clothed you and your ilk when you were naked

تا تحتك الشظايا بالشظايا

19:00  
3a) [iW] Naṣībak mā-l-taʿaynā b-jaww tānī
   Ta tiḥtakk-ish-shaẓāyā b-ish-shaẓāyā\(^{147}\)

3b) And your luck/fate, we did not meet in other circumstances
   The shrapnel would scrape against the shrapnel

3c) And it’s lucky for you we didn’t meet in another venue
   Where shrapnel would clank with shrapnel

\(^{146}\) The reference is to Rukuz.

\(^{147}\) Here is yet another example of Zaghloul’s use of word repetition for added emphasis and musicality.
19:07 4a) [W] Naṣībak baʿidmā fiḍyū-l-ʾanānī  
Lʿaytak min baʿāyāḥun baʿāyā١٤٨ (#)  
4b) And your luck/fate١٤٩ after the bottles were emptied  
I found you – a dreg among their dregs  
4c) It was your luck that when all the bottles were emptied  
I found you at the bottom, a dreg among the dregs  

5a) ‘Anā lammā waṭan killū daʾānī  
Ta ghannī b-il-madāyin w-il-ʾarāyā١٥٠  
5b) I, when the whole country invited me  
To sing in the cities and the villages١٥٠  
5c) As for me, when the whole country called on me  
To sing in the cities and the villages

١٤٨ Zaghloul again uses immediate repetition, emphasizing the word’s meaning (baʿāyā = dregs) and adding to the musicality of the line which he also extends with a long and beautiful melisma. He receives a loud applause for launching such an effective insult.

١٤٩ This is the third instance of the word Naṣībak (your luck/bad fortune/fate) at the start of a line. This is similar to the use of Ḍarūrī (it is necessary that) in Zaghloul’s Third Stanza. This “listing” strategy helps the poet compose numerous lines quickly and also has the rhetorical effect of emphasizing the particular word that starts the list. In the case of repeating Naṣībak (your luck/bad fortune/fate), Zaghloul emphasizes the notion that Mousa has only reached where he is by luck and now his luck has run out.

١٥٠ This is another example of a pairing of opposites (il-madāyin w-il-ʾarāyā = cities and villages) which the audience can easily predict, especially because it includes an end rhyme, and thus sing along with Zaghloul.
6a) Karāmit ʿayn wi-lfiy-l-ʿashʿarānī

6b) To honor of the eye\(^1\) of my blonde companion

6c) To honor the request of my blonde companion


7a) [iW] ‘abil ma-d-durr yikhla’ ʿan [i]lsānī

7b) And before jewels were born on my tongue

7c) And before jewels were born on my tongue

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\(^1\) i.e. to honor someone’s wishes, to be gracious

\(^2\) Another example of pairing of opposites (ish-shabāb iw lā-ṣ-ṣabāyā = the young men nor the young women).

\(^3\) An obvious reference to Zaghloul’s penname.
If they are shaken off they would build a palace

Their dust will be enough to build a palace

Lebanon cried out, how wonderful are these gifts!

In gratitude Lebanon cried out “How wonderful are these gifts!”

The Lebanese cedar tree (cedrus libani), which appears on the Lebanese flag, is the quintessential symbol of Lebanon. Lebanese forests are primarily populated by Lebanese cedars and Quercus libani, the Lebanon oak (sindyān), the two most familiar trees for the audience. Zaghloul is clearly identifying himself as Lebanese to the core.

The verb ātáyt (I gave) that begins the first hemistich is echoed in the cognate noun ātáyā (gifts) that ends the second hemistich.
10a) ‘izā sijjalt hawnī ¹⁵⁶ ʾiṣṭāwānī

10b) And if¹⁵⁷ I recorded here a record album

10c) And if I were to record a record album

11a) ‘Anā Yūsif ‘anā ‘Allāh-ṣṭāfānī

11b) I am Joseph¹⁵⁸ I am, God chose me

11c) I am Joseph, I am the one God chose

156 In Ziadeh’s transcript, سجّلت هوني (I recorded here) is given as سجّل بصوتي bsajjil b-ṣawtī (I record in my voice).

157 Beginning lines with the formulaic [iW] ‘izā (And if) provides another useful listing strategy. The conditional style is conducive to zajal poetics because once the conditional clause (hypothesis) is mentioned in the first hemistich; it anticipates the conclusion clause that will likely come in the second hemistich.

158 Zaghloul’s real name is Joseph al-Hashem. The biblical Joseph (Yusif in Arabic) he is referring to here is Joseph the husband of Mary, mother of Jesus.
20:19 12a) [iW] ‘izā Mūsā smīyyak ʾā zamānī
Byijī, ta shalḥū lawḥ-il-waṣāyyā (#)
12b) And if Mousa your namesake to my time/lifetime159
Comes, then I’ll swipe from him the tablet of commandments
12c) And if Moses your namesake stepped into the present
I’d swipe that tablet of commandments right out of his hands

20:29 13a) [iW] yā Zayn [i]Sh’ayb, yā rikn-il-mabānī
[W] yā bin Ḥamdān yā ṣa’r-il-manāyā
13b) And O Zayn Sh’ayb160, you cornerstone of buildings
And O son of Hamdan161, you hawk of fates of death
13c) O Zayn Sh’ayb, sturdy foundation and cornerstone
And you, son of Hamdan, hawk of death

159 Here Zaghloul reintroduces the connection he established earlier tying Mousa to Moses, taking the analogy a step further by identifying himself with Christ and Mousa again with the Jews.

160 Beginning with the mention of Zayn Sh’ayb in this hemistich, Zaghloul includes the names of each of the members of his jawqa in the succeeding lines. Just as Mousa ended his Iftitāhiyyi with an introduction by name of the members of his jawqa, Zaghloul now does the same, as is customary. As will become clear in the final clincher line, Zaghloul takes the opportunity to boast about his own team, threaten his opponents, and sound the alarm that the duel is about to begin.

161 Reference is to Ṭalīr Ḥamdān, another member of Zaghloul’s jawqa.
لا تهتموا بتحليل القضايا

20:37 14a) [iW] init yā Ḥarb, yā khaznī malānī
14b) And you, Harb\textsuperscript{162}, you full storehouse/treasure house/safe
14c) And you, Harb, storehouse of treasures

Don’t bother with analyzing matters
Don’t bother yourselves analyzing things

لا تهتموا بتحليل القضايا

20:44 15a) ‘Anā waḥdī ‘izā bisruj ḥiṣānī
15b) I by myself if I saddle my horse
15c) I alone, if I were to saddle my horse

With his saddle I will tie up all four mounts\textsuperscript{163}
I would tie up all four of their mounts

لا تهتموا بتحليل القضايا

20:52 16a) [iW] ʿanāṣir jaw’ Mūsā-l-Kisirwānī
16b) And the members of the jawqa of Mousa the Keserwani\textsuperscript{164}
16c) And the members of the jawqa of Mousa the Keserwani

Arrived in the evening as four shining knights

لا تهتموا بتحليل القضايا

\textsuperscript{162} Reference is to Edward Harb, the fourth member of Zaghloul’s jawqa.

\textsuperscript{163} The reference is to Mousa and the three members of his jawqa.

\textsuperscript{164} Zaghloul uses this place name tag meaning “the one from Keserwan (district in Mount Lebanon region Mousa hales from)”. It serves to contrast this Mousa with the Mousa (Moses) of biblical times that Zaghloul was likening him to previously. It has a belittling effect.
17 / وعا بكرا بيرجعوا اربع ضحايا

17a) [W] `a bukrā byirja`ū ‘arba` ḏaḥāyā (#)

17b) And in the morning they’ll go back [as] four victims/slaughtered animals/blood sacrifices

17c) But will return in the morning as four slaughtered victims
3.1.7. *Iftitāḥiyi* of Zaghloul al-Damour: Summary and Analysis

Zaghloul’s *Iftitāḥiyi* consists of six *qaṣīd* stanzas composed of 5, 7, 7, 7, 9, and 17 lines respectively, for a total of 52 lines. His *Iftitāḥiyi* lasts approximately eight minutes and 19 seconds. While Zaghloul’s *Iftitāḥiyi* consists of fewer stanzas, fewer total lines, and does not last as long as Mousa’s *Iftitāḥiyi*, each of Zaghloul’s lines lasts an average of roughly 9.5 seconds, which is slightly longer than Mousa’s average. The extra time per line in Zaghloul’s *Iftitāḥiyi* is likely due to his tendency to add vocal ornamentation at every long vowel and with emphasis at the beginnings or ends of lines and hemistichs. Perhaps Zaghloul’s greatest asset as a *zajal* poet is his beautiful singing voice which he never misses an opportunity to put on display and use to his advantage. He is famous for his voice and holds the record for the longest melisma. Poets use their voices and other non-verbal strategies for more than just buying time. The main objective, after all, is to gain favor with the audience. In addition to making sure the arguments are solid and interesting and whenever possible, witty, poets use their voices, faces, hands, and bodies to make themselves appealing to the audience. In an interview in *al-Mustaqbal* newspaper in 2003, Zaghloul states that a *zajal* poet’s success is “Forty percent poetry and sixty percent voice.” Poets take every opportunity possible to show off their voices with long and fancy *owfs*, long melismas, and other ornamentations. They are performers, after all, expressing every idea with talking hands and dancing eyebrows. They puff up their chests and dance in their seats as they sing. They smile and laugh and make eye contact with each other and with the audience and they comment on each other’s lines with exclamations like “*Ya salaam,*” “*Ya ‘ayn,*” and “*Tayyib,*” all of which translate to something like, “Oh wow!” or “Good one!”
In his Iftitāhiyyi segment, Zaghloul employed the following rhymes:

Stanza 1: Rhyme a = -yyī Rhyme b = -ādī Clincher = khayyī (my brother)
Stanza 2: Rhyme a = -īnī Rhyme b = -lā’ī Clincher = ḥazīnī (sad)
Stanza 3: Rhyme a = -ūnī Rhyme b = -nā Clincher = b-tinikrūnī (you deny me)
Stanza 4: Rhyme a = -yyī Rhyme b = -ṭla’ Clincher = l-‘ādiyyī (the matter)
Stanza 5: Rhyme a = -īdī Rhyme b = -aytū Clincher = ‘īdī (my hand)
Stanza 6: Rhyme a = -āyā Rhyme b = -ānī Clincher = dāhāyā (victims)

Again we see the presence of long vowel endings in all of the “a rhymes.” Moreover, in the first five of his six stanzas Zaghloul used a final long ī vowel for “rhyme a” and in both Stanzas 1 and 6 he used it for “rhyme b.” As mentioned earlier, the long ī is the first-person pronoun suffix meaning “my” or “me.” This ending is for nisba adjectives as well and will crop up again when the tā marbūṭa is pronounced with kasra and is extended to long ī due to its position at the end of a line. A quick look at the actual rhyme words reveals the following count:

- long ī as first-person pronoun suffix: 19 times
- long ī as nisba adjective suffix: 3 times
- long ī as feminine tā marbūṭa suffix: 25 times
- other: 4 times

It is remarkable that of the 51 rhyme words ending in ī, only four are not achieved by means of a suffix: tānī (second), ‘anānī (bottles), mūnī (meanings), and mabānī (buildings). It is also remarkable that over the span of approximately eight minutes, Zaghloul uses the first-person suffix nineteen times. This means he draws attention to himself with the
pronoun “my” or “me” at an average rate of a little more than twice a minute. Certainly this particular rhyme scheme loaded with first-person suffixes helps Zaghloul put himself in the limelight and convey to the audience his great importance and prominence as an individual. This is an idea which is initiated with his opening 12-second “Owf,” is developed in every stanza as he metaphorically equates himself to a variety of images (a poet-shepherd surrounded by herds of poet-sheep, a voice more explosive than the bomb dropped on sad Hiroshima, an affectionate mother caring for her infant through all hours of the night, a caretaker of orphans, an icon, a source of poetic provisions, a Christ-like figure whose dearest disciple denies him at dawn, a warrior capable of bringing down a mountain, a quintessential representative of Lebanon, a song bird, a namesake of Joseph who was chosen by God to raise Jesus), and is culminated in the final stanza when Zaghloul asserts that he alone could take on all four of his opponents and send them home as victims of his slaughter.

Over the course of his Iftitāhiyyi, Zaghloul also contrasts himself with Mousa by ascribing to his opponent a series of negative images. In particular, he implies Mousa is one of those herds of poets who passed like sheep to his left and to his right, accuses him of turning his back on him like Peter when he denied Christ, belittles him as needing all the support he can get just to begin to battle with Zaghloul, accuses him of being misguided and of having made false claims of victory at their last encounter, equates him with Moses and associates him with the Jews as destroyers of Christ, calls him a lost and lonely baby girl, claims he is less valuable than the bullet he would use to kill him, and as a vain fool whose luck has run out. In several instances, Zaghloul turns Mousa’s words and images against him, firing back with powerful insults. Clearly, now that Zaghloul’s Iftitāhiyyi has come to an end, the stage is set for the real duel to begin.
3.2. Taḥaddī: Verbal Duel Segment

At the Beit Mery contest, the Iftitāḥiyi qaṣīds delivered by jawqa lead poets Mousa Zoghayb and Zaghloul al-Damour were immediately followed by rounds of one-on-one duels between opposing members of each jawqa, conducted along the traditional ordering of turns based on seniority from least (rank four) to most experience (rank one)165. That is to say, following the Iftitāḥiyi segment, it is customary for the “fours” from each jawqa to duel each other, followed by the “threes,” and then the “twos,” before the “ones,” or jawqa leaders, take over once again for the duel finale and final closing qaṣīds. In the case of the Battle of Beit Mery, the first two poets to engage in a duel were Edouard Harb (Zaghloul’s jawqa) and Butrus Deeb (Mousa’s jawqa). These were followed by Jiryis al-Bustani (Mousa’s jawqa) and Talič Hamdan (Zaghloul’s jawqa), who were followed by Zayn Shāyb (Zaghloul’s jawqa) and Anis al-Faghali (Mousa’s jawqa). Finally, Zaghloul and Mousa returned to the spotlight to duel each other and deliver closing qaṣīds. This final duel, along with the lead poets’ closing qaṣīds, will be examined in detail in the next section of this study. But first some general remarks about the formal characteristics of the four duels and a quick summary of the preceding three duels are in order.

3.2.1. Verbal Duel: Formal Features

At the Beit Mery event, each pair of opponents followed a similar sequence of turns. They dueled back and forth with eight to nine short stanzas of the traditional maʾannā genre (more about this below) and closed their duels with two turns each of closing qaṣīds. The

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165 This ranking by seniority, which is certainly known well to the poets, is also clear to the audience as it is reflected in the order in which the names of the members of each jawqa are listed on flyers and posters advertising the zajal event.
closing qaṣīds were of the same form and rhyme scheme as the Iftitāhiyya qaṣīds of Mousa and Zaghloul described in detail earlier, though not nearly as long. Closing qaṣīds ranged from sixteen lines (shortest of the closing qaṣīds by the “fours”) to thirty-one lines (longest of the closing qaṣīds by the “twos”) per stanza. The shorter maʿannā stanza turns, by which the duel proper is characterized, ranged from four lines to eleven lines in length, though most were between six and eight lines long. Like the qaṣīd form, each line of the maʿannā stanza is composed of two hemistichs, but unlike the qaṣīd form, in the maʿannā form both hemistichs end with the same end-rhyme (rhyme a) throughout the stanza, that is, the sadr and ʿajz rhymes are identical throughout. However, the final line of the maʿannā stanza is distinguished from all the others by the introduction of a non-rhyme (rhyme x) at the end of its first hemistich (sadr). The final hemistich ends with a return to the original end-rhyme. The rhyme scheme of the maʿannā genre can be summarized as follows:

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<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
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</table>

Chorus:

| a | a |

Throughout the verbal duel, the final hemistich of each poet’s turn is immediately picked up by the riddādi (repeaters/chorus) who sing it twice to the accompaniment of tambourines and hand-held drums according to a set musical tune and rhythm. Once a poet has completed a turn, the riddādi (chorus) repeat the last hemistich two times. When the hemistich is sung by the chorus it is fitted into the music in a manner that gives rise to the insertion of extra vowels and
consequently extra syllables, so that it fits the musical tune, rhythm, and meter. The singing by
the chorus of the poet’s last hemistich helps the poet, his opponent, and the audience. The poets
are aided by hearing the musical tune sung and repeated, thus helping them to stay in tune, and
also by having their clincher lines repeated and emphasized. The chorus leads the musical
rendition for the audience to follow and sing along, allowing them to participate and enjoy the
moment while the poet’s opponent prepares to deliver a response.

It is worth noting that during the Beit Mery encounter, despite its lasting many, many
hours and going well into the early morning, the poets did not employ many of the large variety
of the zajal genres available to them. The reason for this resides in the heated nature of the
battle. The two jawqas had dueled previously, in particular almost a year earlier at Al-Mishrif, a
duel all of the poets alluded to in their Iftitāhiyyi qaṣīds. After the battle at Al-Mishrif, the poets
and their supporters were very vocal in the media and in the community at large about who had
won. Despite there not having been an official judging panel’s declaration of the winners, both
sides claimed victory. In preparation for the Beit Mery duel, a distinguished panel of judges was
invited to attend the duel and declare an official winner. During the ten months leading up to it,
zajal enthusiasts in Lebanon rallied behind their favorite jawqa, publicly declaring their
affiliation and support more so than for political candidates running for public office. According
to highly-acclaimed zajal poet Antoine Saadeh, with whom I have had many zajal-related
conversations since meeting him in Lebanon in 2009, during the Beit Mery era, if a supporter of
Mousa’s jawqa happened to find himself in the company of a supporter of Zaghloul’s jawqa, the
two would certainly indulge in insults and mockery and “would not be caught dead” seated
together. Thus, when the poets arrived at the Beit Mery contest on that hot July night back in
1971, it was after a long gestation period of stored up rivalry and anticipation. As Michel Ziadeh,
a main sponsor of the event and author of the book containing a transcript of the duel, described it as follows:

No sooner had the date of the contest at Beit Mery been announced for the evening of July 31, 1971, than people spilled forth like an ocean wave. Some were forced to abandon their cars and trek the remaining five kilometers to reach the Beit Mery Citadel by foot. The audience was in record attendance, estimated at thirty thousand spectators. The contest ended at five o’clock the next morning (Ziadeh 8).

Not only were the poets ready for battle and set on destroying each other on the stage, but their followers were equally enthusiastic to see their favorites’ opponents slaughtered. Throughout the long night, both the poets and the audience were on the edge of their seats, hanging on every word, responding with delight when their poets were especially clever or sang with beautiful, emotion-charged voices, certainly, but also when the opponents met each challenge boldly and wittily. This was a thrilling and memorable event. It was not an occasion to which oral poets had been invited to provide entertainment, as is more often the case in today’s zajal events taking place nowadays as the second decade of the third millennium unfolds. Today’s zajal occasions are not usually as heated and intense as the Beit Mery contest, and poets like to incorporate a wide variety of genres that feature quick, upbeat tunes, verbal tricks, and other livening tactics that help to keep the audience engaged. At Beit Mery, on the other hand, throughout the course of the evening the poets were intent on accomplishing the very serious business of ḍiṣābat al-maḍnā, “striking the meaning,” or “making a strong argument.” There was a lot at stake at Beit Mery, and thousands were watching with high expectations to see their favorites prevail, providing the perfect atmosphere to push the zajal poets to perform their art at new heights.
3.2.2. Verbal Duel Summary: Edouard Harb versus Butrus Deeb

Edouard Harb initiated the duel and Butrus Deeb closed it. Each poet took eight turns of short stanzas and then took two turns each of long stanzas of qaṣīd. The majority of short stanzas consisted of six lines each, but ranged from five to eight lines over the course of the duel. The long qaṣīd stanzas ranged between sixteen and eighteen lines each. Their duel lasted approximately 34 minutes.

Early in the duel, the theme of imprisonment versus freedom develops. Edouard argues on the side of imprisonment, offering the images of silos, wine barrels, secrets, and good homes as examples of prisons that are positive because of what they hold within them (grain for nourishment, wine to quench lovers’ lips, a promise kept for a friend, and well-mannered children). Butrus responds by arguing that the great people who come out of “good homes,” like the President of the Republic and other national heroes, don’t wander down the path to prison and if prison is to be the place for children (referring to Edouard’s previous line) then we should lock all the school doors shut. Edouard retorts by naming several national heroes who became heroes because they were sent to prison and that prison is only for the strong, unlike the weakling Butrus who “nobody’s ever heard of in school.” Butrus responds by arguing that Edward is wrong; prison is not the place for heroes but for criminals. The number of great men who ended up in prison is very small, whereas the number of criminals there is like counting grains of sand. And those great men who won Lebanon’s independence did so only after getting out of prison. The flag flaps for freedom, not imprisonment. Edouard offers new examples of positive forms of imprisonment, most notably the nine months of imprisonment in the mother’s womb, to which Butrus responds with the a list of items that must not be kept imprisoned: a flower’s fragrance, truth lest it be lost, light lest we become unable to see, an infant’s exit from his mother’s womb.
lest he be imprisoned too long and cause both his and his mother’s death. Other images offered by Edouard on the side of imprisonment: love as a tortuous prison whose doors were slammed shut by a beautiful brunette, flowers imprisoned in a flower pot, the alphabet imprisoned in the page of a book, a youthful spirit imprisoning youthfulness in the body despite the passing of years, prison is like a school run by nuns for the holy purpose of teaching purity, like the cloistering of monks, to worship the heavens. Other images offered by Butrus on the side of freedom: a man will do anything to break out of prison or to break the bonds of slavery, St. Sharbel took on his hermitage to escape man’s sinfulness and to seek his own eternal freedom, Gibran would not have written The Prophet had he not emigrated to America, the alphabet forged by Cadmus’s hand traversed the shores and the big blue sea, and if we had not set our minds free we never would have sent a man to the moon. This last image is delved into further in the closing qaṣīds. Edouard argues man would never have reached the moon had he not been imprisoned in a rocket ship. Butros concludes his first qaṣīd with a clincher line saying that heaven is not a prison, hell is a prison, and Edouard ought to go count himself among those evil-doing blasphemers imprisoned there. Edouard ends his second qaṣīd saying he would never lock the doors of prison because it makes criminals like Butrous pay for their crimes. Finally, Butros’s last argument is to tell Edouard he’s not leaving the duel until Edouard and his cronies are locked up in the prison of the Beit Mery fortress for breaking all the laws of maʿanna (zajal poetry).

3.2.3. Verbal Duel Summary: Jiryis al-Bustani versus Talīʿ Hamdan

Jiryis al-Bustani gave the opening stanza of the duel and Talīʿ Hamdan gave the closing stanza. Each poet took eight turns of short stanzas and then each took two turns of long stanzas of qaṣīd. Most of the short stanzas were seven or eight lines long, but ranged from six to as
many as eleven lines. Jiryis’ *qaṣīd* stanzas were twenty-two lines each; Tali’s were twenty-five and twenty-eight lines. Their duel lasted approximately 38 minutes.

The duel between Jiryis and Tali serves as an excellent example of boasting. They begin their duel with swords brandished, so to speak, each offering images of the bloody battle he is about to win. On Jiryis’s second turn he delivers some particularly clever and boastful lines in which he claims the sun will only rise if he commands it to and will fall to its knees before him if he so requests, he describes the rainbow as a mere ring around his pinky finger. The image of a piece of paper takes on particular significance over the course of the duel. Jiryis first introduces the image in his third turn when he calls Tali “a piece of paper among neglected papers,” to trivialize his importance as a poet. Tali responds by running with the paper image and turning it to his own advantage. Over the course of his turn, the paper is described as Jiryis’s death notice, a page from the Bible, and one of the famous hanging odes (*muʿallaqa*) that Tali dares Jiryis to emulate or himself be hanged. From this point, the hanging image is tied to religious references and national heroes. The images of the cedar tree (quintessential symbol of Lebanon) and the father gain prominence for several stanzas before the image of a bride develops. This eventually leads to an exciting exchange near the end of the duel beginning with Tali calling Jiryis “a girl,” only to have Jiryis recite the long list of important achievements and characteristics of famous females from Arabic literature and history.

### 3.2.4. Verbal Duel Summary: Zayn Shʿayb versus Anis al-Faghali

Zayn Shʿayb started the duel with Anis al-Faghali and Anis ended it. Each poet took nine turns of short stanzas and then two turns each of long *qaṣīd* stanzas. Most of the short stanzas were seven or eight lines long, but ranged from as few as four in Zayn’s opening turn to two ten-
line stanzas, one from each poet. Zayn’s qaṣīd stanzas were sixteen and twenty-four lines long; Anis’ were thirty-one and thirty lines each. Their duel lasted approximately 48 minutes.

Zayn has the reputation of being “sayyid al-marājil,” the master of bravado, the macho-man of daring. In this duel he begins by proclaiming that the fun and games are over, the “tweety birds” have sung their songs, those who have taken their turns managed to escape unharmed, but now the “eagle” who has been patiently waiting in the wings, the “’aṣṣāf il-ʾmār” (destroyer of lives; the executioner) has arrived. Whoever feels like being destroyed, let him come forth to battle me! Anis responds to this by saying he’s accustomed to Zayn and his empty dares and tells Zayn he should keep his distance, this battle’s snow is fiery flames, its kindling is devils, kings, slaves, mountains of flint and quarries of iron. He says to Zayn, “you call yourself an eagle? You’re going to shorten my life? Even if you had a hand as long as a day of hunger and as violent as Nero’s fist or as cruel as Abd al-Hamid (notorious Turkish Sultan), you’d be dead in your tracks before you could take one day from the life of the Sultan of Maʾanna!”

Zayn turns the image of Anis as a self-proclaimed “sultan” into “Sultan Ibrahim,” the Lebanese name for a popular, small and tasty kind of fish (named after the Ottoman sultan said to have liked it and eaten it in excess). He ends his turn saying he’s here to purify maʾanna from the “sultans of lying and swindling.” This type of name-calling continues, each poet bewailing his having to duel with such a lesser opponent and proclaiming the many ways each one will destroy the other. Eventually the insults become very personal. They sling accusations along religious and political lines, each one claiming to be the protector of both Christianity and Islam (regardless of his affiliation) and the most nationalistic of men while simultaneously accusing the other of blasphemy and of being in cahoots with national enemies. At one point, Zayn calls Anis a “westerner” who is diametrically opposed to himself, an “easterner” and an “Arab,” one of
those greats who in Jerusalem “built the Church upon the shrine and the Aqsa mosque with the blood of the wounded,” and who “built the house of Jesus and Muhammad,” unlike “you, Anis, and your ilk” who destroyed both those houses. To this Anis responds with the argument that the west has its good qualities and there are things to be learned from there and if we do not reconcile with them, all our houses will be lost to our children and generations to come. Zayn retorts by calling Anis a collaborator with “our enemies to the south,” and asks him why when the houses in the south were destroyed he didn’t open up his own home to the women and children. At this point it becomes very personal when Anis brings up the fact of Zayn’s many wives and children. Zayn responds by boasting about his having “planted the lands” for the aggrandizement of Lebanon, to build a “Grand Lebanon,” as he puts it. Anis answers this with the argument that it is the quality and not the quantity of children that builds a nation. He calls each of Zayn’s children examples of what comes of “dough balls with no yeast.” They turned out to be “bodyguards for tough guys, criminals, outlaws, and thieves.” None of them has ever even heard of Shakespeare or the highly regarded pre-Islamic poet Imru’ al-Qays or Jarir, the famous Ummayad poet, Anis says, and states that these are not the types of children we need to build up our country. We need educated, open-minded men, and if all we get instead are the progeny of Abu Ali (Zayn’s nickname) then Lebanon is in deep trouble! In the closing qaṣīds, they continue to argue this point. Zayn delivers a long list of great deeds by great “Eastern” and Arab historical figures, leading to his reiteration that he and his children are all descendents of that greatness. Furthermore, he is the “father” who adopted all the “eagles of poetry” under his wing on the stage of zajal. His children were reared on the art of Muslims and Christians, and there is not a single poet who raised his head with pride whom I did not teach to sing and provide a model for. At this point, Anis belittles Zayn’s claim to poetry and crowns himself as the King
of *zajal* and *ma'anna*. The duel ends along the themes of child-rearing, reaping what you sow, and with both poets continuing to boast about themselves while simultaneously slinging bigger and bigger insults at the other.
3.3. Verbal Duel between Zaghloul al-Damour and Mousa Zoghayb: Transcript, Transliteration, Trot, and Translation

3.3.1. First Exchange

3.3.1.1. Zaghloul

1) هلّق رح نرجّع لعينيها البها

 نعست نجوم الليل

 مدري شو بها

2) The stars look sleepy, I wonder what’s wrong

 Let me put the brilliance back into their eyes

3) وي كل صدر منا قد صدر المنتهى

 يا دير قول لقلعتك نحنا لها

4) O monastery, tell your fortress we are on its side

 And each chest of ours is as vast as the horizon

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166 It is to be noted that the repeated word ṣadr, meaning “breast” is also the term used for the first hemistich of a line of poetry. So when Zaghloul states “each ṣadr from us” it not only means each of the poets in his jawqa, but also each line of verse. In the second instance, ṣadr-il-muntahā, literally “the ṣadr of infinity,” the word is being used figuratively as something vast and huge.
وشفقت عيون السبع عا عيون المهى

21:34 3a) [B]ḥaflit il-mishrif bi-d-dala\textsuperscript{c} Mūsā –l-tahā

3b) At “Mishrif" with pampering Mousa entertained himself

3c) At Mishrif Mousa got carried away doting on himself

And the lion’s eyes took pity on the doe’s eyes\textsuperscript{167}

And the lion’s eyes took pity on the doe

ودك تلاقي بعكس ما القلب اشتهى

21:44 4a) [W]il-yawm yā Mūsā iza-d-dāhī dahā\textsuperscript{168}

4b) And today, Mousa, if catastrophe falls

4c) But today, Mousa, if calamity runs its course

You want/need to find the opposite of the heart’s desire

You’ll find the opposite of your heart’s desire

تا شوف روحك فاصلي وكل شي انتهى

21:53 5a) Mish raḥ [i]mninhī ma\textsuperscript{c}rakitnā-l-fālī

5b) We will not end our decisive battle

5c) Our decisive battle will not end

Until I see your soul torn apart and everything come to an end

Until I see your soul separated and everything finished

\\textsuperscript{167} Zaghloul is associating himself with the lion and Mousa with the doe.

\\textsuperscript{168} Zaghloul once again uses cognates: dāhī (catastrophe) dahā (attacks; falls).

\\textsuperscript{169} Zaghloul incorporates a pun by using the word fālī to mean “decisive” in the first hemistich and “separated” in the second hemistich.
Choral Refrain\textsuperscript{170}:

\[\text{22:02} \]

\(\text{تا شوف روحك فاصلي وكل شي انتهى} (\text{twice})\)

Until I see your soul separated and everything finished

\[\text{Until I see your soul torn apart and everything come to an end}\]

\[\text{3.3.1.2. Mousa}\]

\[\text{رجعوا الليالي يتوجوا فيكي الملك}\]

\[\text{22:22} \]

1a) \(\text{Оkh...i’tazzī ya ‘al’it Bet Miri w ḏawwī-l-ḥalak}\)

1b) \(\text{Owxh. Be proud Beit Mery citadel and ignite the pitch dark}\)

1c) \(\text{Oxkh. Be proud, Beit Mery castle, and light up the darkness}\)

\[\text{Rij’ū-l-layālī ytawwjū fīki-l-malak}\]

\[\text{The nights have returned to crowning in you the king}\]

\[\text{The nights are back to crown the king within your walls}\]

\textsuperscript{170} Throughout the verbal duel, once a poet has completed a turn, the \textit{riddādi} (chorus) repeats the last hemistich two times. When the hemistich is sung by the chorus it is fitted into the musical rhythm in a manner that gives rise to the insertion of extra vowels and consequently extra syllables, so that it fits the musical meter. In this first example, Zaghloul’s hemistich with its ten syllables is expanded to fifteen when sung by the chorus. The singing by the chorus of the poet’s last hemistich helps the poet, his opponent, and the audience. The poets are aided by hearing the musical tune sung and repeated, thus helping them to stay in tune, and also by having their clincher lines repeated and emphasized. The chorus leads the musical rendition for the audience to follow and sing along, allowing them to participate and enjoy the moment while the poet’s opponent prepares to deliver a response.
22:38 2a) Zaghlūl shaṭṭib ʕā fajir musta’balak

Ha-l-fāṣli sayf-il-faṣil ʕā mafṣalak

That separation the sword of separating on your joint[s]

2b) Zaghloul, scratch out on the dawn of your future

That separation, that sword severing your limbs

2c) Zaghloul, on the dawn of your future scratch out

ما استدركك عالدير حتى يدللك

3 3a) [i]L-bakkāk bi-l-Mishrif ʕā ʕatbit manzalak

Ma-stadrajak ʕa-d-dayr ḫatta ydallilak

3b) He who made you weep at Mishrif at the doorstep of your home

Did not allure you to the monastery to pamper you

3c) He who made you cry on your own doorstep at Mishrif

Didn’t draw you to the monastery to pamper you

صرنا قلاع تنين نتحدى الفلك

4 4a) Dāʾīk ‘alīa [i]w darib ha-l-ʕalīa salak

Ṣirna ‘lāa [i]tnayn nithādda-l-falak

4b) The one calling you is a fort and the road to this fort he trod

We have become two fortresses challenging the stars

4c) Yours truly is a fortress and trod the path to this fortress

Now we are two fortresses challenging the stars

Mousa uses the word faṣli (introduced by Zaghloul in line 5 of his preceding turn) and adds two cognates: faṣil (separating) and mafṣal (joint). This is an example of how, during the verbal duel, poets take particular words and images and swat them back and forth at each other in a type of volley. The audience responds with gleeful applause at such moments, delighted by the word play and verbal attack.
5a) W ma ḏall ghar tikhtār `alʿa mnit-tnayn

5b) And nothing remains but for your to choose a fortress from the two

5c) All you have to do is choose one of the two fortresses

Choral Refrain:

(twice)

W tdi’ ’[i] rā sak [i] maṭ raḥ- i-l- ‘ah[i] wan i lak (twice)

And bang your head wherever is easiest for you

And bang your head on whichever one is easier
Zaghloul opens the duel with a five-line stanza of maʾannā. His rhyme, which in the maʾannā form is maintained at the end of every hemistich of the stanza except for the penultimate one, is -hā. This particular rhyme is conducive to oral composition since it is the feminine singular suffix pronoun meaning “her,” “it,” “its,” and when referring to non-human plurals, “them,” or “their.” However, of the nine instances of the end-rhyme -hā in Zaghloul’s five lines, only two feature hā as a pronoun suffix: line 1 first hemistich: shū bihā (what’s wrong with them); and line 2 first hemistich: niḥnā lihā (we are for it). All the others are nouns or verbs that happen to end with this sound: l-bahā (brilliance); il-muntaḥā (infinity); l-tahā (entertained himself); il-mahā (the doe); dahā (fell); ishtahā (desired); ntaḥā (ended).

Zaghloul’s maṭlaʿ, or opening line, which he delivers with characteristic vocal virtuosity, offers beautiful poetic imagery as well. It has been two hours or so since he and Mousa sang their opening qaṣīds. He and his jawqa and the audience have been engaged in the intense duels between the other three pairs of poets and fatigue has undoubtedly begun to set in. When Zaghloul describes the stars as looking sleepy, he makes a subtle metaphoric equation between the stars in the night sky and the eyes of the audience members on the ground. In effect, he comes back to the stage with fresh energy to awaken the listeners and heal them of their ailments with his poetry. In the remaining lines of his opening stanza, Zaghloul wastes no time turning his attention to Mousa and launching an attack. He begins by allying himself and his companions with Beit Mery, and describes his companions as having chests “as vast as the horizon.” He contrasts himself as “a lion” with Mousa as “a doe,” and reuses the eye image from the opening line to do so (the lion’s eyes took pity on the doe’s eyes). He brings up the previous battle at Mishrif again, casting himself as having allowed Mousa to gain some points on him out
of pity and hospitality. This time, however, there will be no sympathy, because Zaghloul has
come to tear Mousa to pieces.

Zaghloul’s imagery is violent from the start in this opening stanza, and he adds force to
the imagery with effective word play. In line 4, when he mentions the calamity about to befall
Mousa, he uses cognates (dāhī and dahā) and in the two hemistichs of line 5 he incorporates a
pun on the repeated word fāṣlī (decisive/separated). In addition to the imagery and wordplay,
Zaghloul’s voice is a constant weapon he brandishes at every line and never wastes an
opportunity to show off.

Mousa replies with a matching five-line stanza of maʿannā. His rhyme is -lak, the last
part of which is also a pronoun suffix, ak, meaning “you” or “your”. Of his nine -lak rhymes,
five of them are of this type, including the end rhyme of the final clincher hemistich that is sung
twice by the chorus between turns. These are found in line 2, first hemistich, musta’balak (your
future); line 2, second hemistich, mafṣalak (your joints); line 3, first hemistich, manzalak (your
home); line 3, second hemistich, ydallilak (pamper you), and line 5, second hemistich, ilak (for
you). The remaining rhymes are nouns and verbs: ḥalak (pitch darkness), malak (king), salak (he
trod), and falak (the stars).

Like Zaghloul, Mousa delivers a beautifully poetic maṭlaʿ filled with imagery about the
darkness of the night. He addresses Beit Mery castle with pride and respect and metaphorically
equates himself with the “king being crowned within its walls,” as in days of old. Mousa then
immediately turns his attention to striking back at Zaghloul and does so with some violent
imagery of his own. In line 2 he threatens Zaghloul with a “decisive sword” that will “sever his
limbs,” and at the end of the stanza gives Zaghloul a choice of hard places on which to “bash his
head.” Mousa responds to Zaghloul’s mention of the previous battle at Mishrif by insistently claiming victory there and emphasizing the location as having been on Zaghloul’s “own doorstep.”

Mousa’s word choices and word play are also very effective. In the second hemistich of line 2, Mousa repeats Zaghloul’s word ṣīlī (from Zaghloul’s line 5). Mousa uses the word as a noun meaning “separation,” or “comma,” which differs from Zaghloul’s usage as the adjective “decisive.” Though spelled differently (the noun with feminine ending, the adjective with nisba ending) they are pronounced the same way in Lebanese dialect. Mousa then adds two cognates to the word game: ṣīl (separation, in the phrase sayf-īl-ṣīl, the sword of separation, which incidentally offers an additional layer of visual imagery since a sword might also be seen to resemble a comma, another meaning of ṣīlī); and ṣīs (joint, in the phrase about separating Zaghloul’s joints/limbs). This is a good example of how particular words and images that are introduced by one poet are often repeated and extended by the other poet as a way of retorting or negating or twisting his opponent’s words against him. Or, the poet will expand on a word or image as a way of showing off his own verbal skills and gaining points with the judges and the crowd, as this kind of word play always draws applause and excitement from the audience. Sometimes these repeated words and images develop into major themes that are carried for several stanzas. In this first exchange, we see that the word ṣīlī was introduced by Zaghloul in his clincher hemistich and that this same word was picked up, repeated and extended by Mousa in his second line. Other repeated words and images include the town names Beit Mery and Mishrif, the words for monastery and fortress/citadel, and the images of stars and the night sky.
3.3.2. Second Exchange

3.3.2.1. Zaghloul

وضيفي انت كنت وانا لضيفي فدا

23:33 1a) Il-Mishrif yā Mūsā kan ilī fīhā ṣadā
W ḍayfī init kint w anā l-ḍayfī fidā
And my guest you were and I for my guest am a sacrifice

1b) [At] Mishrif, Mousa, I had there a resounding echo
You were my guest there and for a guest I will sacrifice all

1c) I made a resounding echo at Mishrif, Mousa
You were my guest there and for a guest I will sacrifice all

23:46 2a) [i]Bti’dir ʿa baytī tzūrnī-l-yawm w ghadā
Bi’millak [i]mnīl-‘alb tirwī’a w ghadā
You can to my home visit today and tomorrow
I will make you from the heart breakfast and lunch

2b) You can to my home visit today and tomorrow
I will make you from the heart breakfast and lunch

2c) You can visit me at my home today and any day
I’ll make you breakfast and dinner from the heart

172 Zaghloul uses the same word, ghadā, at the end of both hemistichs of this line, the first time using the meaning “tomorrow” and the second time using the meaning “lunch”.

173 When Zaghloul says “from my heart” he means it figuratively, as in “from the bottom of my heart” or “wholeheartedly.” It could also be meant literally, as if he is offering his own heart as breakfast and lunch.
3a) Lākin bi-'alācit Bet Mirī s-hām-ir-radā

But at the fortress of Beit Mery the arrows of ruin

Will strike you as much as the expanse is long

3b) But here in Beit Mery the arrows of ruin

Will strike you as deeply as the expanse is wide

3c) But here in Beit Mery the arrows of ruin

سكتت ووقفت من فزعها عا حده

It stood up in silent fright at finding itself all alone

4a) Di‘ayt (a-l-‘alāc w ‘ilit wayn-il-‘idā

I knocked on the fortress and I said where are the enemies

It was silent and stood from its fright aside

4b) I knocked on the fortress and I said where are the enemies

4c) I knocked on the fortress and said, “Bring on the enemies!”

Zaghloul picks up the verb Di‘ayt, which here means “I knocked,” from Mousa’s final hemistich in his previous turn in which he told Zaghloul he should tdi’ (bang) his head on one the fortress of his choosing.

In Ziadeh’s transcript, ‘alācit Bet Mirī (fortress of Beit Mery) is given as haflit Bet Mirī (party/zajal party of Beit Mery).
24:16 5a) W[i] rji’t lamma-l-khawf ‘a-l-‘al‘a badā
5b) And I returned when fear on the fortress appeared
5c) When that fear appeared on the fortress I went back

24:24 5a) W[i] smi‘it min rāsak178 šadā jāwab w ‘āl
5b) And I heard from your head an echo answered and said
5c) I heard an echo ring out from your head which said:

 فلاً اللي كانوا هون مش باقي حدا
24:16 Da’‘ayt fīk w rāḥit-id-da’‘a sidā176
Knocked on you and the knock177 went in vain
And knocked on you, but the knock had been in vain

5c) When that fear appeared on the fortress I went back
And knocked on you, but the knock had been in vain

Flu-lli-kānū hawn mish bā’ī ḥadā
They who were here have gone no one is left
Everyone took off, not a single soul is left

176 Note that Zaghloul pronounces the word sudā as sidā to rhyme with the previous line ending in hidā. All the rhymes in this stanza end either with idā or adā, but not udā. Therefore, Zaghloul pronounced sudā as sidā. Perfect example of poetic license.

177 Here Zaghloul again repeats the verb Di’‘ayt, (I knocked) twice in this hemistich.

178 The word rāsak (your head) is another word taken from Mousa’s previous turn and slung back at him. Remember that Mousa told Zaghloul to choose which fortress he preferred to bash his head against at the end of his last turn.
Choral Refrain:

(Choir 1) فَلَا الَّذِينَ كَانُوا هُمُ الْمُحْضَرُونَ بَلْ هُمُ الْمُخْلُصُونَ

(Choir 2) They who were here have gone no one is left

Everyone took off, not a single soul is left

3.3.2.2. Mousa

كنت الاله لشعرك وكنت النبي

1. (Choir 1) al-falā ilāh il-shāri bi-shi‘rī muṣ‘abī

1b) Owkh..O Mishrif, you who were of my poetry enamored

I was the god of your poetry and I was the prophet

1c) Owkh..Mishrif, you who adored my poetry

I was the god of your poetry and I was its prophet

Note the major discrepancy between Ziadeh’s transcript and the recorded poetry. In the transcript this line is given as: شعر الاله بارضك وشعر النبي Shī‘r il-ilāh bi-arḍik w shi‘r-in-nabī meaning “The poetry of God in your land and the poetry of the prophet.”
25:05  2a) Da‘ayt rāsak fī drūc mkahrabī

           W wā‘it w ḥṣadt-in-natījī-l-mir‘ibī

           And you woke up and reaped the frightening result

2b) You [Zaghloul] banged your head\(^{180}\) on electrified sheilds

           And you woke up and reaped the frightening result

2c) Zaghloul, you bumped your head on electric sheilds

           And woke up to reap a horrifying result

25:14  3a) Rāsī w imm-id-dahar ikhwī yā ghabī

           Jābūl-barī‘ w-ir-ra‘d w-il-layl-il-‘abī

           They brought lightning, thunder and the proud night

3b) My head\(^{181}\) and the mother of endless time are siblings, Stupid

           They brought lightning, thunder and the proud night

3c) My head and the mother of endless time are siblings, Fool

           They brought lightning, thunder and the proud night

25:23  4a) W-il-baṭāsh [w[i] šmūd-ish-shfār-ît-ṭayyibī

           W rīḥ-il-‘awāṣif w-il-‘a’il w-il-mawhabī

           And the wind of tempests and intelligence and talent

4b) And violence and the steadfastness of sharp\(^{182}\) blades

           And the wind of tempests and intelligence and talent

4c) And violence and the enduring sharp blades

\(^{180}\) Here we have the image of “banging your head” repeated once again.

\(^{181}\) Here Mousa takes up the image of the “head” and begins to turn it in his own favor in the coming lines.

\(^{182}\) Tayyib (kind, delicious, sweet) is an uncommon modifier for “blades.” In this context it means “sharp.”
5a) [i]W tā tshūf wan rāḥū bi-da’a’ msarsabī
5b) And for you to see where they went in a worried blow
5c) And so you could see where they went in a worried blow

6a) W-il-baṭish yiṣrukh yā riyyāḥ [i]t’ahhabī
6b) And violence shouts, “O winds, prepare yourselves!”
6c) And violence shouted, “O winds, prepare yourselves!”

7a) W rāḥ-iṣ-ṣmūd ‘abl-it-tahaddī yikhtibī
7b) And steadfastness went before the challenge to hide itself
7c) And before the duel steadfastness hid itself

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183 Another repetition of this word/image = 'da’a (hit, blow). This time it is used to extend the image of banging the head on electric sheilds introduced in line 2.

184 Mousa remixes the images of lightning, thunder, and night, which he introduced earlier in line 3.

185 The words for “violence” and “winds” are repeated here. These images were introduced in line 4.

186 Mousa reuses the word/image for “talent” which was introduced in line 4 as well.
8a) W ma ḏall ghayr-il-ʿaʿil nāṣiblak sharak
In order to finish with you with the final try

8b) And nothing but brains stayed to lay a snare for you
And finish you off at the final ordeal

8c) Brains was all that remained to lay a snare for you
And finish you off at the final ordeal

Choral Refrain:

(Choral Refrain)

26:03 Tā yintihī minnā bī-ākhīr tajribī (twice)
In order to finish with you at the final test

And finish you off at the final ordeal

---

Mousa reuses the word/image “brains” also introduced in line 4. This completes a very clever strategy used by Mousa in this stanza in which he begins by listing those items “his mind and the mother of endless time brought (invented).”
3.3.2.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Second Exchange [23:33 – 26:19]

Zaghloul’s second turn is a six-line stanza of maʿannā featuring the end rhyme -dā.

Unlike the rhymes of the previous stanzas, this one is not a grammatical suffix of any sort. Most of the rhyme words in this stanza are nouns: ṣadā (echo); fidā (sacrifice); ghadā (tomorrow/lunch); radā (ruin); il-madā (the expanse); il-ʾidā (the enemies); ħidā (solitude); ḥadā (anyone); one is a verb: badā (appeared); and one is an adverb: sidā (uselessly). Zaghloul’s pronunciation of the word sudā (or sudan in Fuṣḥā, meaning “uselessly” or “in vain”) as sidā provides us with an example of poetic license. Zaghloul pronounces it this way in order not to disrupt the pattern of short vowels preceding the end-rhyme –dā, whereby all of the rhymes end with either -adā or -idā.

In terms of word play in this stanza, Zaghloul delivers a much-quoted line, which pivots on a homonym pun on the word ghadā: [cue to 23:46]

بتقدر عا بيتي تزورني اليوم وغدا
[1]Btiʾdir ʾa baytī tzūrnī-l-yawm w ghadā

You can visit my home today and tomorrow I’ll make you from the heart breakfast and lunch

More impressive, perhaps, is the craft with which Zaghloul has constructed this stanza. Zaghloul frames his turn with one important goal: to take the head-bashing image of Mousa’s previous clincher line and transform it into the new image of Mousa’s empty head. With his clincher line already in mind, he sets the stage with each preceding line and hemistich, beginning with the echo image in the first hemistich. Zaghloul continues to insist that at Mishrif he was being a generous host, willing to sacrifice anything for his guest, even letting him devour his own heart. This is in contrast with the peril Mousa can expect to encounter at the Beit Mery fortress. Next,
Mousa’s image of “bashing” Zaghloul’s head against the fortress is echoed in Zaghloul’s “knocking” on the fortress and is brilliantly transformed into the witty image of the fortress standing up in fright at finding itself all alone, that is, without any warriors to defend it. In the next line, Zaghloul goes in for the kill, so to speak, and creates a perfect metaphorical equation between the echo of his knocking on the empty fortress and the echo of his knocking on Mousa’s empty head. The fortress is empty of warriors and Mousa’s head is void of ideas.

Mousa’s response is an eight-line stanza that utilizes the rhyme –bī. The ī sound at the end of a word is quite common in Lebanese dialect, making it conducive to rhyming and allowing Mousa to quickly construct several lines. It is the feminine suffix, tā’ marbūṭa, found on nouns and adjectives and pronounced ī in Lebanese dialect, and is also the nisba (relative) adjective ending ī used for many adjectives in Arabic that are formed from nouns. The ī ending is also the first-person suffix pronoun meaning my or me, and it is the second person feminine verb suffix for imperative and present tense verbs as well. Certainly Mousa’s choice of rhyme enables him to easily extend the number of lines in this stanza. Of Mousa’s fifteen rhyme words in this stanza, ten can be classified into one of the grammatical categories listed. Nine are nouns or adjectives that end with the feminine suffix: mu‘jabī (enamored), mkahrabī (electrified), mir’ibī (frightening), tayyibī (sweet/sharp), mawhabī (talent), msarsabī (worried), maktabī (library), lāhibī (flaming), tajribī (try/attempt); and one is an imperative verb: t’ahhabī (prepare yourselves). The remaining rhymes are nouns, verbs, and adjectives ending with –bī: nabī (prophet), ghābī (stupid), ‘ābī (proud), ʻābī (thick), and yikhtibī (hides itself).

Mousa begins his turn by addressing the town of Mishrif once again and boasting as its “god” and “prophet” before turning his attention back to addressing Zaghloul. The images of head-bashing and electricity introduced in previous stanzas reappear in his second line when he
describes Zaghloul as having hit his head on a live wire. Mousa then tackles Zaghloul’s accusation of being empty-headed by claiming that his “head and the mother of endless time” are siblings, and furthermore, Mousa transfers the empty head accusation to Zaghloul, bluntly calling him “stupid.” Beginning in the second half of line 2, Mousa introduces a series of powerful items he has “brought” into being with his sibling “the mother of endless time”: lightning, thunder, prideful night, violence, durable sharp blades, gusts of tempests, brains, and talent. In the successive lines leading up to the clincher line 8, Mousa describes a series of events leading to the dispatching of all the items except “brains,” (i.e. Mousa’s brains), which he says have stayed behind to lay a snare for Zaghloul and deliver the final blow. This completes a very clever zajal strategy used by Mousa in this stanza. Mousa’s use of the word Jābū (they brought) in line 2 resonates with a particular type of zajal game called “Jib-li b-jib-lak” meaning literally, “You bring me, I’ll bring you.” In this game, each poet delivers a stanza starting with the phrase “Jib-li something” and ending with “B-jib-lak its opposite.” Usually poets are very creative in the types of “somethings” they use to fill in the blanks, most often items that are impossible to get, such as, “Bring me fire from the waters and I’ll bring you softness from the rock.” Or as in these examples as quoted to me in a 2008 interview in Dar Ishmezzine, Lebanon, with the village poet Toufic Ābdō (aka: Bilbul al-Koura (Robin of the Koura)), the leader of al-Jawqa al-Lubnāniyyi:

Poet, you claim to be an artist And I’ll bring you a 3-day-old boy
So bring me from “white” some “brown” Who can play music, and sing and dance

يا شاعر كنك رسام بجبلك ابن 3 أيام
Poet, you claim to be an artist And I’ll bring you a 3-day-old boy

جبلي نار من التلجات
Poet, you claim to be an artist And I’ll bring you a 3-day-old boy

مشرورين على صنين
Poet, you claim to be an artist And I’ll bring you a 3-day-old boy

تصريف شهر بنتورين
Poet, you claim to be an artist And I’ll bring you a 3-day-old boy

بجبلك بلدة القيادات
Bring me fire from the ice and snow
And I’ll bring you the town of Qbayat
So it can summer in Tannourine

جبلي نابليون بالذات
يرجع يعشق جوزفين
بالذات عالأرض هدية مني

Bring me Napoleon in the flesh
And I’ll bring you all the stars
To fall in love with Josephine once again
Down to earth, a little present to you from me

Poets will sometimes go on for hours with this. Mousa frames his turn here by “bringing’” a number of images (lightning, thunder, night, violence, steadfastness, winds, brains, and talent) and then sending all of them away except one (brains) that will be the magic weapon used to destroy his opponent.
3.3.3. Third Exchange

3.3.3.1. Zaghloul

26:20  1a) Mūsā wa’a‘ b-il-fakhkh w'[i] rfā‘ū [i]nmaḥū

Yā wayl-hun shū tmarjaḥū w shū tsharshaḥū

1b) Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies were obliterated

Pity them how they swung and became a laughing stock

1c) Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies have been wiped out

A pity how they swung and became a laughing stock
Mūsā wa’a b-il-fakhkh w[ī] rřā’ū [i]nmaḥū

Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies were obliterated

Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies have been wiped out

Yā wayl-hun shū tţawţahū

Pity them how they lost their balance and swung

A pity how they lost their balance and swung

Bil-kād bin-nāḍūr ti’dir tilmaḥū

Barely with binoculars can you see him

You can barely see him with binoculars

Zaghloul begins to repeat his first line, which is something poets often do during the course of a duel. While repeating the line the poet is able to work out the details of his stanza without allowing there to be a silent pause that would interrupt the flow of the singing. In this case, when Zaghloul repeats his first line, he changes the words in the second hemistich as noted below. Ziadeh’s transcript does not reflect the repetition of lines and gives the second hemistich as Yā dill-hun shū tţawţahū w shū tmarjahū, which does not quite match up to either of the two versions sung by Zaghloul on the first delivery or on repetition.

Another voice can be heard shouting “tmarjahū” here, presumably to draw Zaghloul’s attention for having said “tţawţahū” instead of “tmarjahū” as he had on the first go. Zaghloul responds by using “tmarjahū” now as the rhyme word, thus changing another word from the original utterance. As it turns out, tţawţahū (to teeter) and “tmarjahū” (to sway back and forth) are a synonymous pair and go well together.
1) They’re tired, Mousa, the people and are embarrassed.

2) Of this explanation about brains you are explaining.

3) *This explanation of yours about brains*

They’re tired of it, Mousa, and embarrassed for you.

4) If you continue adding this account and subtracting it

I will be forced to the world your register to open.

5) Let the libraries at our books rejoice.

They who placed their faith in your talents did not gain a thing.

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190 This line was left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.

191 Note Zaghloul’s use of the idiom “add and subtract.” The idiomatic pair makes it easy for the poet to express the notion that no matter how many angles his opponent uses to analyze the matter, it’s going to be in vain.
27:25 6a) W ʿawwid ifkārak bil-waḥî yitsalaḥū
Familiarize your thoughts with inspiration to be armed
By setting traps the war of zajal you cannot win

6b) Accustom your thinking to be armed with inspiration
Setting traps won’t help you win the war of zajal

6c) تا يحط من حولو الشرك ما بنصحو
Accustom your thinking to be armed with inspiration
Setting traps won’t help you win the war of zajal

27:36 7a) Il bi-ykūn ʿindū ʿa’il šāgh [i]b-maṭrāḥū
He who has a sound mind in its place
For him to place around him a trap I don’t advise him

7b) Ta yḥuṭṭ min ḥawlu-sh-sharak mā binṣaḥū
Whoever has a sound mind in its right place
I wouldn’t advise him to place traps all around himself

7c) لكن انت عن قصد حطيت الشرك
Whoever has a sound mind in its right place
I wouldn’t advise him to place traps all around himself

27:44 8a) Lākin init ʿan ʿaṣid ḥatṭayt-ish-sharak
But you on purpose you placed the trap
Better we don’t reach the hidden thing and expose it

8b) But you on purpose you placed the trap
Better we don’t reach the hidden thing and expose it

8c) So we wouldn’t find your secret and expose you

192 This line was also left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.
Choral Refrain:

احلى ما نوصل للمهخبى ونفضحو
(twice)

27:53

أحلى ما نوصل للمهخبي ونفضحو (twice)

Better we don’t reach the hidden thing and expose it

So we wouldn’t find your secret and expose you

3.3.3.2. Mousa

هي حكمة الحياة اللي بدها تفتري

28:10

1a) Ōkh...Zaghlūl lā tghirrak nuʿūmit mazharī

Hay ḥikmit-il-ḥayyi-llī bad-hā tiftirī

1b) Owkh..Zaghloul don’t deceive you my soft appearance

This is the wisdom of the snake that wants to invent lies

1c) Owkh...Don’t let my tender appearance deceive you, Zaghloul

That is what we should learn from the conniving snake

بتضل تتفيا بكرسة منبري

28:21

2a) In⁰⁹³ shaddak maghnaṭīs-il-mushṭārī

Bit-ḍāll titfayyā b-kirsit manbarī

2b) If it pulls you the magnetism of Jupiter

You will still be in the shade of the chair of my pulpit

2c) Even if the magnetism of Jupiter pulls you in

You’ll still find yourself shaded by my throne up on the stage

---

⁰⁹³ There is a discrepancy between Ziadeh’s transcript: ان جذبك ان شدك مغنطيس المشتري (If it attracts you and pulls you the magnetism of Jupiter) and what is heard on the recording, Kan shaddak (Had pulled you). Most likely, Mousa says “In kan shaddak” (If it pulled you) though “In” (If) is not audible.
فيه المعري وبن برد والبحتري

3) وما بسيج على عقل شاعر جوهري

3a) W ma bsayyij ʿla ʿaʾil shāʾir jawharī

3b) And I do not fence off the gem of a mind of a poet

3c) I wouldn’t fence off a poet’s gem of a mind

فُيـهِ الـمَعـَـرِ لـبـن بـرـد وـالـبـحـتـرـي

3) وما بسيج على عقل شاعر جوهري

3a) W ma bsayyij ʿla ʿaʾil shāʾir jawharī

3b) And I do not fence off the gem of a mind of a poet

3c) I wouldn’t fence off a poet’s gem of a mind

وَنَمْلِ الْمَعْنِي مُوْنَـتِـهِ عَنْ بِـيْدَـرِي

4) وسارت وننشي وشكسبير العبقري

4a) W Sārtir w Nītshī w Shakhīsbīr

4b) And Sartre and Nietzsche and Shakespeare the genius

4c) And Sartre, Nietzsche, and that genius Shakespeare

وَنَمْــلِ الْمَعْنِـي مُوْنَـتِـهِ عَنْ بِـيْدَـرِي

4) وسارت وننشي وشكسبير العبقري

4a) W Sārtir w Nītshī w Shakhīsbīr

4b) And Sartre and Nietzsche and Shakespeare the genius

4c) And Sartre, Nietzsche, and that genius Shakespeare

________________________

194 Here is another example of Mousa’s clever use of listing strategies in which he begins with the image of three famous classical Arab poets hiding within his brain.

195 The reference is to the great Arab poet of the medieval period, Abu al-ʿAla al-Maʿarri (973-1058), a blind Syrian poet known for his pessimism and originality. Note that Mousa mispronounces his name as al-Muʿarri.

196 The reference is to the famous blind Umayyad poet Bashar Ibn Burd (714-784). Note that Mousa mispronounces the name as “Burud.”

197 The reference is to the famous ‘Abbāsid poet al-Buhturi (821 – 897). Note that Mousa mispronounces the name as “al-Buhtari.”

198 All three of these names are mispronounced to fit the meter.
مش خوف من زغلول منقادو طري

28:50 5a) Ḥaṣṣanī† aʿlī [i]mn-il-[i]ḥjūm-il-ṭ̣aʔaskarī  Mush khawf min Zaḡhūl minʿādu ṭ̣aʔrī
5b) I fortified/entrenched my mind from military attack Not fear from Zaghloul whose beak is tender
5c) I’ve fortified my mind against military attack Not out of fear of Zaghloul with his tender beak

مخبيلك الموت العنيف البربري

29:02 6a) [i]W ta-tshūf shū mkhabbī īlak min mašdarī [i]Mkhabbī-lak il-mawt-†-il-ʔanīf-il-barbarī
6b) And for you to see what I’ve hidden for you from my source I have hidden for you violent, barbaric death
6c) Let me show you what I have hidden in my stores for you I’ve got hidden for you a violent, barbaric death

199 Ziadeh’s transcript gives سياجت Sayyajit (I fenced in) rather than حصنت Ḥaṣsanī (I fortified/entrenched).
200 Mousa is making fun of Zaghloul’s penname which means “baby dove”.
201 Ziadeh’s transcript gives الطعن at-ṭa’n (stabbing) rather than الموت al-mawt (death).
202 Again Mousa sets up an opportunity to use the listing strategy in which he cleverly reveals the things he’s got up his sleeve for Zaghloul. Listing does two things: builds a crescendo and provides opportunity to insert creative imagery.
And the sentence of death of the palace of Caesar

And lacerations from the great sword of Antar

So that after the bloodshed of the heroes of the ages

I wash with the tears of the bird the castle of Beit Mery

I’ll cleanse Beit Mery castle with the tears of a little bird

Choral Refrain:

I wash with the tears of the bird the castle of Beit Mery

I’ll cleanse Beit Mery castle with the tears of a little bird

Antar is the great 6th-century pre-Islamic Arab poet, knight, and hero Antara ibn Shaddad. Antar is memorialized in the voluminous epic *Sirat Antara*. See the English translation by Anna Nawolska.

There is a discrepancy between Ziadeh’s transcript, which gives the word “damm” (blood) here rather than what is heard on the recording, “dam” (tears).
3.3.3.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Third Exchange [26:20 – 29:47]

Zaghloul responds this time with an eight-or nine-line stanza of maʿannā, depending on how one counts the lines since, in this particular turn, we have an example of a common practice among zajal poets, which is to repeat the first line (or any line for that matter) before continuing on and completing the stanza. This practice allows a poet to gather his thoughts while working out the details of his successive lines without there being a pause in the singing. Usually the repeated line matches exactly the original version, but occasionally, the poet may change a word or two upon repetition, which is the case in this particular example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26:20 1a)</td>
<td>مُوسَى وَعَلَى بِإِلْفَخَكَحَ وَلَفَأً</td>
<td>Mūsā waʿaʾ b-il-fakhkh w[i] rfaʾū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>construed as</td>
<td>construed as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>يَا وَيَلِهنُو شَو تَمْرِحُوا وَشُو تَشْرَحُوا</td>
<td>Ya wayl-hun shū tmarjahū w shū tsharshaḥū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:20 1b)</td>
<td>مُوسَى وَقَعَ بِالْفَخَ وَرَفَاقُو أَنْمَحُوا</td>
<td>Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies were obliterated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>construed as</td>
<td>construed as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>يَا وَيَلِهنُو شَو تَمْرِحُوا وَشُو تَشْرَحُوا</td>
<td>Ya wayl-hun shū tmarjahū w shū tsharshaḥū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:33 1a’)</td>
<td>مُوسَى وَعَلَى بِإِلْفَخَكَحَ وَلَفَأً</td>
<td>Mūsā waʿaʾ b-il-fakhkh w[i] rfaʾū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>يَا وَيَلِهنُو شَو تَمْرِحُوا وَشُو تَشْرَحُوا</td>
<td>Ya wayl-hun shū tmarjahū w shū tsharshaḥū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:33 1b’)</td>
<td>مُوسَى وَقَعَ بِالْفَخَ وَرَفَاقُو أَنْمَحُوا</td>
<td>Mousa fell into the trap and his buddies were obliterated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>construed as</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>يَا وَيَلِهنُو شَو تَمْرِحُوا وَشُو تَشْرَحُوا</td>
<td>Ya wayl-hun shū tmarjahū w shū tsharshaḥū</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We see that in the second hemistich of line 1’, tmarjahū (they swung) was replaced with tṭawṭahū (they lost their balance) and tsharshaḥū (they became a laughing stock) was replaced with tmarjahū (they swung). Clearly, the metrical qualities of the exchanged words are identical, and the meanings are similar. It is interesting to note that when Zaghloul sings line 1’ and he introduces tṭawṭahū (they lost their balance) in the second hemistich, another voice (perhaps one of his teammates or one of the riddādi) can be heard shouting, “tmarjahū!” (They swung!),
presumably to draw Zaghloul’s attention for having said “ṭawṭahū” (they lost their balance; they teetered) instead of “tmarjaḥū” as he had on the first go. Zaghloul reacts to this by uttering “tmarjaḥū” now as the rhyme word, thus changing another word from the original utterance. As it turns out, ṭawṭahū (they teetered) and tmarjaḥū (to sway back and forth) are a synonymous pair that go well together and provide a metrically equivalent substitution for the original line.

In this stanza, Zaghloul employs the end-rhyme -ḥū, which features the long vowel ū, a grammatical suffix with multiple uses that facilitates the oral composition process. All of Zaghloul’s rhymes in this stanza make use of this aspect of his chosen rhyme and can be classified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ends with ū as suffix pronoun “his,” “him,” “its,” or “it”</th>
<th>Ends with ū as third-person plural verb suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jwānḥū (his wings)</td>
<td>[i]nmaḥū (they were obliterated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tilmaḥū (you see him)</td>
<td>tsharshahū (they became a laughing stock)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tishraḥū (you are explaining it)</td>
<td>tmarjahū (they swung back and forth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tīṭrāḥū (subtracting it)</td>
<td>istalḥū (they were embarrassed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iftaḥū (I open it)</td>
<td>yifrahū (they rejoice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma btirbaḥū (you don’t win it)</td>
<td>ma-staftaḥū (they didn’t gain anything)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maṭraḥū (its place)</td>
<td>yitsalaḥū (they take up arms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mā binṣahū (I don’t advise him)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nifḍaḥū (we expose it)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as we have seen in previous turns, Zaghloul’s stanza is constructed with a particular strategy in mind. He focuses on the word sharak and the image of the “snare” that came at the
end of Mousa’s turn. His plan is to recast the snare Mousa claims to have laid for Zaghloul as a snare Mousa has actually laid for the audience, like a booby-trap, to prevent them from discovering his dark secrets. Also in a manner similar to his construction of the second stanza, Zaghloul introduces a “trap” in the first line and foreshadows for us the argument of his final clincher line by stating clearly “Mousa has fallen into the trap.” In other words, by merely uttering the word “snare” Mousa has fallen into his own “trap.” Zaghloul goes on to poke holes in Mousa’s previous stanza’s argument. His description of Mousa’s companions as “teetering laughingstocks” is meant to ridicule Mousa’s dizzying listing of images and leads nicely into the next series of lines. Zaghloul tells Mousa to quit with the tiresome analysis, all the “adding and subtracting,” and stop embarrassing himself with confusing arguments. He slings a witty insult in line 2 when he says “you think you can restrain the eagle (i.e. Zaghloul)? You can’t even spy him out with a pair of binoculars!” It is also an opportunity for Zaghloul to label himself as “the eagle.” Mousa often belittles Zaghloul by making fun of his penname and calling him a “little bird” or a “baby bird,” as we will see in his response.

Mousa’s response is an eight-line stanza of maʿanna with end rhyme –rī. As mentioned earlier, the final Ṱ is a grammatical suffix, which means “my”, or “me” or is the relative adjective suffix used for turning certain nouns into adjectives, similar in English to the suffix –like or –ish or -ic. In this stanza, Mousa has several rhymes based on these two meanings of the grammatical suffix Ṱ: maẓharī (my appearance), manbarī (my pulpit), jawharī (gem-like), ʿabʿarī (genius-like), baydarī (my threshing floor), ʿaskarī (soldier-like, military), maṣdarī (my source), barbarī (barbaric), ʿantarī (Antar-like), -ʿayṣarī (Ceasar-like). His clincher rhyme is a return to the place name Beit Mery, which is always a good strategy for poets to use since mentioning the name of
the town where the duel is taking place is a gesture that honors the hosts and appeals to the audience.

Mousa’s third stanza provides an excellent illustration of a very useful oral composition strategy I call “listing.” Mousa cleverly uses this strategy twice in this stanza, first beginning in line 3 where he introduces the image of three famous classical Arab poets “hiding within his brain”: the great blind Arab poet of the medieval period, Abu al-‘Ala al-Ma’arri (973-1058), the famous blind Umayyad poet Bashar Ibn Burd (714-784), and the famous ‘Abbāsid poet al-Buḥturi (821 – 897). He goes on in successive lines to add some famous western geniuses to his list of his brain’s contents: Sartre and Nietzsche and Shakespeare. This name-dropping is Mousa’s way of showing his broad background in Arab and western poetry and thought. It is worth noting also that each of the famous names Mousa mentions in these lines is slightly mispronounced in some way or other so it will fit the metrical mold of his verse. The second example of listing begins in line 6 when Mousa lays out for Zaghloul all the horrible and violent things he has “up his sleeve” for him: violent, barbaric death; lacerations from the great sword of Antar; and a death sentence decree straight from Caesar’s palace. Mousa ends his stanza the way he began it – by belittling Zaghloul and his “tender beak” and threatening to cleanse Beit Mery with the “tears of a little bird.”
29:48 1a) Fajjir [i]brākīnak ya khaṭṭ-il-istiwā

W na’īllī ba’d-ū fajj min yallī-stawā205

1b) Explode your volcanoes206, O line of the equator

And separate that which is still unripe from that which ripened

1c) Detonate your volcanoes, Equator

And sift out the unripe from that which has ripened

Zaghloul gets a strong applause for the explosiveness of this line as well as for the pun on the two rhyme words, “istiwā” (equality/part of term for the equator, literally “line of equality” in Arabic) and “istawā” (became ripe). This kind of word play using cognates appears to be one of Zaghloul’s favorite strategies. Also note he ends the line with one of the longest melismas in the duel.

Zaghloul matches the meaning of his words with an explosive rendition in singing that the audience responds to fervently.
W biyzalzil-il-'al"a izā șawt-ū dawā

And will shake the citadel if his voice resounds

2b) The bird you referred to Time his doings narrated

And this whole fortress will tremble and quake on hearing his voice

2c) That bird you mentioned, his feats are recorded in the annals of Time

207 This line is given as the 3rd line rather than the 2nd line in Ziadeh’s transcript. Ziadeh quotes a line that Zaghloul does not actually say: (O you who thinks blood makes a high social level//You don’t have any blood in you and no fruits have ever come from you).

208 Zaghloul again echoes the meaning of his words with the sound of his voice.

209 Here again is the verb “jibīt” (you bring) which is one of many repeated words that are tossed back and forth during the duel. Note that this particular verb is a convenient way for the poet to begin a clever and creative list, which Zaghloul does here as he lists the things Mousa could “bring” to the battle. Ultimately, we can expect none of these items to be of any use, and Zaghloul will use this listing strategy to build a crescendo and cut down his opponent.

210 Zaghloul is most likely referring to the great Phoenician/Lebanese conqueror Hannibal.
4a) And the armor of the Prophet David which is all strength

4b) And a blow of that yellow wind which has no remedy

5a) And an army of giant jinns each battalion a brigade

5b) And a net to ward off death from you and the wind

5c) And an army of giant jinns, each battalion a brigade

6a) I am not leaving you until I destroy the fortress on you

6b) I am not leaving you until I destroy the fortress on you

6c) I’m not letting up ’til I bring this castle down on you

---

211 Zaghloul has already used the homonym dawā in line 2, second hemistich, to mean “resound.” This is another example of Zaghloul’s tendency to word play of this type. In this line dawā means “medicine/cure.”

212 The “yellow wind” is the Arabic term for “the plague.”

213 Here is the last image in Zaghloul’s list. Note that the examples are items from a shared cultural knowledge that the audience will recognize no matter their level of education.
Choral Refrain:

وطمك وداخل عضمك وعنك سوا

30:49  W ṭum mak w[i] ikhuṭ ṣaḏ [i] mak w laḥ [i] mak [i] sa ṭa (twice)

And bury you and mix your bones and flesh together

And bury you and mix your bones together with your flesh

3.3.4.2. Mousa

رح تأسف اللجنة على مشوارها

31:08  1a) Ōkh…Zaghlūl ṣamma’ w-il-maʿānī-khtār-hā  Raḥ ti’suf-il-lijni ʿalā mishwār-hā

1b) Owkh…Zaghloul delved deep and the meanings he chose  The judging panel will regret its trip

1c) Owkh…Zaghloul delved deep into ideas of his choosing  The judges are going to regret having come all this way
31:22 2a) لکحمرة ایبتیال کیتیر کییار-ها

The wine if becomes very heavy its potency

2b) Its value increases in the view of its vintners

If a wine’s potency becomes very strong

Its value increases in the eyes of its vintners

2c) بتزید قیمتها بنظر خمارها

Bitzید َیمیت-هَا یب-نیزار کومنمیم-ی-هَا

TA ریح تعمیی الكوکب من غبارها

تا الريح تعمي الكوكب من غبارها

31:30 3a) فایلت دند-شیر مین اوكار-ها

Release the eagles of poetry from their lairs

Ta-ریح تیمی-ی-کوکب [ی]من-ی-غبار-ها

So the wind can blind the planet with its dust

3b) So the wind can blind the planet with its dust

3c) Release the eagles of poetry from their lairs

So the wind can blind the planet with its dust

---

214 This line is left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.

215 This line seems to be “filler”; it doesn’t follow logically from the argument.

216 This line, though full of interesting imagery, also seems to be outside the main argument. These types of “filler” lines are part and parcel of the oral-formulaic composition process that allow the poets to build up to the clincher line.
31:41 4a) Jibnā cāṣā Mūsā w sīḥir asrār-hā

4b) We brought Moses’s staff and the magic of its secrets

4c) We’ve brought Moses’s staff and the magic of its secrets

31:50 5a) W ha-l-‘al-ʾit-il-rīshī natar ʿā hājār-hā

5b) And this fortress that my feathers brushed off on its stones

5c) And this fortress whose stones my feathers often brushed

31:59 6a) [i]W sayyid mawāʾif-hā w ḥāmī dyār-hā

6b) And master of its decisions and protector of its grounds

6c) The master of its stances and protector of its grounds

---

217 This line was left out of Ziadeh’s transcription.

218 Another example of listing starts with the verb “Jibna” (we brought).
7) Lākin janābak ṭayr shu’m [i]w zār-hā

7a) But you, sir, are a bird of bad omen and visited it

7b) And it suits you, bird, to win its neighborhood

7c) It would suit you, bird, to have the privilege to be here

8) Ta ymūt -il malak w tṣīr ha-l-‘al‘a kharāb

8a) So that the king dies and this castle becomes ruins

8b) So you can go on dancing on the corners of its building

8c) So you can dance on the corners of its dilapidated foundation

Choral Refrain:

(twice)

32:22

Ta -tḍall [i] tir‘uṣ [i] ṣā zwāyā ʿmār -hā (twice)

So you could dance on the corners of its dilapidated foundation

Ziadeh’s transcription gives “bayn jwār-hā” (amidst its neighborhood) rather than “nayl jwār-hā” (win its neighborhood).

Zaghloul opens his fourth stanza with a powerful burst of vocal energy and verbal cleverness. He booms with confidence as he commands the equator to “detonate the volcanoes!” and he completes his maṭla’ with a pun. Zaghloul receives a strong applause for the onomatopoeic matching of his words with his explosive singing, as well as for the pun on the two rhyme words, istiwā (equality/part of term for the equator, literally “line of equality” in Arabic) and istawā (became ripe). It is quickly becoming apparent that this kind of word play using homonyms and cognates is one of Zaghloul’s favorite strategies. It is also clear that Zaghloul is repeatedly able to use his strong and beautiful singing voice to his advantage.

Indeed, he ends the opening line with one of the longest melismata in the duel [cue to 29:48]. Similarly, at the end of line 2, Zaghloul lets his voice resound as he sings out the phrase sawt-ū dawā (his voice resounded). His strike on Mousa is firm, decisive, and completely undermines Mousa’s image of “a little bird’s tears,” at the end of the third exchange. Zaghloul is able to negate Mousa’s claim, but not by saying he is not a “little bird” with “a tender beak,” but by showing his strength with the powerful combination of his voice and wit.

As Zaghloul continues through the successive lines of his six-line stanza based on the rhyme -wā, he picks up Mousa’s listing strategy and swats it back at him. Like Mousa, he begins his list with mentioning the verb jibit (in the phrase law jibit, even if you brought). He tells Mousa that even if he were to bring all of the things on this new list - the sharp edge of Hannibal’s unbending sword, Moses’ staff and the serpent, the armor of David the Prophet, a whiff of the yellow wind (i.e. the plague), an army of giant jinns, and a safety net – he won’t be able to withstand Zaghloul’s power and wrath.
Mousa replies to Zaghloul with an eight-line stanza based on the rhyme -ār-hā. The hā ending is the pronoun suffix meaning “her,” “it,” “its,” “them,” or “their,” and all of Mousa’s rhymes are used in this way. It is interesting that Mousa pronounces the ending as he does, articulating the “h” which is normally silent in Lebanese dialect.

We see in Mousa’s stanza some of the images introduced in previous stanzas reappearing. For example, near the end of the stanza, Mousa pursues the “bird” label, this time calling Zaghloul a “bird of bad omen” who is bent on destroying the fortress (another repeated image/word). In contrast, Mousa describes himself with positive bird imagery in line 5 when he says, “And this fortress whose stones my feathers have often brushed.” Mousa also revives the image of himself as the “king” (previously he addressed Beit Mery fortress “inside whose walls they have resumed crowning the king), and begins another list introduced by the verb Jibnā (We brought) including “Moses’ staff” and “Verses from David the Prophet,” both of which Zaghloul included in his list of items that would be of no use to Mousa against Zaghloul’s wrath. Mousa’s strategy is to portray Zaghloul as a destroyer of those great and powerful men and items, to say that Mousa, out of benevolence, brought forth the staff “and the magic of its secrets,” the verses “and the lyre.” He claims again to be the king and master of the fortress, protector of its grounds, wearer of armor (resonates also with the “armor of David the Prophet” in Zaghloul’s list) hewn from the very same stone as the fortress. All of this Mousa mentions in order to point his finger at Zaghloul and accuse him of being a “bird of bad omen” come to destroy Beit Mery and “dance on its dilapidated foundation.”
3.3.5. Fifth Exchange

3.3.5.1. Zaghloul

                                                                                   1/ مش كل من عاكرسة المنبر علي
صار ينسمى شاعر رفع المنازل٢

32:40  1a) Mish kill min ʿā kirsit-il-manbar ʿilī          Şār yinsama shāʿir raʾīl-manzalī
1b) Not everyone who upon the chair of the stage climbed  Became called a poet fine of rank
1c) Not everyone who took a seat upon the stage           Was called a poet of high prestige

من قبل ما بالارض اعمل زلزلي

32:52  2a) Ya njūm wjj-is-ṣubuḥ ʿa-l-ḥafl- inzilī         Min ʿabil-ma bil-arḍ ʿaʾmil zalzalī
2b) O stars, the face of morning onto the party descend  Before on the ground/earth I make an earthquake
2c) O stars, as morning’s face appears, descend to this party Before I cause an earthquake here on the ground

من قبل ما بالارض اعمل زلزلي

33:03  2a’)  Ya njūm wjj-is-ṣubuḥ ʿa-l-arḍ inzalī         Min ʿabil-ma bil-arḍ ʿaʾmil zalzalī
2b’) O stars, the face of morning onto the ground descend Before on the ground/earth I make an earthquake
2c’) O stars, as morning’s face appears, descend to earth  Before I cause an earthquake here on the ground

220 Zaghloul repeats his second line. On the repeat, he changes عالحفلة al-ḥaflī (to the party) to ʿal-arḍ (to the ground).
33:13 3a) Il-lijni–l-ijit\textsuperscript{221} ē a dayr 'alē a mbakkalī

Tā yiḥimlū b-naē shak\textsuperscript{222} bi-ākhīr marḥalī

To carry your coffin during the final segment

3b) The panel that came to a packed citadel monastery

Will bear your coffin during the final segment

3c) The judges who came to this packed monastery

وعا هيك نوع نسور هالهدلي

33:21 4a)\textsuperscript{223} Niḥnā zghālīl-ish-shīr w-it-targhalī

W ē ā hayk nawē nsūr shū ha-l-bahdalī

And on this type of eagles/vultures what an embarrassment

4b) We are the baby doves of poetry and cooing

What a shame to waste it on these vultures

4c) We are the cooing baby doves of poetry

\textsuperscript{221} In Ziadeh’s transcript Il-lijni–l-ijit (the judging panel that came here) is given as In-nās-il-ijū (the people who came here).

\textsuperscript{222} In Ziadeh’s transcript, Tā yiḥimlū b-naē shak (to carry your coffin) is given as Tā yiwaddaʿū rūḥak (to bid farewell to your soul).

\textsuperscript{223} Ziadeh quotes an extraneous line here as line 4: Law ma ana wujūdī bi-ṣaffī-l-ūlī // La f′azzabū la hawn w lā ḥallū l-mishkīlī (If not for my presence here at the head of the table//They would not have troubled themselves to come here and solve the problem) and quotes the actual line 4 as sung by Zaghloul as line 5. The actual line 5 sung by Zaghloul is left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.
5a) Rūḥ ikhtīfī khalīlī-l-ḥa’ī’ā tinjīlī

5b) Go disappear let truth be revealed

5c) Go disappear, let truth shine forth

Leave me to dance and strut and prance around

And leave me to my dancing and strutting and prancing

6a) Awwal ġā ākhīr yā malak dār-il-bilī

6b) First to last, O king of the house of decay

6c) From beginning to end, King of the house of decay

Sitting on a chair all worn out and threadbare

You’re sitting on a broken, worn-out chair

7a) Raḥ titlā’-il-mawtī bi-ha-l-ḥaflī ilak

7b) Will come out the death at this party for you

7c) At this duel, death is going to be your prize

And the ululating and dancing and dabke/stomping for me

And the ululating, dancing, and dabke will be mine

---

224 Traditional type of dancing involving a lot of stomping (from which its name is derived – dabaka means to stomp) done at major celebrations.
Choral Refrain:

(Choral Refrain: 

34:00 W-il -zal gh atā w-ir -raʾiṣ [i] w[i]-id-dab [i]kī i lī (twice)

And the ululating and dancing and stomping for me

And the ululating, dancing, and dabke will be mine

3.3.5.2. Mousa

34:18 1a) Ōkh…Yā jwāniḥ-il-ihlām riffū w-inzalū  İnā-z-zghaybī-l-kawn arḥab w-inʾilū

167 1b) Owkh…O wings of inspiration flap and descend 

Pick up the Zoghaybi\(^{225}\) to a wider universe and move him

1c) Owkh…Flutter, O wings of inspiration, and swoop down

Lift the Zoghaybi take him to a wider world

---

\(^{225}\) The reference is to Mousa Zoghayb himself, of course. Also, the literal meaning of zoghayb is a diminutive of zaghab, meaning the soft downy feathers of a baby bird.
2a) In-nisr-il-taraktū yā Khalīl [i]b-maʻalū

2b) The eagle you left, O Khalil²²⁶, is in his fortress

2c) Don’t worry, Khalil, the eagle you left is still in his fortress

2/ النسر التراكتو يا خليل بمعقل

اركعلو وشو بيريد منك اسلاو

3a) Zaghlūl mawlāk-il-malak mā b-tijhalū

3b) Zaghloul, your master the king you don’t ignore him

3c) Zaghloul, don’t play dumb before your master the king

3/ زغلول مولاك الملك ما بتجهلو

يرعك وينزلك من منخلو

4a) W in māt-il-malak²²⁷ biyḍall ismū b-man zalū

4b) And if the king dies his name will remain in its high place

4c) And if the king dies, his name will remain in its high place

4/ وان مات الملك يضل اسمو بمنزلو

یریبک وینزلک من منخلو

²²⁶ Mousa is referring to the great zajal poet and his mentor Khalil Rukuz, mentioned earlier.

²²⁷ Ziadeh’s transcript gives W law māt baddū (And even if he were to die he would…) rather than W in māt-il-malak (If the king were to die…)
5) جمع شبابك يوم دفني واعملوا

34:59  
5a) جمّميّ الشباك يوم دفنّي وملّوه
5b) Gather your youths the day of my burial and do
5c) Gather up your youths the day of my burial and do

5) بس مهما تزلغطوا وتهللوا

35:08  
6a) بس ماما تزالغطلي وحليلو
6b) But no matter how much you ululate and celebrate
6c) But no matter how much you ululate and celebrate

6) مثل اليهود الزلغطوا بدفن المسيح

35:16  
7a) مثل الياهود زالغطت بذفن المسيح
7b) Like the Jews who ululated at the burial of Christ
7c) Just like the Jews who ululated at Christ’s burial

---

Here is an example of enjambment across the hemistichs.

Note that Mousa is using the same images Zaghloul used in the clincher line of his last stanza. Again, this strategy allows the poet to take his opponent’s words and turn them against him.

It is traditional for guests attending a burial to be offered food and drink.
Choral Refrain:

ورجعوا بيوم قيامتو سجدوا إلو (twice)

35:24  
[i]W ri$jū bi-yawm [i]’yāmtū sajjdū ilū (twice)

And went back on the day of his rising knelt in worship to him

*Only to bow down and worship him the day of his resurrection*
3.3.5.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Fifth Exchange [32:40 – 35:41]

Zaghloul’s fifth stanza consists of seven lines with end rhyme –lī. Once again, we see the usefulness of grammatical suffixes. This one, ī, which was described earlier relative to Mousa’s rhyme (–bī) in the second exchange, can mean “my,” “me,” or can be the Lebanese pronunciation of the feminine noun or adjective suffix tā’ marbūta, or the relative adjective suffix comparable to the English –ish, -like, -ic, or the verb suffix for second person feminine. In this particular stanza, Zaghloul exploits this ten times: manzalī (rank; feminine suffix), inzilī (descend; verb 2nd person feminine), zalzalī (earthquake; feminine suffix), mbakkalī (packed; feminine suffix), marhalī (segment; feminine suffix), targhalī (cooing; feminine suffix), bahdalī (embarrassment; feminine suffix), ḥanjalī (prancing; feminine suffix), mhalhalī (threadbare; feminine suffix), and ili (for me; pronoun suffix).

Once again, Zaghloul frames his stanza around capitalizing on Mousa’s last image – that of Zaghloul “dancing on the corners of the dilapidated fortress” and turning it on its head. In line 2, which is another example of a poet repeating one of his lines before continuing through to the end of the stanza, Zaghloul calls out to the morning stars that have begun to appear, commanding them to come down before he causes an earthquake. This resonates with the opening of his previous turn in which he called on the equator to “detonate its volcanoes.” Also as before, Zaghloul lets his voice ring out extensively as he sings this line and conjures these images, not once, but twice. Having thus asserted himself and displayed his poetic might, he tells Mousa to let him “dance and prance around” proudly, and then begins dismantling Mousa’s argument. In the previous stanza, Mousa made himself “the King of Beit Mery fortress” and accused Zaghloul of being a destroyer. Zaghloul now mocks Mousa, calling him, “the King of the house of decay,” whose throne is “threadbare and falling apart” (presumably from so much sitting on his
bottom doing nothing), and who will end up in a coffin, carried by the judges of zajal as pallbearers by the end of the night. Also over the course of the stanza Zaghloul revives the bird imagery and calls himself and his jawqa companions “the baby doves of poetry and cooing,” and Mousa and his crew, “a flock of vultures.” Finally, Zaghloul finishes his stanza with a sting that is especially effective because Mousa’s image of Zaghloul dancing on the dilapidated fortress is now turned into Zaghloul’s prize for winning the duel – dancing and ululating at the funeral for Mousa, the King of Decay. Also, the manner in which Zaghloul’s final line is constructed contributes in a big way to its effectiveness. He sets up the final word “ilī” (for me) as the logical subordinate clause to go with “ilak” (for you) from the first hemistich (“Death will be for you”), so that when he reaches “ilī” at the end of the stanza, the audience is easily able to anticipate it and eagerly joins in singing the end of the line (“And ululating and dancing will be for me!”) along with Zaghloul and then again along with the riddādi. This is an excellent way to draw the audience in and gain their allegiance as they are enticed into participating in the duel with their own voices.

Mousa’s response is a seven-line stanza of ma‘annā with end rhyme –lū. As mentioned earlier, the ū ending is also a multipurpose grammatical suffix which functions as a pronoun suffix meaning “him,” “his,” “it,” or “its,” or as a second or third person plural verb suffix. With the exception of hilū (sweets), Mousa employs one of these possibilities in all of his rhymes: inzalū (you (pl.) descend; verb suffix), in’ilū (you (pl.) move him; verb and pronoun suffix), ma‘alū (his fortress; pronoun suffix), yī tilū (they go up; verb suffix), tijhalū (you (pl.) ignore; verb suffix), ‘is‘alū (you (pl.) ask him; verb and pronoun suffix), manzalū (his high place; pronoun suffix), minkhilū (its sieve; pronoun suffix), ‘milū (you (pl.) do; verb suffix), t-halhilū (you (pl.) celebrate; verb suffix), tkammilū (you (pl.) complete it; verb and pronoun suffix), ilū
This last rhyme, “ilū” (for him) is especially interesting and clever since it echoes Zaghloul’s clincher line in which he played on the two phrases “ilak” (for you) and “ilī” (for me). Being as it is the key to Mousa’s clincher line, his use of “ilū” here gives us good evidence and a good example of how the poets compose their stanzas beginning at the end, and working backwards to construct the preceding lines. They do this rapidly and under the pressure of live performance. This is why key images introduced by their opponents are repeated or reworked in the process of making an argument, and also why poets rely a great deal on the types of rhymes that facilitate the composition process.

Mousa begins his turn by bemoaning his presence there beside Zaghloul, using bird imagery again to plead to “the wings of inspiration” to swoop down and sweep him, “the eagle,” away from the “baby chicks of zajal” whom he promised his late, great mentor to forbid from crawling up onto the stage. He admonishes Zaghloul and commands him to bow down before “his king” (i.e. Mousa). He warns Zaghloul that even after “the king dies” he will haunt his every waking moment, and tells him to go ahead and dance and offer wine and sweets to the guests at his funeral. It is at this point in the stanza that Mousa begins to extend the image and deliver his clincher. He tells Zaghloul to go ahead and sing and dance and celebrate, because he is just like “the Jews who ululated at the burial of Christ” only to turn around three days later and “bow down” in worship of his resurrection. With this argument, Mousa has metaphorically equated Zaghloul with Christ’s murderers and himself with the resurrected Christ. While this stanza is very effective and elicits a great deal of applause from the audience, one cannot help but fear the consequence of Mousa’s calling himself not only a king, but now Jesus Christ himself.
3.3.6. Sixth Exchange

3.3.6.1. Zaghloul

1/ يا ابن مريم قوم قلوا لنايبك

35:42

1a) Yā ibin Maryam ‘ūm ‘illū l- nāyibak

Yib’ud ʿadūwwak ʿan ṣuṭūf [i]ḥbāyibak

1b) O son of Mary, rise and tell your deputy

To move away your enemy from the ranks of your beloved ones

1c) Son of Mary, rise and tell your deputy

To remove your enemy from the ranks of your loved ones

兵عد عدوك عن صفوف حبايبك

1/ يا زغيب الله يساعدك عا مصايبك

35:54

2a) Ya Zghayb[23] Allā yaśāʾidāk ʿā mšāyibak

Jāyyi trakkiʾnā w mīn il-jāyibak

2b) O Zoghayb, God help you with your misfortunes

You’re coming to make us kneel and who brought you

2c) God help you, Zoghayb, with your misfortunes

You came here to make us kneel? Who brought you?

جايي تركّعنا ومين الجايبك

23 The combination of the vocative particle يا followed by a noun of the poet’s choice is a formulaic substitution device that is extremely useful. Not only does it enable the poet to quickly fit words together and produce chunks of lines, but it also gives the poet a chance to address a vast variety of people and things, allows him to call his opponent by name or to label him with an adjective. It is also an excellent opportunity to extend the voice in a long melisma on the long alif vowel yā.
لنّك مسيح ولا ظهرت عجائبك

36:04 3a) Shibbahit ḥālak bil-masīḥ shū šāyibak  
You likened yourself to Christ; what’s gotten into you?

3b) You likened yourself to Christ, what’s gotten into you?  
You’re no Christ nor have you shown your miracles

3c) You likened yourself to Christ? What’s gotten into you?  
You’re no Christ and haven’t performed any miracles either

والدجّال خيّك واليهود قرايبك

36:13 4a) [i]W lā init Mūsā, init “Mūshā” b-fard ʿayn  
You’re not even Mousa, you’re Mouha with one eye

4b) You’re not even Mousa, you’re Mouha with one eye  
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your relatives!

4c) You’re not even Moses, you’re the one-eyed Moshe!  
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your cousins!

Choral Refrain:

36:20  
Id-dijjāl khayyak w-il-yahūd [i]’rāyibak (twice)  
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your relatives!

The reference is to Moshe Dayan, the Israeli military leader and politician, who wore a patch over one eye. Zaghloul is also playing a game with Mousa’s name again here, this time switching the letter “s” to the letter “sh” to change Mousa to Mousha. Note that in Arabic the “s” and “sh” are identical in shape and are only differentiated by the three dots above the letter “sh”. $S = Sh$.
3.3.6.2. Mousa

 او جيب ذات المقلع وذات الرخام

أو جيب ذات المقلع وذات الرخام

1/ أوخ... عطيناك رخام وروح يا زغلول نام

1a) Ṭaytak [i]rkhām w rūḥ yā Zaghlūl nām

Aw jīb zāt-il-ma’la’ [iw]w zāt-ir-rkhām

1b) Owkh...I gave you marble and go O Zaghloul sleep

Or bring the same quarry and the same marble

1c) Owkh...I gave you marble, Zaghloul, go get some sleep

Or bring the same kind of quarry and the same kind of marble

عم تجرح شعور العروبة بوجه عام

عم تجرح شعور العروبة بوجه عام

2/ بستنجد بأعور تا تحضي باهتمام

2a) Ṭistanjid b-’a’war tā ṭahdhā biḥtimām

Btīstanjid b-’a’war tā ṭahdhā biḥtimām

2b) You appeal to a one-eyed man to gain attention

You’re hurtin the feelings of the Arabs in a general fashion

2c) You seek help from a one-eyed man to get attention

But you’re hurting the feelings of all the Arabs across the board

اسم موسى بلا نقط متل الدوام

اسم موسى بلا نقط متل الدوام

3/ وتا ادعم الفكرة بحجة وانسجام

3a) W tā idī-am-il-fikrā bi-bihji w-insijām

‘Īsim Müsā blā nu’āṭ mitl-id-dawām

3b) Let me support the idea with zeal and harmony

The name Mousa has no dots like endurance

3c) Let me push the notion with zeal and harmony

The name Mousa has no dots, just like endurance

233 Beginning with this example, dawām, Mousa lists a series of words that are spelled using only Arabic letters without dots. His choices are also all very positive images he equates with his name by using the formulaic simile phrase mitl ... (like ...).
37:10 4a) Mitl-is-samā mitl-il-ilāh mitl-is-salām
        4b) Like the sky like God like peace
        4c) Just like the sky, like God, like peace

37:23 5a) W shū khaṣṣak [i)b-‘ismī yā Zaghlūl-il-ḥamām
        5b) And what is my name to you, O zaghloul the pigeon
        5c) And what business is it of yours, little Pigeon?

Ziadeh’s transcription gives mitl-il-hūsām (like the sword) rather than mitl-is-sīhām (like arrows).

Mousa slings a big insult here by calling Zaghloul “zaghlūl-il-ḥamām” since the literal meaning of zaghlūl is a baby chick, usually a dove, and il-ḥamām is either the commonplace and nuisance of a bird, the pigeon, or the peaceful dove. Either way, Mousa is calling Zaghloul a diminutive of that, effectively belittling him with his own name. This is his counter to Zaghloul’s attack on Mousa’s name.
6a) Raḥ jīb236 āynayk-it-tayn b-‘interām

6b) I will bring your two eyes with revenge

6c) I am going to take your two eyes with a vengeance

37:40 7a) [i]W ḥuṭṭun tlēt nu’tāt ḍāzīni ʿālām

7c) And put them the three dots a decoration mark

7c) And put those three dots as decorations

W ḍāyn Mūshā l-baʾid-hā misk-il-khitām

And the eye of Moshe which remains “misk-il-khitām”237

And Moshe’s one eye that you brought here in your last line

Tā yṣīr Mūshā mush tā ikbar bil-maʾām

So it will become Mousha not to grow larger in stature

Turning it into Mousha, not to puff myself up

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236 Ziadeh gives shīl (remove) rather than jīb (get).

237 Misk-il-khitām, according to Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary, literally means “the concluding musk”, stemming originally from the practice of finalizing a letter with perfume (Wehr 909). Figuratively, the expression means “the crowning touch.” In zajal, misk-il-khitām refers to the concluding line of the stanza, or the “clincher”. In this case, Mousa is making reference to Zaghloul’s previous turn in which he ended by saying, “You’re not Mousa, you’re Moshe with one eye, etc.”
7/8: Ta ḥarrim il-bit-dī’ ‘inda-l-āfyi

8a) Tā ḥarrim il-bit-dī’ ‘inda-l-āfyi Yna’ ‘it [i]ḥrūf-in-nās238 w yghayyir kalām

8b) To forbid he who has difficulty with the rhyme
From dotting the letters of people and changing words

8c) But to forbid that one who has trouble making rhymes
From dotting letters of peoples’ names and changing their words

Choral Refrain:

37:56

Y na’ ‘it[i] ḥu rūf-i n-nā s[i] w[i] yghay yi r[i] kalām
From dotting the letters of people and changing words

From dotting the letters of peoples’ names and changing their words

238 Ziadeh gives asāmī-n-nās (names of people) rather than ḥurūf-in-nās (letters of people).
3.3.6.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Sixth Exchange [35:42 – 38:10]

Zaghloul’s brief sixth stanza of maʿannā is powerful and to the point. The four lines are punctuated by end rhyme –bak. The final –ak, which was discussed earlier (Mousa’s first stanza), is a pronoun suffix meaning “you” or “your,” and is used as such in all of Zaghloul’s rhymes: nāyibak (your deputy), ḥbāyibak (your loved ones), mšāyibak (your misfortunes), jāyibak (brought you), šāyibak (gotten into you), ʿjāyibak (your miracles), and ʿrāyibak (your relatives).

Zaghloul wastes no time attacking Mousa’s metaphorical equation with the resurrected Christ. He calls out to “Son of Mary” to remove his enemies (i.e. Mousa and his jawqa) from the ranks of his lovers (i.e. Zaghloul and his jawqa). Then Zaghloul reprimands Mousa directly, asking him what has gotten into him. How dare he call himself Christ? He’s not Christ and has never performed a single miracle! And then in his clincher line, Zaghloul completely deconstructs Mousa’s previous clincher, in which Mousa equated Zaghloul with the Jews as murderers of Christ. He tells Mousa, “You’re no Christ, and you’re not even Mousa (i.e. the biblical Moses). You’re the one-eyed Mousha (Moshe), the Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your relatives!” This is a particularly clever move on Zaghloul’s part, as it reverberates on many levels. Of primary significance is the play on Mousa’s name, making it a very personal kind of attack by Zaghloul. By changing the letter س (s) to its sister letter ش (sh), which is identical in shape and is distinguished by the addition of three dots above, Zaghloul turns Mousa’s Arabic name into its Hebrew counterpart, Mousha or Moshe, thus transferring the association with the Jews back onto Mousa. Moreover, Zaghloul strengthens the allusion to the infamous Israeli military leader Moshe Dayan, who was known for wearing an eye-patch, by calling Mousa “the one-eyed Moshe.” But Zaghloul doesn’t stop there. He makes one more
association, this time to *al-Dajjāl*, or *al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*, the False Christ or Antichrist, who is depicted in Islamic eschatology as being one-eyed. Some descriptions say his right eye is punctured and his left eye is raised to his forehead like a star. Thus, in effect, in this short four-lined stanza and with the simple addition of three dots to the letter “s”, Zaghloul turns Mousa into Moshe Dayan, brother of the Antichrist and cousin of the Jews. It is clear that the duel has taken a turn down a rocky road, now that such heated personal, political, and religious-themed insults have started to be slung back and forth.

Mousa’s response is an eight-line stanza incorporating the rhyme – ām. This time, the rhyme is not a grammatical suffix. The rhyme words are a variety of mostly nouns and adjectives and one imperative verb in the opening hemistich: nām (go to sleep). In terms of word play, Mousa incorporates a very interesting strategy as he counters Zaghloul’s changing his name to Mousha. He affirms that his name is not Mousha, but Mousa, with no dots, like a list of items he offers all of which are spelled with “dotless” letters: الدوام *ad-dawām* (endurance), السماء *is-samā* (the sky), السلام *is-salām* (peace), السعد *is-saʿd* (good luck), الوعد *il-waʿd* (promise), السهام *is-s-hām* (arrows). This is a crafty strategy, and is particularly effective because his choice of words spelled without dots, which are like his name and thus items with which he can be personally associated, are all very positive images and concepts. Mousa then proceeds to rebuke Zaghloul, this time calling him “a pigeon,” telling him he has no business putting dots on his name and invoking the name Moshe. He tells Zaghloul it’s not worth hurting everyone’s (all the Arabs’) feelings just to get attention. As Mousa transitions to the final lines of his stanza, he combines the “one-eyed” image with the three dots image and threatens Zaghloul. He tells Zaghloul he will take the one eye from Zaghloul’s last line and add to it Zaghloul’s two eyes, which Mousa will pluck out with vengeance, and then he will place them himself over the letter “s” and turn
his own name from Mousa to Mousha. And this he will do, not to puff himself up, but to stop
those who have “difficulty making rhymes” (i.e. Zaghloul) from messing around with people’s
names and changing their words. Once again we see the strategy of taking the opponent’s
metaphors and turning them upside down. Mousa has turned Zaghloul’s three dots into an
opportunity to figuratively pluck Zaghloul’s eyes out.
3.3.7. Seventh Exchange

3.3.7.1. Zaghloul

ريشك من الأرز وشلوح السنديان

1/ يا جوائح الزغلول ضَلَّك في آمان

38:11 1a) Ya jwāniḥ-iz-zaghlūl ḏallik fī amān

Rīshik min-il-arz [i]w-shilūḥ-is-sinidyān

1b) O wings of the Zaghloul, remain in safety

Your feathers are from the cedars and the branches of the oaks

1c) Have no fear, wings of the baby dove

Your feathers are made of cedar and oak

ما عرفت من رقة قصيدي الصخر لان

38:25 2a) ʿā Bet Mirī shū jīt tiʿmil yā falān

Ma ʿrifit min riʾit ʿaṣīdī-ṣ-ṣakhir lān

2b) At Beit Miry what’d you come to do, nameless one?

Don’t you know from the fineness of my qasid rocks get pliant?

2c) Why did you come to Beit Meri, Mr. What’s-his-name?

Don’t you know my odes are so amazing even the rocks go soft?

239 These, once again, are quintessential symbols for Lebanon.

240 Zaghloul calls Mousa “yā falān” meaning “O nameless one” or “So-and-so.” It is very funny and derisive considering the duel has been centering on Mousa’s name.
38:35  
3a) [i]W bil-‘āfiyī w-il-wazīn [i] hārf-il-bayān  
Bghiyyir [i]w ma b-khallī ‘ā ha-l-baydar [i]zwān  
And with rhymes and meter and the letters of rhetoric  
I make changes and don’t leave on this threshing floor any chaff  

3b) And with rhymes and meter and the letters of rhetoric  
I change them how I like with no chaff left on my threshing floor  

3c) And as for rhyme, meter, and eloquent words  
I make changes and don’t leave on this threshing floor any chaff  

38:46  
4a)241 [i]W raḥḍall ḥuṭṭ w shīl fīk [i]b-ha-z-zamān  
W ṣabbi-l-fāḍī b-ṣaynak w faḍḍī-l-balān  
I’ll keep putting in and taking from you in this time  
And fill the empty space in your eye and empty the full space

4b) I’ll keep putting in and taking from you in this time  
And fill the empty space in your eye and empty the full space

4c) I’ll keep on pushing and pulling you while we’re here  
Right in your face I’ll fill the empty and empty the full

38:55  
5a) Biyjūz ‘albak izra’ū mhall-il-lsān  
W biyjūz rāsak āda’ū b-tānī makān  
It’s possible your heart I’ll plant in the tongue’s place  
And it’s possible your head I’ll put in another place

5b) It’s possible your heart I’ll plant in the tongue’s place  
And it’s possible your head I’ll put in another place

5c) Maybe I’ll plant your heart where your tongue should be  
And maybe I’ll put your head in some other place

241 This line was left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.

242 Zaghloul is playing with opposites here – fill the empty and empty the full.
39:06  
6a) [i]W bîdghaṭ ṭlayk [i]w biʿišrak bil-kishîtān
   And I will press on you and squeeze you into the thimble
   And with three drops of your blood we will end the festival
6b) And I will press on you and squeeze you into the thimble
6c) I’ll compress you and squeeze you into a thimble
   And with three drops of your blood we’ll end the festival

39:15  
7a) W min ha-n-nuʿāt raḥ [i]nḫūṭ ṭuʿā bīl-Yābān
   And from these drops we will put one drop in Japan
   And one drop in the heart of red hell, too
7b) And from these drops we will put one drop in Japan
7c) We’ll take one of those drops and put it in Japan
   And another drop we’ll put in the heart of red hell

39:25  
8a) [i]W ma yḍall minnakk ghayr ṭuʿā b-Bet Mīrī
   And there won’t remain of you but one drop in Beit Mery
   In order for them to say that here Mousha Zoghayb was
8b) And there won’t remain of you but one drop in Beit Mery
8c) Then there’ll only be one drop of you left in Beit Mery
   To mark the spot where Moshe Zoghayb used to be

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243 This is a very famous line in which Zaghloul cleverly returns to the game of playing on Mousa versus Mousha. Here, the three dots on the letter “šīn” have been turned into three drops of Mousa’s blood. Zaghloul tosses the first two out and leaves one in Beit Mery as a trace, a reminder that “Mousha” was here.
Choral Refrain:

39:32 (twice)

حتى يقولوا هون موشي زغيب كان

\( \text{Hat tā y[i] 'ū lū haw n[i] Mū shā Z[i] ghay b[i] kān} \)

In order for them to say that here Mousha Zoghayb was

To mark the spot where Moshe Zoghayb used to be

3.3.7.2. Mousa

ما تحمل من الزغيب آلام وبلا

أوخ..زغلول ضب جناحك وارحل بلا

1a) Ōkh..Zaghlūl ḏibb [i]jnāḥak w irḥal balā\(^{244}\)

Ma tīḥmul min [i]Zghayb ālām w balā

1b) Owkh..Zaghloul, pack up your wings and leave don’t\(^{245}\)

Bear from Zoghayb pains and misfortunes

1c) Owkh. Pack up your wings and take off, Zaghloul, rather than suffering Zoghayb’s slings and arrows

\(^{244}\) Mousa is using an unusual rhyme here. Many of the words ending in “lā” that he incorporates do not normally come at the end of a clause, giving rise to a number of examples of enjambment (lines 1, 2, 7). Also, by itself, the rhyme cluster is the word “No.” In effect, Mousa subliminally cries “No” to Zaghloul line after line.

\(^{245}\) Here is one of the instances of enjambment across the hemistichs: balā//Ma tīḥmul (Don’t bear…)
39:59  1a’)  Zaghlul ḏibb [i]iǧnāḥak w ʿirḥal balā Ma tīḥmul b-hal-layl ālām w balā

1b’) Zaghloul, pack up your wings and leave don’t bear in this night247 pains and misfortune

1c’) Pack up your wings and take off, Zaghloul, rather than suffering this night’s slings and arrows

40:07  2a) [i]W ʾiṣrūkh ya maḥlā-l-bayt wī-r-raj’sa wa lā Tīṣrūkh tā ṣīṣ [i]Zghayb lā ḥawla wa lā

2b) And shout “how better is home and to return” and don’t shout248 at the tyranny of Zoghayb “there is no power except”249

2c) Say, “Home is where I should be” rather than Cry from Zoghayb’s tyranny, “There is no power except…”

246 Here Mousa repeats his first line, with changes as noted in next footnote.

247 Upon repetition of line 1, there are two changes: first hemistich leaves out “Ōkh” and second hemistich substitutes b-hal-layl (this night) for min [i]Zghayb (from Zoghayb).

248 Here is the second example of enjambment across the hemistichs: wa lā// Tīṣrūkh (and don’t // shout).

249 Mousa says lā ḥawla wa lā (There is no power except) which is an abbreviated version of the idiom lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bil-lāh (There is no power and no might save with God). This expression is used when one feels defeated and powerless at the hands of some force.
40:16 3a) [i]Btiṣur baṭal bil-kishitbān wahm inṭalā
3b) You squeeze a hero into a thimble is a deceptive illusion
3c) Squeezing a hero into a thimble is a deceptive fantasy
40:26 4a) Il-manbar izā biyīrīd dammī yā halā
4b) The stage if it wants my blood, it’s welcome
4c) If this stage wants my blood, it is welcome to it

Mish wa’it la’b [i]kshātbīnak wi-l-“galā”
It’s not time for playing with thimbles and “abracadabra”
This is no time for playing with thimbles and “abracadabra”
Ma biyihruj il-‘iddīs matlūb
The saint doesn’t get flustered by the demand of prayer
A saint doesn’t get flustered by the demands of prayer

250 In Ziadeh’s transcription he gives ḫal wa lā (Go or else) in place of wahm inṭalā (a deceptive illusion).

251 The expression “la’b [i]kshātbīnak,” literally, “playing with your thimbles” is also an idiom meaning to play tricks on people. Mousa uses this cleverly to repeat Zaghloul’s image of the thimble from the previous stanza and turn his own words against him.

252 Ziadeh gives “izā biyiḥtāj daffī” (if it needs my tambourine) instead of “izā biyīrīd dammī” (if it wants my blood).

253 Ziadeh gives “in-nāṣik bī” (the monk doesn’t get flustered by the demand of prayer) instead of “il-‘iddīs” (the demand of prayer doesn’t fluster the saint).
40:34 5a) W rasmak [i]twazza ١٨٩ a-l-bashar min w ilā ٢٥٤

5b) And your picture was spread on humankind from and to Ṭābi’ amīrī l-bukhul bi-snīn-il-ghalā

5c) Your picture was dispersed on humankind back and forth An official stamp like stinginess in expensive times

40:42 6a) W law lā tlāt nu’tāt min dammī salā Ramz id-dinī w-id-dīn ٢٥٦ bi-nfūs-il-malā

6b) And if three drops of my blood have flowed The symbol of the world and religion in the souls of the world

6c) And if three drops of my blood have spilled They are the symbol of world and religion in people’s hearts

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٢٥٤ The phrase “Ṭābi’ amīrī” means “an official stamp” and is usually for small denomination. The gist of it is that Zaghloul’s picture is equivalent to a cheap stamp.

٢٥٥ This line, while continuing to sling insults at Zaghloul, doesn’t follow logically from the general argument introduced in the first few lines. Mousa does get back to the argument in the next line.

٢٥٦ Ziadeh gives “hawdī shī‘ār id-dīn” (These are religion’s motto) instead of “Ramz id-dinī w-id-dīn” (The symbol of the world and religion).
البيرق لحتى تحمر وشق الفلا

40:50 7a) II-awwalī damm-il-baṭāl ʿarṭash ʿalā

7b) The first is the blood of the hero splattered upon

7c) *The first drop is that of the hero splattered upon*

والثالثة دم الحسين بكربلا

40:58 8a) W-it-ṭānyi damm-il-maṣīḥ ʿla-ṣ-ṣalīb

8b) And the second is the blood of Christ upon the cross

8c) *The second is the blood of Christ on the cross*

والتانية دم المسيح على الصليب

257 Here is a third instance of enjambment across the hemistichs: ʿalā/ L-bayraʿ (upon//the flag).

258 Mousa has taken the image of the three dots Zaghloul added to his name to change it from Mousa to Mousha to a new level in this stanza. He foreshadows the religious symbols in Line 2 with his abbreviated “There is no power or might save in God” and brilliantly ends his stanza with the three dots representing three drops of blood – one from the martyred national hero holding the flag, one from the Christian savior and martyr Jesus Christ, and one from al-Husayn, the Muslim saint and grandson of the prophet Muhammad martyred at the Battle of Karbala.
Choral Refrain:

والثالثة دم الحسين بكربلا (twice)

Wi-t- tāl [i] ti dam m-il-[i] Ḥu say n [i] b-[i] Ka r bā lā

And the third is the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala

*And the third is the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala*
3.3.7.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Seventh Exchange [38:11 – 41:23]

Zaghloul’s seventh stanza of maʾannā is eight lines in length and is based on the end rhyme –ān. This particular ending is not a grammatical suffix, and although it would have been an opportunity to incorporate Libnān (Lebanon) into his stanza, this is not one of the varieties of nouns, adjectives, and verbs Zaghloul used as rhymes.

In his seventh turn here, Zaghloul is masterful in his manipulation of all the elements that go into creating a great verbal duel stanza. In his first line he appeals to “the wings of Zaghloul” which are made of “cedar and oak,” two quintessential symbols for Lebanon, thus identifying himself with his and his audience’s beloved homeland. In his second line, he insults Mousa by addressing him as Yā falān (O falān), a word akin to the English “John Doe” used as a generic name for an otherwise nameless person, a nobody. It is especially insulting here considering how much attention both poets have been giving to Mousa’s actual name. The second half of line 2 is dedicated to boasting, which spills over into line 3. Zaghloul describes his odes as being so wondrous they cause the “rocks to soften” and describes himself as a master of rhyme and meter who changes words at will and without leaving “any chaff on the threshing floor.” In line 4 Zaghloul insists that despite Mousa’s attempts to control him he will go on “pushing and pulling” him, “filling the empty” and “emptying the full.” In the fifth line Zaghloul continues listing all the changes he will make to Mousa, focusing now on his body parts. He tells Mousa he will put his heart where is tongue is and his head “in that other place,” for which he draws a lot of laughter and applause from the audience. In line 6 Zaghloul tells Mousa he will “squeeze him into a thimble” and end the festival with the three drops of Mousa’s blood that filter through the sieve. Here we see further development of the image of the three dots introduced earlier, originally used by Zaghloul to turn Mousa into Mousha, then by Mousa as three eyes (two
plucked from Zaghloul), and now by Zaghloul as three drops of Mousa’s blood. This is the point at which Zaghloul begins the final lead-in to his clincher line. In line 7 he describes what he plans to do with each of the drops of Mousa’s blood. First, he says he will put one drop “in Japan.” The second drop will go to “the heart of red hell.” And the third will be left in Beit Mery, a tiny trace of him so people will know that “Mousha Zoghayb,” as Zaghloul wittily refers to him again, “was here.” These last two lines with the final hemistich ending emphatically on the simple past tense verb “was,” are some of Zaghloul’s most memorable lines, establishing him as a brilliantly imaginative and crushing opponent.

Mousa’s response is also an eight-line stanza of ma‘annā. He employs a very interesting rhyme sequence in this stanza based on the end rhyme –lā. Many of the words ending in “lā” that he incorporates do not normally come at the end of a clause, giving rise to an uncharacteristic number of examples of enjambment. In line 1, for example, Mousa ends the first hemistich with the word balā, spilling into the first word of the second hemistich to complete the clause balā ma tīḥmul (don’t bear/put up with/suffer). Mousa also ends the second hemistich of line 1 with the same word, balā, but this time with another meaning – misfortunes. Mousa gets even more mileage out of his wordplay when he repeats his first line (as we have seen Zaghloul do twice before), resulting in the repetition of balā four times. In line 2 we find another example of enjambment across the end of the first hemistich as Mousa ends with lā, a word in its own right, which is part of the clause completed by the first word in the second hemistich to form lā tiṣrūkh (don’t shout/cry). And as he did in line 1, Mousa uses the exact same rhyme word for both hemistichs of line 2, creating a play on the phrase wa lā. In both cases, wa lā (literally “and no”) is an incomplete phrase. In the case of the first usage at the end of the first hemistich, the meaning is completed in the second hemistich. In the case of the second usage, however, the
meaning is completed by the imagination of the listeners who, with their shared cultural-linguistic knowledge, recognize the second wa lā (which is part of the larger phrase lā ḥawla wa lā) as the beginning of the phrase lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bil-lāh (There is no power and no might save with God). This familiar expression is normally said when one feels defeated and powerless at the hands of some force. Later, in line 7, we find yet another example of enjambment when Mousa ends the first hemistich with the preposition ʿalā (on) and begins the second hemistich with its noun complement l-bayraʾ (the flag), completing the prepositional phrase “on the flag”. Also adding to the cleverness of Mousa’s chosen end rhyme is the fact that in itself lā means “No.” In effect, then, Mousa subliminally cries “No” to Zaghloul throughout this stanza, line after line, a total of fifteen times.

Mousa’s rhymes support his goal of admonishing Zaghloul and negating his arguments. He begins by telling Zaghloul to pack it up and go back home since he would be much safer there, away from Mousa’s arrows. He tells Zaghloul he would be better off pining over the benefits of staying home than screaming for God’s help from Mousa’s tyranny. He mocks Zaghloul’s notions of squeezing him into a thimble, calling such talk “a deceptive fantasy” and “abracadabra.” At this point in Mousa’s argument, line 3 of his stanza, he succeeds at incorporating yet more word play when he uses the expression “laʿb [i]kshāṭbīnāk,” literally, “playing with (your) thimbles,” which is also an idiomatic expression meaning to play tricks on people. Mousa uses this cleverly to repeat Zaghloul’s image of the thimble from the previous stanza and turn his own words against him. Next, Mousa brings up the matter of the three drops of blood and adds one more layer to this growing image. He begins by welcoming the idea of having his blood spilled, since the three drops of his blood will symbolize “the world and religion” to everyone. In particular, he continues, the drops will represent first, “the blood of the
hero splattered on the flag,” second, “the blood of Christ on the cross,” and third, “the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala.” These are clearly three striking images, all great examples of martyrdom, with which Mousa wishes to connect himself via his poetry.

Mousa has taken the original image of the three dots Zaghloul added to his name back at the beginning of the sixth exchange to a new level in this stanza. He foreshadows the religious symbols in Line 2 with his abbreviated “There is no power or might save in God” and brilliantly ends his stanza with the three dots representing three drops of blood – one from the martyred national hero holding the flag, one from the Christian savior and martyr Jesus Christ, and one from al-Husayn, the Muslim saint and grandson of the prophet Muhammad martyred at the Battle of Karbala.
3.3.8. Eighth Exchange

3.3.8.1. Zaghloul

41:24 1a) Yā wāʾī b-nuṭā in-nuʿāṭ mish hayyīnī

1b) O he who has fallen into a drop\textsuperscript{259}, drops are not easy

1c) You fell into my trap, those drops are a serious matter

\[\text{In my hands you’re caught in seriousness not childishness}\]

41:37 2a) Ir-rāyi-l-bi-dammāt ish-shahīd [i]mlawwānī

2b) The flag which with the blood of the martyr is colored

2c) That flag which is dyed with the martyr’s blood

\[\text{About your black blood its honor can do without}\]

\[\text{Its honor has no use for your black blood}\]

\textsuperscript{259} The expression \textit{wāʾī b-nuṭā} has the literal meaning “fallen into a drop” but as an idiomatic expression it means to suffer from a blood clot and suffer a seizure or stroke or aneurism. Zaghloul is also saying, “You who has fallen into my trap,” the trap being the game of the three dots starting from changing Mousa’s name to Mousha.
41:47 3a) W dam-il-Husayn [i]b-Karbalā id-damm-il-ghanī  
Ra’bit-ish-shumr [i]’bāl majdū b-tinḥīnī  
3b) And the blood of Husayn in Karbala the precious blood  
The neck of the great people before his glory bends  
3c) And that precious blood of Husayn in Karbala  
The necks of great men bend down before its glory

41:57 4a) W dam-il-fadā sha’b-il-jaras w-il-maydanī  
Mannū li Mūsā-l-khaybarī w fi’lu-d-danī  
4b) The blood of him who redeemed the people of the bell and minarets  
It is not for Mousa the Khaybari and his lowly action
4c) And the blood of the redeemer of the people of the bells and the minarets  
Wasn’t shed for Mousa of Khaybar and his lowly actions

260 The people of the bells” refers to Christians and “the people of the minarets” refers to Muslims.

261 Khaybar was the largest Jewish settlement during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and was the site of frequent battles with the new religion. Zaghloul is calling Mousa a “Khaybari,” in other words, a Jew from Khaybar, someone who was looked down upon for opposing the Prophet’s new religion.
42:07 5a) W[i] tlāt nu’aṭ dammak bi-sā’a miḥzinī

Waddūk ētā tīnī wē marsī mṣawbanī

5b) And three drops of your blood in a sad hour

Led you to a fig tree and a noose

5c) It was three drops of your blood which in a sad hour

Led you to a fig tree and a noose

42:17 6a) Hawdī-l-maṣārī illī ’abāḍt-un ē-īl-l-masīḥ

Nṭarshū ēkāfak kill nu’tā fī dinī

6b) These are the money that you were paid for Christ

They splattered onto your palm each drop in a world

6c) Those drops were the blood money you were paid for Christ

They fell onto your palm and splattered in every direction

Choral Refrain:

42:25

انطرشوا عا كفك كل نقطة في دني (twice)

[twice]N ṭar shū ēkāf fa k[i] kil l[i] nu’ ṭā fī di nī

They splattered onto your palm each drop in a world

They fell onto your palm and splattered in every direction

262 The term used for “noose”, marsī mṣawbanī, literally means “a soapy rope” or a rope treated with oil soap to strengthen it. Zaghloul is alluding to Judas hanging himself from a fig tree, i.e. calling Mousa a Judas.
3.3.8.2. Mousa

تحول وصايا جداد اقراهن مليح

42:44 1a) Īkh.‘Abl-il-mašārī id-damm ʕā kaffī-l-jarīḥ

1b) Owkh..Before the money the blood on my wounded hand

1c) Owkh..Before the money, the blood on my wounded hand

Transformed into new commandments read them carefully

42:54 2a) Awwal waṣiyyi lāzim-ij-jaw’-iṣ-ṣāḥīḥ

2b) The first commandment the correct jawqa should

2c) The first commandment: Let the true jawqa

Raise the zajal of Lebanon to the level of the eloquent/fusha

بهالدير يمرق تحت سكين الدبيح

43:03 3a) W-it-tānyī kull dīk ma b-yaʿrif yiṣīḥ

3b) And the second any rooster that doesn’t know how to crow

3c) And the second: Any rooster that doesn’t know how to crow

In this monastery passes under the knife of butchery

yatū waṣiyya jdād iqrā-hun mlīḥ

[T]-حوالال واشییا جدید اقرانه مليح

أوک..قبل المصاري الدم على يد الجريح

Transformed into new commandments; read them carefully!

أول وصیة لازم الجوق الصحيح

Tooltip for 1b)

وک..Before the money the blood on my wounded hand

Tooltip for 1c)

وک..Before the money, the blood on my wounded hand

Tooltip for 2a)

اول وصیة لازم الجوق الصحيح

Tooltip for 2b)

The first commandment the correct jawqa should

Tooltip for 2c)

The first commandment: Let the true jawqa

Tooltip for 3a)

والثانية كل ديك ما يعرف يصيح

Tooltip for 3b)

And the second any rooster that doesn’t know how to crow

Tooltip for 3c)

And the second: Any rooster that doesn’t know how to crow

Tooltip for 3b)

In this monastery, must submit to the butcher’s knife
43:11 4a) W-it-tāltī iṣ-ḥā-l-wiʿūf b-wajih rīḥ
And the third be wary of standing in the face of a wind
4b) And the fourth if you break it you won’t ever rest
4c) The third: Don’t stand in the face of a strong wind
And the fourth, if you break it, you’ll never rest

والرابعة انخالفتها ما بتستريح

43:19 5a) W-il-khāmsī w-is-sādsī t-ḥāshā-l-qabīḥ
And the fifth and the sixth stay away from the ugly
5b) And the seventh and the eighth help the lame
5c) The fifth and the sixth: Keep away from ugliness
And the seventh and eighth: Help the crippled

والسابعة والتامنة عين الكسيح

43:27 6a) W-it-tāsā kimm-il-afāʾī mn-il-faḥīḥ
And the ninth muzzle the vipers from hissing
6b) And the tenth don’t deceive yourself with praise
6c) The ninth: Muzzle the vipers and stop their hissing
And the tenth: Don’t deceive yourself with excess praise

وذا الوصايا تغمر الكون الفسيح

43:34 7a) W hayk Mūsā kān bil-māḍī ṣarīḥ
In this way Moses was in the past blunt
7b) In this way Moses was in the past frank
7c) This was Moses’ way in the past, to be blunt
He let the commandments inundate the spacious universe
And let the commandments flood the universe

والنinth: Muzzle the vipers and stop their hissing
And the tenth don’t deceive yourself with praise

وذا الوصايا تغمر الكون الفسيح

وهيك موسى كان بالماضي صريح

He let the commandments inundate the spacious universe
And let the commandments flood the universe

وهيك موسى كان بالماضي صريح

And let the commandments flood the universe
8a) ‘Abl-ish-sharāyìc w-ir-risul w-il-anbiyā

8b) Before religious laws and the messengers and the prophets

8c) Long before religious laws and messengers and prophets

Choral Refrain:

W[i] ‘ab[i] la k[i] w[i] ‘ab[i]l- ū tāja ṫ um- damm il- maṣīḥ

And before you and before those who did business with the blood of Christ

And long before you and those who sold out Christ’s blood
3.3.8.3. Verbal Duel Summary and Explication: Eighth Exchange [41:24 – 44:03]

Zaghloul’s eighth turn is a six-line stanza of maʿannā. His lines are based on end rhyme –nī, which, as mentioned before, is a multipurpose grammatical suffix. This time around, six of his eleven rhymes are words ending in the feminine suffix: hayyinī (easy), waldanī (childishness), mlawwanī (colored), maydanī (minaret), miḥzinī (saddening), mṣawbanī (soaped; soapy). The others are nouns, adjectives, and verbs that happen to end in –nī. As Zaghloul proceeds through his lines, constructing his argument and creating yet another transformation for the three dots image, he indulges in a lot of clever and witty word play. His opening hemistich is the first example, which he begins with a play on the literal meaning of the word nuʾṭā (drop) nestled inside the idiomatic expression: wāʾi b-nuʾṭā (literally, one who has fallen into a drop). As an idiomatic expression the phrase means to suffer from a blood clot and suffer a seizure or stroke or aneurism. The phrasing is also reminiscent of Zaghloul’s earlier stanza during the third exchange when he played on the notion of Mousa “falling into the trap.” When he starts this new stanza with “O you who has fallen into a drop,” Zaghloul implies, “You who has fallen into my trap,” the trap being the game of the three dots Zaghloul started when he changed Mousa’s name to Mousha. Zaghloul goes on to warn Mousa “drops are not easy!”

Zaghloul also employs interesting wordplay in line 4 when he describes Christians and Muslims using the metonyms il-jaras (the bell) and il-maydanī (the minaret). In the second hemistich of the same line, Zaghloul plays a new game with Mousa’s name, calling him Mousa the Khaybari. The allusion is to Khaybar, the largest Jewish settlement during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the site of the Battle of Khaybar. Zaghloul calls Mousa a “Khaybari,” in other words, a Jew from Khaybar, someone who was looked down upon for opposing the Prophet’s new religion.
In terms of Zaghloul’s argument and strategy in this stanza, his goal was to undermine the three positive images Mousa introduced in his seventh stanza and transform them one by one into negative ones. He begins with the image of “the blood of the hero splattered on the flag,” and negates it saying that honorable flag has no use for Mousa’s black blood. This is one of many instances during the duel when Zaghloul attacks Mousa personally by referring to his dark skin color in derogatory terms. Next, Zaghloul tackles Mousa’s image of the precious blood of al-Husayn in Karbala. This time he argues that the blood of that great martyr, to which great people bow their heads in humility, was meet for redeeming “the people of the bell and the minaret,” (i.e. the Christians and the Muslims) but that blood was not spilled for the likes of Mousa al-Khaybari (i.e. an anti-Islam rebel) and his lowly actions. The final image, that of the blood of Christ the savior, is transformed by Zaghloul into the pieces of silver (three drops of blood…thirty pieces of silver) taken by Judas as payment for Christ’s blood. In his final lines, Zaghloul makes Mousa out to be the Judas, and the drops of blood are the pieces of silver spilling onto his hand.

Mousa responds to Zaghloul with an eight-line stanza of ma’annā based on the end rhyme –īḥ. This rhyme is not any sort of grammatical suffix, but is most likely recognized from the outset to have been chosen as the final clincher rhyme il-masīḥ (the Messiah; i.e. Christ). Although the rhymes this time cannot be classified according to grammatical suffixes, as we have observed in many cases, many of Mousa’s rhymes, including the clincher rhyme il-masīḥ, share the very common morphological pattern faʿīl: jarīḥ (wounded), mlīḥ (carefully), sahīḥ (correct), faṣīḥ (eloquent), dbīḥ (butchery), qabīḥ (ugly), kasīḥ (lame), faḥīḥ (hissing), madīḥ (praise), šarīḥ (frank), fasīḥ (spacious).
Mousa’s argument in this stanza revolves around deflecting Zaghloul’s accusation of being like Judas and accepting blood money for Christ and recasting himself as being akin to the biblical Moses. He begins by describing his own palms as “wounded” and tells Zaghloul that he has received ten new commandments for him to follow. This is a variation on the listing strategy we have seen Mousa (and Zaghloul) use very effectively before. Mousa’s new set of commandments, all of which apply to the current contest and the world of zajal poetry in general, are as follows: First commandment – Let the true jawqa (presumably Mousa’s) raise zajal to the highest levels of eloquence; Second commandment – Roosters who can’t crow (Zaghloul and his jawqa?) should submit to the butcher’s knife; Third commandment – Don’t stand in a strong wind (i.e. Mousa’s powerful poetry?); Fourth commandment – This one should not be broken (though Mousa does not really say what it is) and if you break it, you will never rest; Fifth and Sixth commandments – Stay away from ugliness (Zaghloul and his poetry?); Seventh and Eighth – Help the crippled (does Mousa mean to be magnanimous here, condescending to help handicapped Zaghloul?); Ninth commandment – Muzzle the vipers (Zaghloul and his crew?) and stop their hissing; Tenth commandment – Don’t deceive yourself with excessive praise (warning to Zaghloul not to boast so much?).

Mousa closes his stanza by cementing his alignment with and resemblance to the biblical Moses (“this was Moses’ way in the past, to be blunt and flood the universe with his commandments”) before turning the tables on Zaghloul and implying that it was Zaghloul and his cohorts (and not Mousa) who “sold out Christ’s blood.”
3.3.9. Ninth Exchange

3.3.9.1. Zaghloul

وعاخب موسي وشعب موسي تغضبي

44:04 1a) Of... Of... Ha’ik yā nijmāt-īs-samā’ titkahrabī
W ā khbār Mūsā w sha’ib Mūsā tighḍlabī
1b) Owf. Owf. It’s your right, O stars of the sky, to get upset
And on the news of Mousa and the people of Mousa get angry

1c) Owf. O stars of the sky, you have every right to be upset
1c) Owf. O stars of the sky, you have every right to be upset
Hearing all this nonsense of Mousa and the people of Mousa

44:23 2a) Shū bāk mish fāhim shū ‘aṣḍī w maṭlabī
Bḥākīk hawn [i] w ʿam [i] tṛidd bbū ṣabī
2b) What’s with you not knowing what I mean and want
I address you here and you’re answering in Abu Dhabi

2c) What’s wrong with you? Why don’t you catch my drift?
I talk to you here and you answer in Abu Dhabi

44:34 3a) Halla’ kinit ʿāmil za’īm-il-martabī
Mʿarram mitil shī dik faw’-il-maṣṭābī
3b) Now you were acting like the commander of the trade
Puffed up like some rooster on a high fence

3c) Just now you were acting like the master of the trade
All puffed up like some rooster crowing on the rooftop

263 Remember that Zaghloul opened the duel by mentioning the stars.
44:44 4a) Shū khašnī b-daffak w kaffak yā ghabī
Rūḥ shūf bakhtak ma [i]mnajjim mughrabī

4b) What’ve I to do with your tambourine and palm, idiot
Go see your luck with a gypsy fortune teller

4c) What do I care about your tambourine and palm, you idiot?
Go see your future with a gypsy fortune teller

44:44 4a) Shū khašnī b-daffak w kaffak yā ghabī
Rūḥ shūf bakhtak ma [i]mnajjim mughrabī

4b) What’ve I to do with your tambourine and palm, idiot
Go see your luck with a gypsy fortune teller

4c) What do I care about your tambourine and palm, you idiot?
Go see your future with a gypsy fortune teller

44:53 5a) [i]Shbiṅnā taharrub yā ʾadīm-il-mawhabī
Isbit-lak ʾalā shīʾ isim ḥājī sha’labī

5b) We’ve had enough of your fleeing, you devoid of talent one
Settle yourself on some name enough somersaulting

5c) We’ve had enough of your fleeing, talentless one
Settle on one name, enough doing cartwheels

45:03 6a) [i]B-ʾilmī ʾmilit ḥālak ibin bint-in-nabī
W ʾĪsā-l-masīḥ il-ʾa ḥūḍun immū ribī

6b) To my knowledge you made yourself the Prophet’s grandson
And Jesus Christ who in his mother’s lap was raised

6c) So far I’ve heard you claim to be the Prophet’s grandson
And Jesus Christ, raised in his mother’s warm embrace

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264 This entire line was left out of Ziadeh’s manuscript.

265 Note here that the image of the “palm” has been volleyed back and forth several times by both poets. In this instance, Zaghloul uses it (kaffak) in a rhyming phrase with (daffak), drawing attention to it.
45:11  7a) [i]W lammā sh‘īrīt šārit ḥayātak mit‘ibī
And when you felt your life became tiresome
Ballashit tistanjid bi Mūsā-l-ajnabī
You started appealing to Mousa the foreigner
7b) And when you felt your life was on the line
You made an appeal to Mousa the foreigner
7c) And when you felt your life became tiresome
You started appealing to Mousa the foreigner

45:19  8a) Fādī-n-Naṣāra w-ir-rasūl-il-yārubī
The savior of the Nazarenes and the Messenger of the Arabs
Itrik-hun li-aš-ḥāb-il-‘amāyim w-il-‘ibī
Leave them to the owners of the turbans and the abayas
8b) The savior from Nazareth and Messenger of the Arabs
Leave those guys to the wearers of turbans and robes
8c) The savior from Nazareth and Messenger of the Arabs
Leave those guys to the wearers of turbans and robes

45:28  9a) [i]W jīb-il-‘āṣiyi-l-‘inid Mūsā šāḥbak
And get the staff belonging to Moses your friend
Ta-l-yawm kassir-hā ʿā rāsak yā šabī
So today I can break it over your head, little boy
9b) And get the staff belonging to Moses your friend
So today I can break it over your head, little boy
9c) And get me your buddy Moses’s staff
So I can break it over your head right here and now, little boy

266 In this stanza Zaghloul delivers some of his most vicious and memorable lines. He resorts to name-calling twice: once in line 4 when he says, “You idiot” and in the final hemistich when he says, “Little boy.” Like his description of the stars in the opening line, Zaghloul is “electrified” with anger and lashes out at Mousa from beginning to end.
Choral Refrain:

45:35 (twice)

Ta-l- ya w[i] m[i] kas si r[i] -hā ʿā rā sa k[i] yā ša bī

So today I can break it over your head, little boy

So I can break it over your head right here and now, little boy

3.3.9.2. Mousa

باب الزغيبي باب جعفر برمكي

45:51


1b) Owkh..Oh hungry ones (twice) gather at this kingdom The gate of the Zoghaybi; the gate of Jafar Barmaki

1c) Owkh..Come to my kingdom, hungry ones Through the gate of Zoghayb, the gate of Jafar Barmaki

ذكر العصا عيب وسخافة ومضحكي

46:02

2a) [i]W jaww-il-adab w-ish-shiʿr ghayr-il-maʿrakī Zikr-il-ʿaṣā ʿayb w sakhāfī w maḍḥakī

2b) And the atmosphere of literature and poetry not battles Mentioning the staff is shameful and dim-witted and laughable

2c) Into the world of literature and poetry, not the battlefield Mentioning the staff is shameful, dim-witted, and laughable!

267 The reference is to the famous Barmakid family. Jafar Barmaki inherited the position of vizier to the Arab Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Jafar Barmaki appears along with the Caliph Harun al-Rashid in many stories of The Thousand and One Nights. He was famous for his eloquence, love of pleasure and parties, and for his generosity (Encyclopaedia Brittanica Online).
3/ The man’s glory is in his well-chosen words.

3a) Il-insān majdū fī kalāmū -l-mā shikī

3b) A man’s glory is in his words that don’t draw complaints

3c) Man’s glory is in his well-chosen words

4/ And the most expensive talk is Ahmad’s Quran if it spoke

4a) W aghlā- l-ḥakī Qur’ān Aḥmad law ḥikī

4b) The most expensive talk is Ahmad’s Quran if it spoke

4c) The richest talk is the Quran of Muhammad had it spoken

5/ I gave you commandments holy and blessed

5a) Iṭṭaytak waṣāyā m’addaṣī w[i] mbārakī

5b) I gave you commandments holy and blessed

5c) I gave you commandments that were holy and blessed

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268 Ziadeh’s transcription gives “majdū bil-ḥakī il-mā byishtikī,” (his glory is in talk that doesn’t complain).

269 Mousa uses the name Ahmad rather than Muhammad for the meter. Both names stem from the same root (hamada) and are used interchangeably as names for the Prophet.
46:37 6a) Yā lijni t-taḥkīm ‘ibkī w-ʿiddakī
Raḥ mūt min insān mit-ḥaddī-z-zakī
6b) O panel of judging cry and laugh
I’m going to die from a person who dares the smart one
6c) Dear judges, cry and laugh
This one who dares challenge the intelligent one is killing me

46:45 7a) Radd-il-waṣāyā w šār yis’al ʿa-l-ʿaṣā
W lā bil-ʿaṣā raḥ yifḥam [i]w lā bil-ḥakī
7b) He refused the commandments and began asking for the staff
Neither by the staff will he understand nor by talking
7c) He rejected the commandments and asked for the staff
He’ll never understand, by talking or by the staff!

Choral Refrain:

(�twice)

46:52
W lā bi l-ʿa šā raḥ yifḥam [i]w lā bil-ḥa kī (twice)
Neither by the staff will he understand nor by talking
He’ll never understand, by talking or by the staff!

Zaghloul’s ninth maʿannā stanza consists of nine lines with end rhyme –bī. As mentioned previously, the ī suffix has several grammatical uses. A large number of Zaghloul’s rhymes in this stanza can be classified into grammatical suffix categories as follows: second person verb suffix – titkahrabī (you get upset), tīghābī (you get angry); pronoun suffix - maṭlabī (my request); feminine suffix - il-martabī (the trade), il-maṣṭabī (high fence), il-mawhabī (talent), sha’labī (somersaulting), miṭ ibī (tiresome); nisba (relative adjective) suffix – mughrabī (gypsy), ajnabī (foreign), yaʿrubī (Arab). A couple of Zaghloul’s rhymes, which are not included in this list, are noteworthy for their effectiveness as word choices. First, in line 2, the rhyme on Abu Dhabi at the end of the second hemistich punctuates a very witty remark. Zaghloul complains about Mousa’s attempts to change the subject and divert the audience’s attention. He says, “What’s wrong with you? Don’t you understand what I am saying? I’m talking to you right here, why are you answering me from Abu Dhabi?” The audience reacts to this with laughter and applause as Zaghloul emphasizes his insult with especially beautiful intonation [44:23]. And a little later on, in line 4, Zaghloul’s rhyme at the end of the first hemistich is a blatant insult when he calls Mousa, “Yā ghābī,” (literally, O stupid one). This resonates with the final clincher rhyme when Zaghloul ends his turn by calling Mousa “Yā ṣabī,” (literally, O little boy). Note that these two phrases, Yā ghābī and Yā ṣabī are metrically identical, examples of formulaic substitutes.

As Zaghloul works his way through the successive lines of his stanza, he follows a formulaic pattern we have seen already in his and Mousa’s previous stanzas. He begins with an appeal to the stars, which we will remember is how he opened his first stanza of the duel. He addresses the stars directly, empathizing with them for having to put up with Mousa and all his
nonsense. In the second line, he addresses Mousa directly, making the witty insult about Mousa evading the issue and answering from “Abu Dhabi.” He begins a new angle of attack in line 3, which is to pursue the notion that Mousa “doesn’t get it,” despite portraying himself not long ago as “master of the trade” and puffing himself up “like a rooster on the rooftop.” Note the reappearance of the rooster image, which was part of Mousa’s Second Commandment (Roosters who can’t crow should submit to the butcher’s knife). Once again we see how the poets turn their opponents’ own words against them. Zaghloul continues with this strategy in his fourth line in which we see the palm image turned upside down. In the first hemistich, Zaghloul uses word play to belittle Mousa’s palm with the catchy phrase, “daffak w kaffak” (your tambourine and your palm). In this hemistich, when Zaghloul says, “What have I got to do with your tambourine and your palm, you idiot?” not only does he get mileage out of the catchy sound of daffak w kaffak, but he is adding another layer of insult with the specific word “tambourine” as a metonym for zajal poetry, owing to the integral role the tambourine plays in the poet’s delivery of a line with tambourine raised. In effect, then, Zaghloul is saying, “What’ve I got to do with your palm and your stupid poetry!” Then in the second hemistich he ridicules Mousa even more, telling him to go see a “gypsy fortune teller,” who can presumably read Mousa’s palm for him.

In the fifth line, Zaghloul continues ridiculing Mousa, calling him “talentless one,” and accusing him of “flip-flopping.” This sets off a list beginning in line 6 of all the different names and faces Mousa has tried on over the course of the duel: the Prophet’s grandson, Jesus Christ, Mousa the foreigner, the Savior of the Nazarenes, and the Messenger of the Arabs. Zaghloul incorporates metonymy once again, telling Mousa to “leave that to the owners of turbans (headdress) and robes” (i.e religious men). With his list complete and the momentum reaching its peak, Zaghloul delivers the clincher line with a return to the image of Moses and his staff, which he introduced
in his fourth stanza, and tells Mousa to “Go get your buddy Moses’ staff so I can whack you over the head with it, Little Boy!”

Mousa responds with a seven-line stanza of ma’annā using the end rhyme –kī. Although the consonant before the final ī is “k” and not “b” this end rhyme is very close to Zaghloul’s rhyme. Mousa’s rhymes can also be categorized according to grammatical suffixes as follows: feminine suffix – mamlakī (kingdom), il-maḍḥakī (laughable), mshārakī (shared), mbārakī (blessed); nisba suffix (relative adjective) – Barmakī (family name meaning Barmakid), zakī (smart); second person verb suffix - idḥakī (laugh). Many of the rhymes also can be classified as having the characteristic final ī of a special class of Arabic verbs known as “weak” verbs: mā shīkī (did not complain), yittikī (leans on), ḥikī (he spoke) and its cognate ḥakī (speech), and bikī (he cried).

Following the formulaic protocol, Mousa begins his stanza with a plea to “the hungry ones,” inviting them to his “kingdom.” He ushers them in through the “Gate of Zoghayb (Mousa’s family name)” which, according to his poetic line, is synonymous with the “Gate of Jafar Barmaki,” thus creating a metaphor equating his family (the Zoghaybi) with the famous Barmaki family. Jafar Barmaki was vizier to the Arab Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid and the name Jafar Barmaki appears along with the Caliph Harun al-Rashid in many stories from The Thousand and One Nights. He was famous for his eloquence, love of pleasure and parties, and for his generosity. In the second line, Mousa turns his attention to attacking Zaghloul. He does this by contrasting his kingdom, “the world of literature and poetry,” with Zaghloul’s insistence on “the battlefield,” and his “shameful, dimwitted, and laughable” mention of the staff. In his third line, Mousa insists that a man’s strength comes not from the violence of hitting someone with a staff, but from his words. Concentrating on the staff image, Mousa admonishes Zaghloul
in a somewhat subtle manner as he points out what a man really needs a staff for is “to lean on” in his old age. In his fourth line, Mousa develops the idea of the value of words further, pointing to specific examples which are again of a religious nature – the Holy Quran and the Gospel of Jesus plus the Ten Commandments. This leads to Mousa’s fifth line in which he mentions the ten new commandments he offered earlier (eighth exchange). He reprimands Zaghloul for not accepting those holy and blessed commandments and for turning a blind eye to “religious law.” In line 6, Mousa makes a new plea, to the judging panel this time, telling them to go ahead and “Cry and laugh!” and complaining to them about this “one who dares challenge the smart one (i.e. Mousa himself)”. Note how Mousa’s end rhyme here is the word zakī (smart one), the antonym of Zaghloul’s ghabī (stupid). In effect, and without saying it directly, Mousa inverts Zaghloul’s accusation that he is “stupid” by calling himself “smart.” Mousa takes this one step further in his seventh and final line, by implying that Zaghloul is the “stupid” one, since no matter how much he talks to Zaghloul or even how hard he hits him with the staff, nothing can make him understand!
3.3.10. Tenth Exchange

3.3.10.1. Zaghloul

46:54  1a) Yā lijnit-il-ḥikm ihtidī ʾā baydarī

1b) Oh panel of judging be led to my threshing floor

1c) Come this way to my threshing floor, Judges

And see the boon and the bounty all over the place

See all the boon and bounty pouring forth

47:05  2a) Law kūn ʾam biḥkī shī wāḥad hamsharī

2b) If I were speaking to some vagabond

2c) If I were talking to some vagabond

Or someone plentiful of words and chatter

Or some garrulous chatterbox

١/ يا لجنة الحكم اهتدي عا بيدري

وشف الرزق والخير عم يدري دري

أو شي حدا كتير الكلام وثرثري

لوكومن عم بحكي شي واحد همثري

٢/ لو كنت عم بحكي شي واحد همثري

٢٧٠ Ziadeh’s transcript gives “šūf-il-ʾmnih w-il-khayr” (see the wheat and the bounty) rather than “šūf-il-rizi’ w-il-khayr” (see the boon and the bounty).

٢٧١ Here in Line 2 Zaghloul begins a seven-hemstich hypotheses to a conditional statement in which he lists one image after another of incompetent competitors he would have an easier time understanding than Mousa. It is a particularly effective use of the listing strategy that allows Zaghloul to sling a witty and colorful crescendo of insults at his opponent before releasing the energy in the final lines of his stanza. His delivery is strong and melismatic and the riddādi and audience are clearly enthralled by it.
أو شيء صنم واقف بمتحف سنكري

3a) Aw akhwat w fāʾid ṣawābū-l-jawharī
3b) Or a lunatic who has lost his essential balance
3c) Or some madman who’s lost his marbles

أو أخرس وما بيلحم لسانو بغري

4a) Aw aṭrash w shū ṣār ḥawlū mā dirī
4b) Or a deaf man what happened around him he didn’t know
4c) Or some deaf man with no idea what’s happening around him

أكتر ما عم بفهم عليك ببيت مري

5a) Kint [i]fhimit min ha-l-ghashīm-il-barbarī
5b) I would have understood from the barbaric fool
5c) I’d understand from such a barbaric fool

آكتر ما عم بفهم عليك ببيت مري

1/3) أو أخوت وفاقد صوابو الجوهری

47:15

Or a lunatic who has lost his essential balance

Or some idol standing in the museum of a tinsmith

Or some statue on display in a tinsmith’s museum

47:23

Or a deaf man what happened around him he didn’t know

Or a mute his tongue doesn’t get fixed with glue

Or a mute whose tongue can’t even be fixed with glue

47:30

More than I’m understanding you in Beit Mery

Much more than I’m getting from you in Beit Mery
6a) Ḥakyak mā biyfahhim ḥadā [i]w lannū ṭarī

W lā brīd ismak yinkatab fī daftarī

6b) Your talk doesn’t make anyone understand nor is it fresh

And I don’t want your name written in my record book

6c) Your words make no sense to anyone, nor are they fresh

I don’t want your name written in my record book

لما لقيتك عالشعر عم تفرتي

7a) W bayn-il-waṣāyā w-il-ṣāṣā [i]w bayc w shirī

Lammā la’aytak ẓash-shi’h c‘am tiftirī

7b) Between the commandments and staff and selling and buying

When I found you on poetry fabricating lies

7c) Between the commandments and staff and the buying and selling

When I found you turning poetry into lies

واكتب بايدي وصيتك عا منبري

وتركت الوصايا والعصا وبيع وشري

8a) Trakt-il-waṣāyā w jīt iftaḥ ‘anbarī

W iktub bi-‘īdī wṣ yiiyitak ẓā manbarī

8b) I left the commandments and came to open my storehouse

And write in my hand your will and testament on my stage

8c) I left the commandments and opened my storehouse of knowledge

And handwrote your will and testament here on my stage

زiadah’s transcript gives “w lā sha‘ rak τατη” (and your poetry isn’t tender) rather than “w lannū τατη” (and it (your talk) isn’t tender either).

I suspect Zaghloul throws in this phrase (selling and buying) to fill the line more than for added meaning. It is a cliché that here could mean arguing back and forth.

Note here that the poetic sentence continues into the next line.
48:11  
9a) [i]W min hawn mish raḥ rūḥ tā khallī-l-‘aṣā, 
Til‘ab ʿalā jnābak tā jildak yihtirī

9b) And from here I will not leave until I make the staff 
Play on your sides until your skin is torn to pieces

9c) I will not leave this place until I make this staff 
Play upon your sides and tear your skin to pieces

Choral Refrain:

48:20 
Til ʿa b[i] ʿa lā j[i] nā ba k[i] tā jil da k[i] yih ti rī (twice)
Play on your sides until your skin is torn to pieces

Play upon your sides and tear your skin to pieces

Zaghloul now delivers the final stanza of ma‘annā. Mousa’s response will be the first of the closing qaṣīds, of which each poet will deliver two stanzas. Since Mousa opened the party, delivering the first of the Iftitāhiyyi qaṣīds, Zaghloul should have the last word and deliver the final closing qaṣīd. Whether it was planned as such or not, Zaghloul ends up having one extra turn in the ma‘annā form.

This, Zaghloul’s tenth ma‘annā stanza, is nine lines in length and also features a rhyme ending in the grammatical suffix ī, the end rhyme –rī. Many of Zaghloul’s rhymes can once again be categorized accordingly: pronoun suffix – baydarī (my threshing floor), daftarī (my notebook), ānbarī (my storehouse of knowledge), manbarī (my stage); nisba suffix – hamsharī (vagabond), jawharī (essential), sangarī (tinsmith), barbarī (barbaric), sarsarī (chatter); words stemming from “weak” verbs - yidrī darī (all over the place), mā dirī (he didn’t know), ghirī (glue), ṭarī (fresh, tender), shirī (buying), and tıftırirī (fabricating lies).

We also find in this stanza a number of examples of Zaghloul’s tendency to use pairs of cognates or homonyms. For example, at the end of line 1, the idiomatic expression yidrī darī, meaning “all over the place,” or “in abundance,” consists of the verb yidrī (literally “it knows”) and its gerund darī (literally “knowing”), forming a cognate accusative construction used for emphasis. Later on, in line 4, the phrase mā dirī (he didn’t know) contains dirī, which also stems from the same verb stem. In line 5, the first hemistich contains the verb fhimit (I understood) and the second hemistich contains bifham (I understand). This same verb appears once more in the first hemistich of line 6: mā biyfahhim (doesn’t make one understand). In line 7 we find an example of a catchy phrase containing a pair of opposites - bayī w shirī (selling and buying), in
this case perhaps more valuable to Zaghloul for its musicality than for helping to strengthen the impact of his argument.

As we have come to expect, Zaghloul’s first line makes an address to the judging panel, ushering them to his “threshing floors” where they can enjoy the “boon and the bounty.” In line 2 he turns his attention to attacking Mousa, making use of the listing strategy again. Here in Line 2 Zaghloul begins a seven-hemistich hypotheses to a conditional statement in which he lists one image after another of incompetent competitors he would have an easier time understanding than Mousa. This is a particularly effective use of the listing strategy as it allows Zaghloul to sling a witty and colorful crescendo of insults at his opponent before releasing the energy in the final lines of his stanza. His delivery is strong and melismatic and the riddādi and audience are clearly enthralled by it. In particular, Zaghloul builds a crescendo of images framed by the conditional clause, “If only I were talking to a….,” in which he includes “some vagabond,” “some garrulous chatter box,” “some madman whose lost his marbles,” “some statue in a tinsmith’s museum,” “some deaf man who doesn’t know what’s going on around him,” “a mute whose tongue can’t be fixed with glue,” or “some barbaric fool,” all of whom Zaghloul could understand better than what he is getting from Mousa “in Beit Mery.” With the rhyme ending on the place name where the zajal battle is taking place, the conclusion of the crescendo and of Zaghloul’s line is easily anticipated by the audience and leads to a loud and enthusiastic applause.

While line 5 with its ending on “in Beit Mery” might have made an excellent clincher line, Zaghloul’s argument (and stanza) does not end there. In the remaining four lines, Zaghloul runs with the notion that Mousa doesn’t make sense and tells him with disdain, “I don’t want your name written in my record book.” He takes on Mousa’s rebuke for his not accepting the
commandments by citing them as examples of Mousa “turning poetry into lies.” Zaghloul gives this as his reason for “leaving the commandments” and resorting to his own “storehouse of knowledge.” Zaghloul ends his turn with an image of a sort of holy writ of his own – Mousa’s last will and testament and an oath to keep whipping Mousa with the staff “until his skin is shred to pieces.”
3.4. Verbal Duel between Zaghloul al-Damour and Mousa Zoghayb: Closing *Qaṣīds*

3.4.1. First Closing *Qaṣīd* of Mousa Zoghayb

لهيك مجال يهبط مستواي

Li hayk [i]mjāl yihbuṭ mustawāyi

1/ أُرخ... جنايي بعد بروزك جنايي

48:40 1a) Ōkh..Ōkh..janāyi ba’d Bū Rūkuz janāyi

For in such a circumstance my level falls

1b) Owf..a crime after Abu Rukuz a crime

1c) *Owf. What a crime, after the great Rukuz, what a crime* For me to have to stoop so low now

كون برفقة الزغلول جايمي

2/ وكلما بيسألوا الشعار عنني

48:54 2a) [i]W kill mā b-yis’alū [i]sh-shīc-ār275 annī

I would be in the company of Zaghloul coming

2b) And whenever the poets ask about me

2c) *And every time the poets ask about me* To be found in the company of Zaghloul

زرعها النصر رايي حد رايي

3/ سباععشر سنو وحصون فنني

49:05 3a) Sab’at ʿashar sini w[i] ḥṣūn fannī

Victory planted them flag beside a flag

3b) Seventeen years and the fortresses of my art

3c) *Seventeen years, the fortresses of my art* Victory planted them flag beside flag

---

275 Ziadeh’s transcript gives نقاد (nuʾād) (critics) instead of شعّار (shiċār) (poets).
وفضحت عيوبك عا هالمرايي

49:16

4a) Ana [i]mrāyi\(^{276}\) btifḍah kill ʿinnī

W faḍaḥt [i]yūbkun ʿa ha-l-[i]mrāyi

4b) I am a mirror it exposes every flaw

And I exposed your faults upon this mirror

4c) I am a mirror that exposes every flaw

Your faults, too, on this mirror I have exposed

حلفت بموطني بربي بسمايي

49:27

5a)\(^{277}\) W lamma-sh-shīr ʿa-sh-shīr iʿtamannī

[i]Ḥlift [i]b-mawṭini [i]b-rabbī bi-samāyī

5b) And when the poetry on the poetry trusted me

I swore on my homeland my God my heaven

5c) And when poetry entrusted me with poetry

I swore on my homeland, my God, and my heaven

ولا بخرب بيت غير لأجل غايي

49:36

6a) Ma bikhluf bayn Mārūnī w Sinnī

W lä bikhrub bayt ghayr il-ajil ghāyī

6b) I don’t differentiate between a Maronite and a Sunni

And I don’t destroy a house except for a purpose

6c) I don’t discriminate between Maronites and Sunnis

And I don’t destroy a man’s house for no reason

\(^{276}\) Note Mousa’s clever use of “mrāyi” (mirror) which contains within it “rāyi” (flag) from the previous line. Also in this hemistich, Mousa uses “btifḍah” (it exposes) in the first hemistich and its cognate “faḍaḥt” (I exposed) in the second hemistich.

\(^{277}\) This line (line 5) and the next (line 6) were left out of Ziadeh’s transcription.
انفضح أمرك تحت مجهر ذكايي

49:46  7a) [i]W yā Zaghlūl jāyī timtiḥinnī
And, Zaghloul, you come to test me
7b) And, Zaghloul, you come to test me
7c) Zaghloul, you come here to test me

سقيع الكوخ بخيال البنايي

49:57  8a) Ẓharit bārid msa’’a ḥadd minnī
You appeared cold, frozen, next to me
8b) You appeared cold, frozen, next to me
8c) You looked cold and frozen beside me

وطعّمتك بتفاح العنايي

50:07  9a) Jibtak zayzafūnī tā tjannī
And I grafted onto you the apples of my concern/care
9b) I got you as a fruitless tree to bear fruit
9c) I got you as a fruitless tree to make you bear fruit
50:16 10a) Bi‘ī zahrak ḥamā wi-t-tamir kinnī  
10b) Your flower was a mother-in-law and the fruit a daughter-in-law  
10c) But your flower was a mother-in-law and your fruit a daughter-in-law  

Because the barrenness is in you from the start  
Because barrenness was in you from the start

50:23 11a) W[i]rji‘it sharra‘it lak bāb-it-tamannī  
11b) I returned and opened wide for you the gate of hope  
11c) I came back and flung open the gate of hope for you  

And I freed you from a prison oppressive enough  
And I freed you from a most oppressive jail

50:32 12a) [i]W ʿaṭaytak bikir shīrī bdūn minnī  
12b) And I gave you the first-born of my poetry without a favor/kindness  
12c) I gave you the first-born of my poetry without a thing in return  

And before you cursed the blessedness of my gift  
And before you cursed my bountiful gift

---

278 It is proverbial that mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are always at odds with each other.
We gave you the bedsheet of longing as a robe.

And wrapped you in the blanket of my longing.

I embraced you as my adopted son

And I gave you the bedsheets of longing as a robe.

And I embraced you a son but by adoption

And wrapped you in the blanket of my longing.

And trade that staff for a quill and an inkwell.

And trade that staff for a quill and inkwell.

Oh what shame you stay on one ringing/tune

With a staff from the beginning to the end

That staff in your hand from beginning to end.

Note the way Mousa has structured this qaṣīd around the many loving and wonderful things he has done for Zaghloul, only to have Zaghoul throw away his gifts with ingratitude. Mousa uses parallel verbs of the form “I did this” to frame his argument: I brought you… I fed you… I untied for you… I freed you/ I embraced you… I gave you…. He also uses this structure to introduce some nice poetic imagery: the gate of hope/ first-born of my poetry/bedsheets of longing as a robe, etc.
16a) [i]Mlūk-ish-shīr ḥaddak ʿam [i]ṭghannī

16b) The kings of poetry beside you are singing

16c) You have the kings of poetry singing beside you

17a) W kif lak ʿayn tīḥkī b-il-ʿaṣāyī

17b) And how do you have an eye to talk of the staff

17c) What gall you have to keep mentioning that staff!

---

280 The expression here, kīf lak ʿayn (how do you have an eye), is an idiom similar to the English “to have the nerve to”. It is especially effective here due to the repetition of the word “eye” which appeared in the previous hemistich “in front of your eye”.
3.4.1.1. Summary and Explication: First Closing *Qaṣīd* - Mousa [48:40 – 51:19]

Mousa’s first closing *qaṣīd* consists of seventeen lines, with ‘ajz rhymes –āyī and šadr rhymes –nnī. As noted many times previously, the final –ī, which is present at the end of both of Mousa’s first *qaṣīd* rhymes, is a multipurpose grammatical suffix. As it would be cumbersome to list them individually here, a simple count by category will be sufficient and is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of suffix</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun suffix (me, my)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine suffix</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisba suffix</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak verb or stems from weak verb</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Line-by-line summary and explication:

In lines 1 and 2, Mousa laments his present predicament (which he calls “a crime”) – to find himself in the lowly company of Zaghoul after once being in the company of the great, dear, beloved mentor and master poet Khalil Rukuz.

In lines 3 through 6, Mousa boastfully describes himself and his history as a *zajal* poet in glowing terms full of beautiful and compelling poetic imagery – effectively proving his point with his current singing as an example. He describes his “seventeen years” in the trade and the “fortresses of his art” that have been decorated all around with “victory flags.” He describes himself as a “mirror” that exposes flaws, including the flaws of his current opponent. He boasts of having been “entrusted by poetry with poetry,” and having taken an oath upon “his homeland,
his God, and his heaven,” not to discriminate “between Maronites and Sunnis,” and not to
“destroy a man’s house for no reason.”

In lines 7 and 8, Mousa attacks Zaghloul. “How dare you come here to test me,” he says
bitterly, “when your sorry state was exposed long ago under the microscope of my intellect.” He
describes Zaghloul as “cold and frozen” next to Mousa, like a shack shivering in the shadow of a
grand building.

In lines 9 through 14, Mousa draws up a list of all the wonderful and generous things he
has done for Zaghloul only to have Zaghloul throw away his gifts with ingratitude. Mousa uses
parallel verbs of the form “I did this” to frame his argument: I brought you…/ I fed you…/I
untied for you…/ I freed you/ I embraced you…/ I gave you…. This structure enables him to
introduce several novel poetic images: I opened wide for you “the gate of hope”; I gave you “the
first-born of my poetry”; I wrapped you in “the blanket of longing as a robe”. Mousa’s examples
of Zaghloul’s ingratitude are also clever, especially in line 10 when he describes the result of his
having grafted onto Zaghloul who was “a fruitless tree,” the “apple tree of (Mousa’s) heartfelt
care.” According to Mousa, the flower that produced was “a mother-in-law” and the fruit “a
daughter-in-law.” In Arab culture, these two are notorious for being forever at odds with each
other and the common idiom for describing two people who are always arguing is to say they are
like “il-ḥamā w-al- kinni” (a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law). The audience recognizes this
and responds positively to this line. In line 14, Mousa incorporates another clever image when
he says that he had hoped all of his efforts would have paid off and Zaghloul would “trade in the
staff for an inkwell and pen.” Here Mousa refreshes everyone’s memory and revisits the staff
image that has been mentioned several times already and has developed into an important
themetic image over the course of the duel.
In lines 15 through the final single-hemistich closing line 17, Mousa completes the main thrust of his argument in this stanza, which is to persuade Zaghloul to “put down the staff,” stop with all the violent talk, and get back to composing good poetry. He tells Zaghloul that this approach is “shameful,” and he should stop harping on “that same tune,” especially in light of the fact that the “kings of poetry” are sitting beside him and the “kings of criticism” are staring him “in the eye.” Mousa’s last two hemistichs are strengthened by word play, whereby the expression used in the final hemistich, kīf lak ‘ayn (how do you have an eye), an idiom similar to the English “to have the nerve,” pivots on the word ‘ayn (eye), which appeared in the previous hemistich as part of the phrase “with the kings of criticism ‘iddām ‘aynak” (in front of your eye).
3.4.2. First Closing *Qaṣīd* of Zaghloul al-Damour

لأنك رح بتوقع في بلاها

لأنك رح بتوقع في بلاها

51:20 1a) ʿOf.ʿOf. Ya Mūsā kān falsaftak balāhā  

Li-ʿannak raḥ btūʿa c fi balāhā

1b) Owf. Owf. O Mousa, your philosophy was without it  

Because you will fall into its calamity

1c) Owf. Mousa, It’d be better to abandon your argument  

Because you’re going to suffer its blows

ولا شربت شفافك من دماها

ولا شربت شفافك من دماها

51:34 2a) Ya raytak mā ʿaliʾb [i]b-hayk mabraḍ  

W lā shirbit [i]shfāfak min dimāhā

2b) If only you hadn’t gotten stuck in such a grater  

And didn’t drink your lips from its blood

2c) If only you hadn’t been rubbed on this rasp  

And your lips didn’t taste its blood

مثل ناعورة الضيق مداها

مثل ناعورة الضيق مداها

51:44 3a) Ilak sāʾa ʿam [i]btinzal w tiṣʿad  

Mitil nāʿūrt-iḍ-ḍayyiʿ madāhā

3b) You have for an hour been going down and up  

Like a water-wheel and its constricted extent

3c) You’ve been bobbing up and down for an hour  

Like a water-wheel going around in circles

---

281 Zaghloul makes an effective pun in this line by using the same end word “balāhā” to mean “without it” and “its calamity”.
Ta aqṭafu kāl nijmāt min sāmāhā

4/ Wāna ʿam biフトکr b-majāl ʿabād

4a) Wānā ʿam biフトkir b-[i]mjāl ʿabād
4b) And I am thinking of a further range
4c) While my thoughts aim for more distant realms

51:53

Wa iʿṭuf kill nijmāt min sāmāhā

So I can pluck each star from its sky

Where I can pluck each star from its sky

Ta iʿṭuf kill nijmāt min sāmāhā

5/ Wāna ʿam bi昉kār b-majāl ʿabād

5a) Wānā ʿṭayt [i]l-banāt-ish-shīr mawād
5b) I gave to the daughters of poetry an appointment
5c) I granted the daughters of poetry a date

52:03

Wānā ʿṭayt [i]l-banāt-ish-shīr mawād

Upon Zaghloul they peeked out from their hiding place

They peeked out from their hiding place to see Zaghloul

5b) I gave to the daughters of poetry an appointment

5c) I granted the daughters of poetry a date

52:12

W bi-mashiʿ-il-ʿadd w-il-khadd-il-[i]mwarrad

Ijīt ʿad-dāyr tīʿruḍ-lī ʿibāhā

They came to the monastery to show me their youthfulness

They came here to parade their youthfulness for me

6a) W bi-mashiʿ-il-ʿadd w-il-khadd-il-[i]mwarrad
6b) And with the form of the physique and the rosy cheek
6c) And with that slender form and those rosy cheeks

7/ Wānā ʿam bi昉kār b-majāl ʿabād

7a) Wānā ʿal-miʿāl malak nihnā mnish-had
7b) You made yourself a king we bear witness
7c) You made yourself a king, but we are witnesses

72:22

Wānā ʿal-miʿāl malak nihnā mnish-had

A king over your level with their level

To the kind of king you really are

7c) You made yourself a king, but we are witnesses
8) And if you request in the throne of poetry a seat I will bring down the kingdom upon the one who built it

9) King Kafur was black just like you And a slave, a fat lip hanging down and another like a lid on top

---

282 The reference is to Kafur al-Ikhshidid (906-968), who was an Ethiopian slave who later became a ruler of Egypt of the Ikhshidid Dynasty.
10a) Inid-mā hājamū bi-sh-shiʾr ‘Alḥmad Abu-Ṭ-Ṭayyib, lawa-l-kirsī w liwāhā

10b) And when attacked him with poetry Ahmad Abu Tayyib, pulled the chair out from under him and the whole court

10c) And when al-Mutanabbi attacked him in his poem He pulled the chair out from under him and his whole court

11a) Ashātū-l-jildak ālay-hā mʿawwad ‘Abil mā yishtir-zinzī-shtarāhā

11b) And his staff that your skin to it is accustomed Before he bought the zinji he bought it

11c) And his staff, with which your skin is familiar He bought it before he bought the slave

283 Enjambment across the hemistichs. Also, the reference is to the famous 10th Century Arab poet, Ahmad Abu Tayyib al-Mutanabbi. Al-Mutanabbi’s famous satirical poem, which would be well-known to the audience, makes fun of Kafur with the following lines: “Do not buy a slave without buying a staff too//Because slaves are dirty and repugnant.” The next line by al-Mutanabbi, which Zaghloul draws upon: “La yiqbṣū al-muth ynsa ʿm nffsīm //alā wfi yd mī” “Death does not take one of their souls//Except with a long stick in hand because of its stench”. By making an allusion to these well-known lines, Zaghloul is simultaneously insulting Mousa’s dark complexion and making an argument for the staff he continues to hold onto in his poetry despite Mousa’s attack on him.

284 The reference is to the stick/staff mentioned in al-Mutanabbi’s poem.
235

53:10 12a) [i]W ana rji‘t [i]dfi‘a’t lIrāt ‘azwad
12b) And I returned and paid liras much more
12c) And I went and paid a whole lot more

Kafāhā khalṭ ‘alām kafāhā

53:19 13a) Ḥaj tit-harrab w tiz‘al w tiḥrad
13b) Stop evading and getting upset and annoyed
13c) Stop evading the issue and acting hurt and annoyed

53:26 14a) Izā stanjadit fi ‘Īsā w Muḥammad
14b) If you appeal to Jesus and Muhammad
14c) Even if you appeal to Jesus and Muhammad

5/ قبل ما تدوّر حراجل عزاها

15a) ‘Abil-ma-tdawwir [i]Ḥrajil ‘azāhā
15b) Before Hrajil announces its mourning
15c) Before Hrajil declares a day of mourning for you

Hrajil is Mousa’s hometown in Mount Lebanon.
3.4.2.1. Summary and Explication: First Closing Qaṣīd – Zaghloul [51:20 – 53:42]

Zaghloul’s first closing qaṣīd consists of fifteen lines and features ‘ajz rhyme –āhā and ṣadr rhyme –ad. This combination of rhymes allows for a nice metrical balance with lines always ending on -xāhā (CVV-CVV), and first hemistichs ending on–xad (CVC). Further inspection of the ṣadr rhyme words reveals that they all consist of two short syllables of the form CVC-CVC (mabrad, tiṣ’ad, ‘ab’ad, maw’ad, (m)wrrad, (m)nish-had, ma’ad, ‘aswad, ‘Ahmad, (m)awwad, ‘azwad, tiḥrad, (Muḥammad). Thus, each line of the stanza (excluding the first and penultimate) features this musical-metrical alternation of CVC-CVC at the end of the first hemistich and its opposite CVV-CVV at the end of the second hemistich. It is also important to note that the ‘ajz rhyme –āhā contains the grammatical pronoun suffix –hā, with possible meanings “her,” “it,” “its,” “their,” and “them.” Indeed, all of Zaghloul’s ‘ajz rhymes exhibit this type of usage.

Zaghloul’s stanza also features another type of alternation, between series of lines aimed at attacking Mousa using second person, and series of lines boasting about himself using first person. In lines 1 through 3, Zaghloul addresses Mousa directly, saying it would be better to “abandon your argument,” because “you will suffer its blows.” He tells Mousa too bad “you got stuck in a grater,” and “your lips have tasted blood.” He describes Mousa as a flip-flopper again, this time likening him to a water-wheel going around in circles.

In lines 4 through 6 Zaghloul switches to first person and contrasts himself with the sorry Mousa of the first three lines. While Mousa has been “bobbing up and down” Zaghloul has been busy aiming his thoughts at much more distant realms, where he can “pluck each star from its sky.” He introduces the image of the “daughters of poetry” whom he granted a date. Like
coquettish beauties they “peeked out from their hiding place” to catch a glimpse of the great Zaghloul. Then he makes a flirtatious innuendo to the women in the audience when he implies those beautiful daughters of poetry, with their “slender form and rosy cheeks” came “here,” to Beit Mery that is, to “parade their youthfulness” before Zaghloul.

In lines 7 through 11, Zaghloul switches his focus back on Mousa and through a series of very brutal insults, finds his way back to the issue of the staff. In line 7, Zaghloul reminds everyone how Mousa has called himself a “King,” but goes on to snicker at “the kind of king you really are.” In line 8 he tells Mousa that if Mousa were to ask to sit upon “the throne of poetry,” he would bring down the whole kingdom “upon its builder” (i.e. Zaghloul himself). In line 9, Zaghloul likens Mousa to King Kafur, with reference to Kafur al-Ikhshidid (906-968), an Ethiopian slave who later became a ruler of Egypt of the Ikhshidid Dynasty. As we have seen earlier, Zaghloul is making a personal insult on Mousa for his dark complexion, and makes this very clear when he describes him in extremely racially derogatory terms (“King Kafur was black like you, a slave with a fat lip hanging down and another like a lid on top”). This idea leads to Zaghloul’s next two lines in which he alludes to a satirical poem by the famous 10th century Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi delivered to the historical King Kafur after giving up hopes of attaining a position in King Kafur’s court at the time. In particular, Zaghloul is alluding to the following lines containing the all-important image of the staff:

لا تشتُر العَبْدَ إلاّ والعَصَا معَهُ إِنَّ العُبيدَ لأَنْجاسٌ مَناكِدٌ
لا يَقبَضُ الموتُ نفساً من نُفوسِهِم إِلاّ وفي يَدِهِ من نَتنِها عَود

Do not buy a slave without buying a staff too // Because slaves are dirty and repugnant

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286 For the complete poem with English translation, see “A Satire Against Kāfūr” in Arberry’s Poems of al-Mutanabbi (106-122).
Death does not take one of their souls // Except with a long stick in hand because of its stench

In Lines 10 and 11, Zaghloul uses the allusion to al-Mutanabbi’s poem to redefine once more the image of the staff and justify his clinging to it during his duel with Mousa. While simultaneously equating Mousa with King Kafur, the target of al-Mutanabbi’s successful attack, and himself with al-Mutanabbi, who singlehandedly “pulled the chair out from under him and his whole court,” Zaghloul extends the staff image and now claims to have bought it from al-Mutanabbi at a much higher price than al-Mutanabbi paid for it before “buying the slave” (King Kafur). This staff, which Zaghloul describes as something “with which your skin (Mousa) is familiar,” is what Zaghloul will use to drag Mousa’s dead (and stinking) carcass with at the end of the battle.

In the remaining lines of the stanza, Zaghloul insists on sticking to the staff, blames Mousa for trying to evade the issue and trying to confuse everyone. He tells Mousa that even if he were to appeal to “Jesus and Muhammad” he will not let go of Mousa, will not let go of the staff, and won’t stop beating him until “Hrajil (Mousa’s hometown) declares a day of mourning” for him.
3.4.3. Second Closing *Qaṣīd* of Mousa Zoghayb

وحديثك بالقتل عم تستهلُو

53:43 1a) Ḍokh..*[i]*w kamān-is-sayf baʾdak ʿam*[i]* tsillū  
And your talk about killing you are striking it up

1b) Owkh..and again the sword you are still withdrawing it
And your talk about killing you are striking it up

1c) Owf..again you draw your sword
And keep prefacing your talk with killing

شو زنب الناس خليهن يفلّو

53:54 2a) Izā baddak*[i]* tḍall *[i]*b-hayk matla‘
Shū zanb-in-nās khallīhun *[i]*yfillū

2b) If you want to stay on this kind of prelude
What fault is it of the people let them leave

2c) If you want to dwell on this kind of prelude
Why make the people suffer; let them leave

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287 Ziadeh’s transcript reads: *Iza mish raḥ tghayyir hayk maṭla‘* (If you’re not going to change such a premise)
3b) By your God, O judge, judge and listen

3c) I beg you, Judges, listen and make your ruling

And you tell me what I should tell him

And tell me what I should say to this guy

4a) I tell him the two of us are of one quarry

A crime and the law is impossible to unravel

A crime not even the law can undo

4c) Shall I tell him we two are hewn from the same quarry

We read a prelude in Jirdaq’s book

The winking and backbiting went on and on

5a) We read in the net of Jirdaq a prelude

Winking and backbiting about it they didn’t stop

5b) We read in the net of Jirdaq a prelude

The winking and backbiting went on and on

288 Ziadeh’s transcript reads: Ya na’ib-il-ḥakī ismā’ (O master of talk, judge and listen)

289 Ziadeh’s transcript reads: Shū ma’cūl ‘illū (What would be reasonable for me to tell him)

290 The reference is to Lebanese poet George Jirdaq (b. 1933).

291 This appears to be an example of enjambment spilling into the next line.
6a) Ḥa‘ī’a w-il-ḥa‘ī’a shū btūja
A truth and truth how it hurts

6c) A single truth and Oh how truth hurts
When told when it should be told

7b) O critic, there is only one poet lifted himself
From the atmosphere that drowned others in its shame

7c) O critic, there’s only one poet who lifted himself
Out of this situation that caused others to drown in shame

8b) And I am wondering like you what prevents
The realm of criticism we go back and take it over

8c) I too am wondering, what’s to stop us
From battling again in this realm of criticism

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292 In Ziadeh’s transcript this is given as: يَا جِرْدٌ (O Jirda’) rather than يَا نَّاِدٌ (O critic).

293 Ziadeh’s transcript gives الجو النقد Jaw-in-na’d (atmosphere of criticism) rather than المجال النقد Majāl-in-na’d (realm of criticism).
54:50 9a) [i]W nhkī ‘a-l-ff‘r-il-ma b-yishba‘
Rghīfu294 w-il-ghani ‘am yisitghillū
And we talk of the poor man who doesn’t satiate him
his loaf of bread and the rich man exploiting it
9b) And we talk of the poor man who doesn’t satiate him
9c) And to talk of the poor hungry people
Whose daily bread the rich man exploits

54:59 10a) W nhkī ‘a-l-yatīm-il-‘am [i]b-yidma‘
W dā‘ w ma-l-ta‘ā mikhliṣ ydillū295
And we talk about the orphan who is tearing up
And is lost and didn’t find a virtuous soul to direct him
10b) And we talk about the orphan who is tearing up
10c) And to talk of orphans with tears in their eyes
Lost with no honest soul to show them the way

55:07 11a) Yā Zaghlūl min ha-s-sijin ‘itla‘
W ṣīr w ‘allim [i]nāḥak y‘allū
O Zaghloul from this prison go out
And fly and teach your wings to go up high
11b) O Zaghloul from this prison go out
11c) Zaghloul, break out of this prison
Fly and teach your wings to soar high

294 Enjambment across the hemistichs.
295 Note the parallel structure in lines 9 and 10
55:18 12a) Ma’ak shā’ir ‘ilū āfā’ awsa
W ab‘ad ma ghuzāt-ij-jaww ḥallū
12b) With you a poet he has wider horizons
And farther than the invaders of space alighted
12c) With you here is a poet of vast horizons
Farther than the space invaders reach

55:26 13a) Ana min-il-mawt ma ta’awwadit ifza
Junūdu mnayn mā ṭallū yiṭullū
13b) I from death did not get accustomed to fear
Its soldiers from wherever they loom they loom
13c) I’ve never grown accustomed to fearing death
No matter from where its soldiers loom

55:32 14a) Ḥays il-mawt296 lil-insān marja
Snīnū ‘add mā zādū297 w ‘allū
14b) Because death to the human being is an authority
His years no matter how they increased or decreased
14c) Since death to man is inescapable
Now matter how many or few his years

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296 Ziadeh’s transcript gives ما زال الموت Mā zāl il-mawt (As long as death…) rather than حياث الموت Ḥayth il-mawt (Whereas death…).

297 Ziadeh’s transcript gives قد ما كتروا وقلوا ‘add mā kitrū w ‘allū (as much as they were many or were few) rather than قد ما زادوا وقلوا ‘add mā zādū w’allū (as much as they increased or were few (decreased)).
55:40 15a) In ṭalbitnī-l-ard lil- ard irja\(^c\)

‘ṭār-il-lā nihāyi bisit‘illū

15b) If the earth requested me back to earth to return

The train of eternity I will ride it

15c) And if the dust calls for my return to dust

I will hop right on the train to eternity

مجد موسى زغيب ومجيد "خلو"

55:47 16a) W[į] b-mūt bkhāṭrī ta-l-mawt yijma\(^c\)\(^{299}\)

Majid Mūsā Zghayb w-majid “Khillū”\(^{300}\)

16b) And I die on my own accord so death can join

The glory of Mousa Zoghayb and the glory of “Khillu”

16c) I would die willingly so death could join

The glory of Mousa Zoghayb with that of Khalil Rukuz

بموتي بس ما بتفجع "حراجل"

55:55 17a) [į]W tā ti′rif [į]b-mawtī shū btifja\(^c\)

B-mawtī bass mā btifja\(^c\) [į]Ḥrājil

17b) And so to know my death what grief it would cause

My death not only bereaves Hrajil

17c) Let me tell you what kind of grief my death would stir

Not only would my death make Hrajil mourn

\(^{298}\) Entire line was left out of Ziadeh’s transcript.

\(^{299}\) Ziadeh’s transcript gives تالرب يجمع ta-rabb yijma\(^c\) (for the Lord to gather together) rather than تالموت يجمع ta-l-mawt yijma\(^c\) (for Death to gather together).

\(^{300}\) Mousa is using a diminutive of Khalil (Khillū) in reference to Khalil Rukuz.
18a) [i]{B-mawtî byinfaja} Libnān kilū

18b) With my death all of Lebanon would be bereaved

18c) All of Lebanon would be wailing and weeping over me
3.4.3.1. Summary and Explication: Second Closing \textit{Qaşīd} – Mousa [53:43 – 56:09]

Mousa’s second closing \textit{qāṣīd} is an eighteen-line stanza featuring ‘\textit{ajz} rhyme –\textit{illū} and \textit{ṣadr} rhyme –\textit{a}’. Though not in the exact manner as Zaghloul’s first closing \textit{qāṣīd}, these two rhyme forms also offer a metrical alternation whereby the end rhymes are CVV syllables and the first hemistich rhymes are CVC. Also similar to Zaghloul’s stanza is the use of a grammatical suffix for the \textit{ṣadr} rhyme, but not the \textit{ṣadr} rhyme. The final –\textit{ū} of Mousa’s \textit{ṣadr} rhyme has two main uses as a suffix: pronoun suffix meaning “him,” “his,” “it,” or “its” and plural verb suffix (for second or third person plural subject pronoun). In Mousa’s stanza, nine of his \textit{ṣadr} rhymes are of the former type and seven are of the latter.

In his first two lines, Mousa once again shows his frustration with Zaghloul’s insistence on violent talk. He expresses his empathy for the audience, saying “Why make the people suffer; let them leave!” In line 3 he addresses the judges, begging them for advice on how to deal “with this guy.” In lines 4 through 6, Mousa makes reference to a \textit{maṭla} (prelude) he read in “the net of Jirdaq,” and the fallout from critics, “winking and backbiting,” and describes this as being a type of “truth” that was told, which can sometimes hurt. It is not clear to what specific event Mousa is referring, but the thrust of his argument seems to be pointing out Zaghloul’s inadequacy as a \textit{zajal} poet.

In lines 7 through 10, Mousa again tries to persuade Zaghloul to change his tone to more poetic topics, or to aim his talk away from violence and towards lifting up humanity. He offers, for example, “talk of the poor, hungry people, whose daily bread the rich man exploits,” or “talk of orphans with tears in their eyes,” or “those who are lost with no honest soul to show them the way.”
In line 11 Mousa pleads with Zaghloul directly, begging him to “break out of this prison,” urging him, with a return to bird imagery, to “fly and teach your wings to soar.” And in lines 12 and 13, he offers himself as a great example for Zaghloul to follow. He describes himself as “a poet of vast horizons” who has gone to the furthest reaches of space, even “farther than the space invaders reached.” He boasts of his bravery, his lack of fear of “death,” which we remember was the image we were left with at the end of Zaghloul’s stanza when he closed with the hemistich about Hrajil declaring a day of mourning for the death of its native son Mousa. It is at this point that Mousa begins to form his crescendo towards his stanza finale. Mousa builds his argument in lines 14 through 16 as follows: I have never feared death, no matter from where its soldiers loom, since death is inescapable, no matter the number of a man’s days, and if death calls for my return to the dust, I will hop right on that train to eternity, I will die willingly, in order to be glorified as I reunite with the glorious Rukuz. His finale is a resounding blow to Zaghloul’s last line. Mousa accepts Zaghloul’s death sentence with the kind of heroism that not only will be appreciated by the villagers of Hrajil, but which will stir the grief of the whole of Lebanon, causing an uproar of weeping and wailing over his death. This is an extremely powerful and effective finale from Mousa as he cleverly presents himself as a hero for all of Lebanon, felled by the violent Zaghloul who lacks the poetic prowess to duel over matters that are important to the people and to raising Lebanon to new heights.
3.4.4. Second Closing *Qaṣīd* of Zaghloul al-Damour

Ana al-bilbul simiwa ta ghanna

56:10 1a) Øf..Øf..taghannā yā shi‘r fiyyī tghannā
I the songbird heard my voice in order to sing

1b) Owf..owf..sing O poetry my praises sing

1c) Owf..Sing, poetry, sing out my praises
The songbird learned to sing when he heard my voice

Ana al-bilbul simi‘a ṣawtī ta ghanna

56:22 2a) [i]W ‘amar Nīsān kān iṣfarr khaddū
If not for the light of my poetry it got tattooed with henna

2b) The moon of April would have yellow cheeks

2c) The April moon would have turned pale
If not for my poetry tattooing it with henna

Law ma-b-nūr ash‘ārī tḥannā

56:33 3a) Ya Mūsā sayf ʿizzak šām ḥaddū
‘Abil mā tilfuz-il-kilmī [i]t’annā
Before you pronounce a word be careful

3b) O Mousa, the sword of your greatness its sharpness fasted

3c) Mousa, the swordblade of your greatness has gotten dull
Be careful before uttering a word

Ziadeh’s transcript gives قصدني ʿiṣdānī (my qasids) rather than اشعاري ash‘ārī (my poetry).
4a) Init law mitt mawtak mā b‘iddū
4b) You if you die I would not consider it
4c) If you were to die I wouldn’t consider that

Khsāra ʿā shaʿb Aḥmad w Ḥannā
A loss to the people of Ahmad and Hanna
A great loss to Muslims and Christians

5a) W Ḥarājil ‘isimhā il-khālid [i]bwiddū
5b) And Hrajil its everlasting name I love it
5c) And Hrajil, whose everlasting name I adore

W b-ḥibb ʂ-ḥāb-hā ‘albī [i]thannā
And with the love of its people my heart rejoiced
And for whose people my loving heart swells with joy

6a) ‘ālit māt Allah lā yriddū
6b) It said he died may God never bring him back
6c) Said, “So he died; may God never send him back”

Li-ʿannū-l-yawm ʿā ḥālū tajannā
Because today he on himself committed a crime
Because today he caused his own demise

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Zaghloul uses the names Ahmad and Hanna (which fit the meter and rhyme) as metonyms for Muslims and Christians.

Again, the reference here is to Mousa’s hometown.
لأنّو بيعرف الارز المكنّى

7a) ʻalayi lāzim il-mitlak yriddū
7b) To me people like you should respond
7c) People like you should respond to me

أنا بي اللي قبلك غاب عنّا

8a) Anā bayyak li-bayyak būs yaddū
8b) I am the father of your father kiss his hand
8c) I am your father’s father; kiss this hand

وبي الرمح وشفار الاستنة

9a) Anā bayillī rif‘ātī t-ḥaddū
9b) I am the father of all those my friends dared
9c) I am the father of all those my friends challenged

وبي الرمح وشفار الاستنة

304 Zaghloul is alluding to Khalil Rukuz.

305 There is an allusion here to al-Mutanabbi’s great boasting line: Horses and the night and the desert know me well// And so does the sword and the spear and the paper and the pen
10a)  And I the children of intelligence my children are considered
I am the rearer of zajal until poetry yielded harvest

10b)  All the brilliant children in the world are my children
I am the one who reared zajal and made poetry yield a harvest

11a)  If you die and people mourn you
It’s not for your sake our homeland weeps

11b)  If you die and people mourn for you
It’s not for your sake our homeland would weep

12a)  For the sake of your father Lebanon wants to
Weep blood in our place and other than our place

12b)  But for your father’s sake Lebanon would
weep tears of blood here and everywhere

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306 There is an instance of enjambment across the hemistich.
13/ وشوفوا وين كان ووين كنّا

13a) Ya anṣār-il-[i]mʿannā il-fikir ḥiddū
W shūfū wayn kān [i]w wayn kinnā
And see where he has been and where we have been

13b) O supporters of maʿannā the thinking prepare it
And see where he has been and where we are

13c) Aficionados of maʿanna, reign in your thoughts

14/ ويا حكّام للحكم استعدّوا

14a) W yā ḥikkām lil-ḥikm [i]stʿiddū
Tā tiʿṭū kill shāʿir mā tamannā
To give every poet what he wished for

14b) O judges, for judging get ready
And give every poet what his heart desires

14c) Judges, get ready to make your judgement

15/ وهلّق كل ضد

15a) [i]W hallaʾ kill ḍīd [i]ʿbāl ḍiddū
Bi-yḥayyīkun yā aghlā nās minnā
Salutes you O most cherished people among us

15b) And now every opponent facing his opponent
Salutes you, the most cherished people of all

15c) And now, facing his foe, each opponent
58:30 16a) W tā yib’ā ha-sh-shiʿr marfūʿ ḥaddū Allah yidīmkun w yḍall dāyim
16b) And for this poetry to stay elevated its borders May God keep you and let remain eternal
16c) And so that this poetry will stay exalted, high May God keep you and keep eternal

17 17a) Ariz Libnān w[i]lyālī-l-maʿannā
17b) The cedars of Lebanon and the nights of maʿanna
17c) The cedars of Lebanon and the nights of maʿanna

Note the excessive enjambment throughout and especially in the last half of Zaghloul’s qaṣīd. Not only do the ideas spill over the separation between hemistichs, but the ends of lines spill into subsequent lines. Note in Zaghloul’s singing, as well, that the ends of lines are not accentuated with melisma in the usual way, but rather seem to begin the next line instead. This is easy to hear at the ends of lines 5, 8 and 11. It is as if Zaghloul is impatiently speeding headlong toward his (and all the poets’) most cherished ending: maʿanna.
3.4.4.1. Summary and Explication: Second Closing Qaṣīd – Zaghloul [53:43 – end (59:10)]

Zaghloul’s second closing qaṣīd is the final stanza of the duel. It consists of 17 lines and features ājz rhyme –annā and ādār rhyme –addū. Having seen now, repeatedly, that the opening rhyme of the stanza can give us a clue to the clincher rhyme at the very end of the stanza, it is no surprise when we reach Zaghloul’s last hemistich and find that it ends with the word maʿ annā, which is used interchangeably with “zajal” to mean Lebanese oral poetry. However, we will leave further discussion of the final closing qaṣīd’s last words until later.

The two rhymes Zaghloul incorporates into his stanza, –annā and –addū are identical in syllabic quality this time – VCCVV. The long vowel ending to each rhyme allows for more opportunities for long melismata, and each also provides the poet with ample choices since both are grammatical suffixes. The final ʿā of the ājz rhyme –annā is a pronoun suffix meaning “her,” “it,” “its,” “them,” or “their” and can also stem from the presence of the feminine suffix, which in Lebanese is sometimes pronounced as “a” as in Standard Arabic (al-Fuṣḥā), rather than “i” as we have seen many times. The final nā of the ājz rhyme –annā is also another pronoun suffix meaning “our” or “us,” and it is the past tense verb suffix for first person plural (we). The final ʿū of the ādār rhyme –addū is the suffix with two main purposes, either as pronoun suffix meaning “his,” “him,” “it,” or “its” or as second- or third-person plural verb suffix. It is interesting to note that while Zaghloul’s rhymes provide ample opportunity to exploit grammatical suffixes, which he does for every single one of his ādār rhymes –addū, this only accounts for six of his ājz rhymes: ānnā (from us) in line 8, ʿasinnā (blades) in line 9, waṭannā (our homeland) in line 11, āinnā (at us) in line 12, kinnā (we were) in line 13, and minnā (from us) in line 15. All but one of these is related to the first-person plural suffixes “our,” or “us,” or “we,” which in a subtle way helps Zaghloul as he works his way toward an ending that aims to

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reunite the opposing teams of poets under the unifying umbrella of maʿannā. A larger number of Zaghloul’s ʿajz rhymes, which do not exhibit any of the possible grammatical suffixes mentioned, have something else in common: they are all form II past tense weak verbs ending in alif maqṣūra. As such, they all have a syllabic pattern identical to the final word “maʿannā” which we might describe as CaCannā whereby only two consonants vary from one rhyme to the next. The seven rhymes that fit this pattern are: taghannā (sing), ta ghannā (in order that he sang), taḥannā (tattooed with henna), taʾannā (be careful), tahannā (rejoiced), tajannā (committed a crime), and tamannā (he wished). The repetition of words that not only rhyme with the final word maʿannā but echo its entire syllabic structure only helps to strengthen its already strong impact.

Zaghloul begins his stanza with the expected invocation, this time calling out to poetry, asking it to “sing his praises.” He ends his first line with the boastful claim that “the songbird learned to sing when he heard my voice.” This opening line begins with a long and beautiful “Owf…Owf…Owf,” followed by a hemistich that begins and ends with the imperative verb tghannā (Sing!). Zaghloul then sings the homonym, “ta ghannā” at the end of the second hemistich, this time with the different but related meaning, “in order that he sang”. In the second line Zaghloul delivers a beautiful poetic image, describing the April moon as being colored by his poetry as if tattooed by henna.

In lines 3 through 6, Zaghloul’s attention is on Mousa and finding more and more ways to insult him and undermine his arguments. He begins by telling him that “the sword blade” of his greatness “has dulled,” and that he should be careful before uttering a word. He tells Mousa that his death would not be a great loss, to Muslims or to Christians, and even the people of Hrajil wouldn’t care if he died. Indeed, they would blame his demise on his own bad actions.
In lines 7 through 12, Zaghloul switches his efforts to boasting and to presenting himself this time as a father figure. He begins by patronizing Mousa, telling him he should answer to his elder – his own grandfather – and kiss his hand. He calls himself “the father of the dear, departed one,” with reference again to their beloved mentor Khalil Rukuz. He says he is also father of “all those my friends challenged, the father of the spear and the sharp blades of swords.” All of the brilliant children of the world are Zaghloul’s children. At this point, halfway through line 10, Zaghloul claims to be the father and “rearer of zajal” who made poetry itself yield a harvest. And in lines 11 and 12 Zaghloul attempts to destroy Mousa’s argument from the previous stanza. We remember that Mousa ended with the image of the whole of Lebanon weeping and wailing in lament over his death. Now in Lines 11 and 12, Zaghloul tells Mousa that if he dies and people mourn for him, it’s not for his sake the homeland would weep, but for the sake of “your father” that they would weep tears of blood. This is the last time in the duel that either of the opponents will undo the other’s argument and recast an image in his own favor. At this point, before Zaghloul turns his attention to the judges, the audience, and to the task of closing the duel on a positive note, he leaves us with the image of himself as the forefather of his nation’s best gift to the world – zajal poetry. And this is the direction he takes as he leaves Mousa and addresses the judges. He asks them to get ready to make their judgment and to be generous, “give every poet what his heart desires.” He describes the poets like soldiers, facing one another with a spirit of sportsmanship, saluting the judges, the “most cherished people of all.” And as we have been expecting from the first rhyme, Zaghloul closes the duel with an exaltation of zajal poetry and a prayer that God will keep eternal the two most valuable and cherished things: the cedars of Lebanon and the nights of ma’anna.
CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Much of the driving force behind this dissertation was a desire to understand how zajal poets are able to do what they do, that is, to successfully compose and deliver hundreds of rhymed, metered verses filled with powerful imagery and compelling arguments over the course of several hours of uninterrupted performance before a critical and demanding audience. After looking at a specific duel through the magnifying lens of translation, it is now possible to clearly see the various components of the oral-formulaic composition process at work. These I have noted in detail throughout Chapter Three in footnoted running commentary as well as in the explications interspersed between sections, exchanges, and long stanzas. Some of the recurring oral-formulaic strategies include a number of “poetic license”-type strategies, such as the shortening of words or the lengthening of vowels in order to fit the musical or poetic meter or the use of what might be called imprecise images that fit the rhyme and meter. Poets depend on formulaic systems and substitutions in order to compose lines quickly and fluidly. Repetition of formulaic words and expressions or repetition of hemistichs and lines also enables poets to compose quickly and improvise on the spot without causing a pause in singing. Above all, poets rely on the nature of the Arabic language itself which has an unending capacity to produce words that rhyme as well as words that share morphological patterns or etymological roots. The presence of a chorus of riddādi provides the poets with a musical backbone and constant encouragement that is also echoed by an appreciative and critical audience. Zajal poets spend decades in apprenticeship and are constantly practicing their art both on and off the zajal stage.
The combination of heavy competition and public enthusiasm creates the perfect, inexhaustible machine that should ensure the continuation of zajal into future decades and for generations. Indeed, the art of Lebanese zajal shows no signs of dying out, despite the many distractions posed by modern society with its lightning speed sources of entertainment. As Zaghloul al-Damour himself put it, “The continuous practice of the profession insures its survival...never worry about zajal continuing after me...Zajal will never die out...new talents are always present, and there are many natural born poets...Zajal will continue on after me, no doubt about it” (El-Hage, “Part One” 16). When asked if zajal poets go through “dry spells,” Zaghloul had the following comments:

Very rarely, not commonly. When a zajal poet takes the stage he is in a constant state of transfiguration; the zajal stage is the stage of emanation and regeneration, and the act of facing an audience is always a confrontation with improvisation, and a touchstone for ingenuity. The audience is the wellspring, the source of poetic utterance that causes the waters to flow and tears down all obstructions. The audience stimulates the senses and the sentiments and hones talent. The zajal poet on the stage is in a state of “transition” while on the stage. He gets inspiration from the occasion, and the occasion is always new and wonderful and demanding all at once. The surge of excitement opens the pathways of creativity, lets poetic bounty flow forth from its hiding places, and inspires the zajal poet with verses and ideas and instinctive responses and spontaneous verses. A great poet is not afraid of a tough competitor, but rather seeks him out and invites him to the arena of song and verbal dueling. (El-Hage, “Part One” 17)

Having traveled myself to Lebanon nearly every summer for the past twenty years, including this past summer of 2014, I can confirm the continued presence of zajal poets and zajal parties as a major part of the entertainment scene. Posters advertising upcoming events and featuring long-established jawqas and experienced poets as well as new jawqas and aspiring young poets are visible all over the place and sometimes fill giant billboards dotting the main highways.
In addition to the importance of oral-formulaic composition strategies to the art of Lebanese zajal, it is also worth noting the important role zajal plays in Lebanese society itself. After all, every verbal duel constitutes a type of dialogue, a special kind of conversation between representative members of an extremely diverse society. In so many ways, verbal dueling is a game of opposites. Poets often resort to using opposites in their lines, they argue over opposing sides such as old and young, war and peace, freedom and imprisonment. They seat themselves in alternating order so that each poet is beside an opponent. And moreover, they are teamed up with members of different religious groups. All of this makes for an exciting display of diversity of ideas as well as identities.

Lebanon, too, is a land where opposites converge. Located on the Mediterranean Sea between Syria to the north and east and Palestine/Israel to the south, Lebanon has always found itself at the crossroads between civilizations. From ancient times it has been of great interest to nations around the world and the situation is no different today. Lebanon’s terrain is also a world of contrasts: high mountains and miles of seacoast, all squeezed together into a very narrow geographic area. (Though measuring only 10,452 square kilometers in its modern-day borders – roughly the size of Connecticut – due to its very high mountainous terrain, the Lebanese are fond of saying that if you just iron it out, it would be bigger than Texas!) In several months of the year, one can literally ski in the mountains in the morning and swim in the sea in the afternoon. Lebanon’s population is similarly diverse. It has eighteen religious denominations spanning the spectrum of both Islam and Christianity. In addition, there are a number of sizeable ethnic groups in Lebanon, such as Armenians and Kurds, as well as nationals of neighboring Arab countries, such as Syrians and Egyptians.
There are six major confessional groups in Lebanon – three Christian and three Muslim. In the Christian category, there are Maronites, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics. In the Muslim category, there are Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, and Druze. (While the Druze are often grouped as Muslims or described as an offshoot of Islam, they are actually neither Muslim nor Christian, but a somewhat mysterious and secretive religion.) In the arena of government and politics, Lebanon’s multi-confessional nature is an integral part of day-to-day governing and political dialogue. Adding to this, numerous political parties also abound in Lebanon, including the Syrian Nationalist Party, Baathists, Arab Nationalists, Phalangists, Lebanese Forces, Hizbollah, etc. There are more than eighty political parties in little Lebanon; in fact, politics might be the only practice that surpasses verbal dueling as a ‘national pastime’.

I mention all of this in order to draw attention to the importance of the confessional and political system in verbal dueling. The members of most jawqas reflect the religious pluralism of Lebanese society. Usually in each jawqa there is a Maronite Christian, a Shiite Muslim, a Druze, and possibly a Greek Orthodox Christian. Rarely is there a Sunni Muslim member, however, as there are very few Sunni zajal poets in general, owing to geography and demographics: zajal developed primarily as a form of entertainment in the mountains of Lebanon and Sunni communities historically inhabited coastal regions.

In his opening chapter to *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Norman Fairclough makes a strong case for a critical approach to discourse analysis which aims to investigate verbal interactions “with an eye to their determination by, and their effects on, social structures” (36). To shed further light on the study of verbal dueling in Lebanon, we might ask a few questions suggested by Fairclough. In what ways is the practice of verbal dueling determined by social structures, and what effect does it have on them? In what ways is it socially shaped, but also socially
shaping, or constitutive? To what degree is language use in verbal dueling constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief? (Fairclough 131)

In verbal duels, poets representing a wide spectrum of Lebanese religious sects and political affiliations are able to safely and productively hash out current issues in public. Through these duels both poets and audience members are availed of an opportunity to hear multiple voices and opinions on a wide range of topics that matter to all of them in a profound way. At the same time, through the poets’ attempts to prove their virtuosity and knowledgeability by recounting culturally significant stories and themes, they are able to solidify a common Lebanese identity and to forge unity among an extremely diverse population even as they pair off on opposite sides of an issue, and one that may initially seem as mundane as ‘hot versus cold’.

During verbal duels, certain key concepts – the oppositions that form the opposing sides of debate, such as hot vs. cold or east vs. west – become open to reexamination and reformulation. In the hands of poets they can be reshaped and transformed like a ball of clay. Poets are allowed to change conventional symbolic associations in order to advance themselves and gain advantage over each other. At the same time, they have an understanding of where the line between witty insult and taboo is drawn and rarely do they cross that line. While it is acceptable to attack an opponent on a personal level, as Zaghloul did about Mousa’s dark complexion, or even call him names like “stupid” or “fool,” poets do not make attacks against the religious affiliation of their opponents. On the contrary, when they do use a religious symbol, which is quite often, it is always to show themselves as champions of all religions, not to attack each other or to attack a particular religion. While individual poets represent their particular religious groups, there are politeness conventions that prevent them from directly attacking each other along these lines. If a poet crosses this line, he will be rejected from the zajal community.
This was the case recently after an instance when the well-known Druze zajal poet, Tali\textsuperscript{c} Hamdan (one of the members of Zaghloul’s jawqa at Beit Mery) is said to have cursed the Virgin Mary. As a result, Tali\textsuperscript{c} has become an outcast from the zajal arena, a persona non grata in many zajal circles\textsuperscript{308}.

When it comes to the topic of Lebanon, certain important rules also seem to be at work. Poets can gain advantage by expressing their patriotism and devotion to Lebanon, or by associating themselves with traditional Lebanese symbols, such as the Cedar tree or Baalbek, Tyre, or Byblos, even zajal itself, which are stable. The concept that Lebanon is holy, sacred, graced by God with beauty and people who are steadfast and deeply rooted in its soil, is fixed. There is no room for debate on this issue. It is indeed a unifying factor. If there is any debate over Lebanon, it has to do with who can love Lebanon more or who can best protect Lebanon against foreign invasion or influence. Sometimes there are tense moments in a verbal duel, and the most common way to diffuse the tension is for poets to return to those unifying symbols around which they can all rally in support of Lebanon, beloved homeland.

While some topics are taboo, the spectrum of allowable topics for debate is broad. Poets are free to bring up a wide range of social and political topics in a zajal duel and to speak about these topics in an exceptionally free manner. This openness in the verbal duel is a reflection of the high value Lebanese society has always placed on free speech, something for which Lebanese journalists, writers, and political leaders, historically and to this day, have been willing to risk their lives and unfortunately sometimes lose them. And it is important to remember that

\textsuperscript{308} Poets Antoine Saadeh and Elias Khalil, for example, have mentioned in conversations with me the controversy surrounding Tali\textsuperscript{c} Hamdan and described the strain on jawqa relations it has caused and how on a number of occasions, poets have refused to duel with him or to participate in events where he might be present.
the end of the duel involves a conscious stepping back from the sharp edge of debate and insult, and a celebration of the event as a communal/community spectacle. Zaghloul’s final lines at the Battle of Beit Mery, which rise up like prayer, express this perfectly:

And now, facing his foe, each opponent
Let this poetry stay exalted on high
Salutes you, most cherished people of all
May God keep you and keep eternal
The cedars of Lebanon and the nights of ma’annā

What does the future hold for Lebanese Zajal?

By definition, traditions are passed down from generation to generation. But traditions are not simply handed passively from experienced virtuosos to aspiring apprentices. The receivers of the tradition do not only preserve the tradition, they also do the life-giving work of shaping and transforming it as it makes its journey through decades and centuries and sometimes across seas and continents. What do today’s zajjāls have in store for the future of Lebanese zajal? Are they doing what is necessary to keep their precious art form alive? Who are the young and up and coming poets? What kind of public support is out there for zajal poets and their art? From what I have witnessed, the future looks very bright. Zajal poets are busier than ever trying to fit requests for their performances into their schedules. Furthermore, there is growing recognition of the importance and value of their art in literary and academic circles.309 In Lebanon zajal is beginning to claim its rightful place as a high form of art and in

309 The efforts of my home university (University of Arkansas) are a case in point, as it has sponsored Lebanese verbal duel events in Italy, three times in Lebanon -- including a highly successful and well-attended commemorative event at Beit Mery on the forty-first anniversary of the 1971 event -- and once at the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville, making history as the first time zajal poets have been invited to perform before a foreign academic audience while abroad. The UA’s King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies has also supported scholarly research on Lebanese zajal by establishing and acquiring books, videos, and tapes for its special collection on oral poetry in the UA library.

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2013 the Ministry of Education declared the need for its inclusion in public education. It is now being taught as part of the Arabic Literature curriculum at the Lebanese University as well as at several private universities in Lebanon. While I am not aware of other nearby Arab countries making this same move towards inclusion of “folk poetry” and other vernacular literary forms in mainstream curricula, I would not be surprised if Lebanon’s decision to do so paves the way and sets a trend around the Arab world. Oral forms in languages other than Arabic do seem to already enjoy a good level of acceptance as art worthy of scholarly attention. Major international conferences like the Vis Musicae conferences I have attended in Italy in 2009 and 2010, which brought together numerous poets and scholars from a variety of Mediterranean oral traditions, such as those found in Sicily, Sardinia, Mallorca, Menorca, Malta, the Canary Islands, Crete, Spain and Basque Country, are a case in point. As a result of the inclusion of Lebanese zajal poets and scholars at the Vis Musicae conferences, a special relationship developed between Lebanese and Basque poets. The Basque tradition of “Bertsolaritz” is a deeply-rooted and highly celebrated and cherished one which is not only offered in Basque mainstream curricula but is a required and institutionalized field of study in Basque schools from elementary through high school. Moreover, several Bertsolaritz competitions featuring the best Bertsolari poets by age group are organized and judged throughout the year, feeding into the major Bertsolaritz competition held in a massive stadium once every four years that is attended by 20,000 spectators and where the winning poet is crowned\textsuperscript{310}. Plans are in the works for hosting a Zajal-

\textsuperscript{310} For more about the Bertsolaritz tradition, see the 2011 Txintxua Films documentary film by Basque filmmaker Asier Altuna. Also note the reference to Lebanese oral poetry in the film’s narrative. Also see \textit{The Art of Bersolaritz: Improvised Basque Verse Singing} by Joxerra Garzia et. al.
Bertsolaritza festival in Lebanon or in Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain (the Basque capital) in coming years.

There are other important venues that support the art of *zajal* as well, such as the popular weekly TV show “Owf” (aired on Lebanese television station OTV) where young, aspiring poets can challenge themselves and each other before huge TV audiences and before high caliber judges such as show host Mousa Zoghayb himself. Programs like “Owf” help provide the all-important competitive impetus that fosters *zajal’s* advancement and the creativity and development of its practitioners. And OTV is not the only Lebanese station to air *zajal* on television. Public station Télé Liban has frequent airings of *jawqas* and of performances around Lebanon.

There is one major development in the field of *zajal* that I would like to end with, which is the entrance and increasing presence of young female *zajal* poets into the arena. This is not to say that women have not historically been a part of the *zajal* tradition, because there have been many accomplished and celebrated female *zajal* poets throughout its history. Several of these are included in the annals of *zajal* such as Joseph Abi Daher’s six volume encyclopedia, *Shuʿarāʿ Zurafāʾ* (Charming Poets) or his *Antologia Zajal al-Ightirāb al-Lubnāni: 1900-2000* (Anthology of Lebanese Zajal in Immigrant Communities Abroad: 1900 - 2000). Women oral poets have always participated in public occasions calling for *zajal*, such as weddings, funerals, and holidays. Up until very recently, however, female *zajal* poets did not participate in the type of on-stage verbal dueling focused on in this study. One rising star that might be seen as a pioneer in the entrance of women onto the *zajal manbar* is Nagham Abi Karam, the recent winner of the top award on the TV show “Owf.” In an interview with Nohad Topalian for Al-Shorfa.com, Nagham spoke about having dueled with both male and female poets. In her duels
with men, especially, she tries to show women in a very positive light, drawing on the image of women “as mothers, giving individuals in society, and capable to take part in political life.” She addresses numerous themes, including women’s rights and other social issues such as poverty, hatred, violence and war, but most of all women’s issues dominate her zajal writings and recitals.

In the same interview, Nagham described having grown up in a “house full of poets” and having started writing shūrūqi – a very difficult kind of zajal – at a young age\(^{311}\). Her father, poet Iskandar Abi Karam, and her aunt, poet Gulnar Abi Karam, encouraged her as a young girl to perform at Saturday evening poetry recitals at their family home and also by giving her specific topics to write zajal poems about. At age 16, she became the first woman in the Arab world to write in the shūrūqi genre. Later, as a first-year university student at the Lebanese University, she took part in a poetry festival that included recitals in Lebanese dialect. Afterwards, she was encouraged by faculty and by the (female) Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Lebanese University, prompting her to publish her first poetry collection, “Gulnar,” in honor of her aunt. In her final year at the university, while participating as she had done every year in the same annual poetry festival, Nagham describes how she ended up competing on OTV and embarked upon her life as a zajal celebrity:

Zajal poet Mousa Zoghayb and Dr. Claudia Abi Nader attended the festival. They had just finished presenting the first season of the zajal programme "Owfl" on OTV and they were looking for participants for the second season. After listening to me, the poet

\(^{311}\) Described by Haydar in his as yet unpublished book manuscript on “The Metrics of Lebanese Zajal,” shūrūqi was adapted by Lebanese zajjāls from the Bedouin prototype of the same name (143–44). It shares the basic Bedouin melody but is set to a different meter. It belongs to the nathr or free-rhythm musical form and is deemed a ‘difficult’ form due to its characteristic extensive melisma that punctuates each line. Mousa Zoghayb is known among zajal poets as a master of the shūrūqi genre. For examples of shūrūqi, see also Whaybeh (79-80).
Moussa Zoghayb asked if I wrote *shurūqi* and requested I join him on the show. I came out of the show with the first prize, the Golden Tambourine...

Fans and admirers opened a Facebook page for me called "The First Woman Shurūqi Pioneer". More importantly, the award motivated me to advance in this field. I am currently pursuing my master's degree, for which I chose the research topic "The Effect of Religion on Gulnar Abi Karam's Poetry", which includes a section on the types of *zajal* my aunt wrote, and a comparison to the Khalili meters [of classical Arabic poetry], which are the foundation of *zajal*. (Nagham 2)

For many reasons, it appears Lebanese *zajal* will continue to enjoy its prominent position in Lebanese society and will have a bright future. It is exciting to imagine the new developments in this highly valuable art form now that it is becoming accepted among the literary elite and now that women are taking on a larger role in its practice. It is beginning to find its way into more and more scholarly studies as well, including this dissertation, which is a first attempt to transcribe and translate an entire verbal duel into English and to make Lebanese *zajal* in general accessible to the English-speaking world. It is my hope that this study will set the stage for future research and will contribute to future studies on this extremely rich and powerful poetry tradition.


Iftitāḥiyi of Mousa Zoghayb

Owf...Owf... You and I are one, ask not why sadness haunts my eyes
I was a threshing floor for those who came to peck at me grain by grain
‘Tis time to wean them now from my generous breast
I used to stay up late, but the nights were shorter than the dream that soothed my thoughts

What mother could spend long nights over a cradle without buying wakefulness from my eyes

Owf... I freed my thoughts on the wings of a dark-feathered eagle and the wings lifted me higher and higher
Until the earth below me shrank, smaller, smaller Than those who dared me to a duel

Owf... I became more blasphemous than the guardians of fire
My madness drove the tempests mad
Niether Time nor the Fates drove me to blaspheme

Only the people of ma`annā caused me to curse
I didn’t come here to gain fame in Zaghloul’s company
Crooning of harsh and tender dreams
I’ve come with my jawqa to crown the stage
And enter these honorable judges’ hearts
And let anyone who still doesn’t know me, know who I am

***
Poetry was once a seaport without a lighthouse
Gold buried in the crannies of a cave
Then Michel came along to sponsor this duel
To bring true lovers of zajal together, not to make a profit
Those who used to flee from us before
As if our cup was filled with enmity and bitterness
Have come here to make sure that ma’annā remains
A pure white dream in the eyes of virgins
And Zaghoul, if Death chooses to test us
We must face our fate with bravery
Perdition struck its blow on me long before you
And plucked from me that child, that pure lily blossom
The poet walks a path of wounds and daggers
With a smile on his lips and bitterness in his heart
Our zajals sang the epics of Palestine
Unmasking all the borrowed faces
And here in the name of ma’annā in our homeland
I have these words for the President and the Cabinet
If an emigrant finds fortune in the West
But has a feverish longing for his homeland
And you want to help him find his way back home
Send him a Poet in the name of Lebanon
You would be sending him the entire embassy

***
Owf…Our zajal has reached the peak of its fame
Imposing itself in every situation
It set off into the world from its life imprisonment
So everyone could know what high standards it has
Bishop Qila’i, Lehfed’s native son
Sang zajal and zajal crowned him with dignity
And Patriarch Aquri had great affection
For this sweet genre and blessed its fruits
And even Saint Ephrem’s songs, in every place of worship
Became holy hymns of prayer
Emir Bashir gave us countless zajal poems
His ode to the mountain caused its rocks to rumble
And Nasif al-Yaziji, great composer of “al-Bahrayn,”
Was born with ma’annā pulsing through his veins
And Rashid Nakhleh composed the anthem to our cedars
Language itself rose like dough in his home
The only sources he cited were verses of ma’annā
He was its prince and lord and the bearer of its banner
And in those days Shahrour al-Wadi came
His wings from the skies of Bdadoun took flight
And King Farouk’s eyes froze
When he heard Shahrour’s qaṣīd so full of invention
He paved the road of poetry for our jawqas
So all could follow in his footsteps
And along came Rukuz that rebel on the stage
Waving his fiery sword of rebellion
And after nurturing and renewing zajal
And earning a wreath of laurels for his trustworthiness
He forged the path of verbal dueling with a heart colder
Than ice, just ask anyone who got caught in a contest
And ever since, his *jawqa* has remained a sturdy fortress, sturdier
Than the fortress Alexander failed to scale
When he frowned a night of darkness set in
Whose daylight never broke on these blind folks
Here I advise Zaghloul to stay away
And not risk tripling his defeat
And at this final meeting, with God as my witness
Which *jawqa* inside this monastery
Is going to raise the victory flag?

***

Bear witness, storied citadel
To the might of the foursome of Khalil
And Zaghloul, it’s not right to make false accusations
Like the ones you blared on the radio
You lived under my wing with abated emotions
And in my hands you were more pliant than my pen
But after you went away from me
Even the vipers cringed from your tongue
If it’s victory you’ve come here to test me on
Know that I can prop triumphal arches on my elbows
Time kneaded into me so much experience
That the age of time and the length of my arm are one
Go ahead and sing, but what can you sing
When I’m the sea and you’re a shell at the bottom of the sea
You live in constant fear of me
My ghost terrifies you when you’re asleep
And mere mention of my name terrifies you when you’re awake

***
Owf...Owf... I see a touch of sorrow there on your brow
My young years have begun to pity that gray hair of yours
Get your little lambs safe inside their pen
Before I loose my wolves on them
And for people to report that your jawqa dueled
With the jawqa that never misses its mark
You'll need to seek refuge from the Virgin of Virgins
And rebel against the clay of your being
From the volcano you'll need to borrow heat
And from the rocks you'll need to borrow hardness
From the two lions borrow some courage
And from the Sultan borrow some majesty
And from the knight borrow some skill
And in this citadel related to me by blood
If you were to put Time up on a saddle to launch an attack
Time wouldn't even come up to my knees
Owf... You're a mere singer crooning with your jawqa-for-hire
One part is the chorus and the other plays the rabāb
If you're so enamored of your voice
Then go ahead with your “Owf” but let al-Basha
Set the tune for you and we will write the words

***

أوخ، أوخ، شفت عا جبهتك مسحة كابي
ابتدا عا شيبتك يشفق شبابي
أحترح حملانك بقلب العمارة
قبل ما يفتتوا عليهن ديابي
وحتى يخبروا جوقك تبارى
مع الجوق الا ما يضيغ أصابي
وتتمرز على الطين الترابي
بلك تنتجى لعذرا العذارى
ومن البركان تستقرض حرارة
ومن الجلمود تستقرض صلابي
ومن السبعين استقرض إهابي
ومن السلطان تستقرض جسارة
ومن الخيال تستقرض مهارة
وعا قلته بينها وبيني قرافي
انسرجت الدهر حتى تشن غارة
ببقي الدهر اوطى من ركابي
أوخ، انت مطرب معك جوقة تجارة
قسم كورس قسم يعزف ربابي
وإذا معجب بصوتك عن جدارة
عليك الاوف و"الباشا" الملحن
عليه اللحن وعلينا الكتابي

***
Cower before the sea you dried-up spring
   Don’t triple your disgraces one after another
All eyes are attentively watching us
   The kings of the vernacular and the classical
In poetry you’re nowhere near my caliber
   And you don’t belong in a real match like this
You’re good for doing TV commercials
   For Ninex and Bata and sweet-smelling soap
And after I pampered you plenty
   And gave you a chance to flee
With what kind of heart, Zaghloul, are you coming here
   To duel a poet with a tiger’s heart and a tiger’s pounce
And the rage of a wounded lioness in his eyes?

***

And now, most beloved Abu Rukuz
   To set your mind at ease, I send you a message
Be not afraid lest we lose the crown
   The very lining of our crown is the star-studded night
Owf…And as you told us to do when you left
   We spent sleepless nights to reach the highest of heights
Sleep in bliss in the heart of the valley
   And bask in the dreams of courage and valor
We’ve crossed the road and in our homeland will always be
   The masters of the pen and improvised verse
And if they put the men of ma‘annā through a sieve
   The only poets who will remain
Are myself and Jiryis and Butrus and Faghali

***

استحي من البحر يا نبعة شحيحة
ولا تلت فضيحة عا فضيحة
العين مفتهحة علينا بعنايي
بملوك العاميّة والفصيحة
أنت بالشعر مش من مستوايي
ولا خرج المباراة الصحيحة
لليتيمك وباتا وصابون ريحه
أنت بالثالثة خرج الدعابي
وعلبكك للهرب آخر نصيحة
بابا قلب يا زغلول جاني
عا شاعر وتية النمر بطمحو
وبعينو غصبة اللبعة الجريحة

***

وهلق يا أبو روكز الغالي
على التطمين بعتلك رسالي
لا تنزع لنا بروح النتاج منا
بطانته تاجنا نجوم الليالي
ومثل ما حكيت لما غبت عنا
سهرنا تا وصلنا للاعلي
نام بفحسة الوادي تهنا
عا احلام البولولي والبسالي
قطعنا الارتجالي القلم اضلاعنا
وادا بيتغلبوا رجال المعتلى
من الشجار ما ينفع إلا
انا وجريس وبطرس والفعالي

***
Iftitāḥiyi of Zaghloul al-Damour

Owf...Owf...Forgive me, letters of the alphabet
If I fall short of the task tonight
I lost my brother who lavished his love on my children
And on me, like a father and a mother
He left us barely five hours ago
Too soon for forgetting to set in
After mourning my brother I came back to console my heart
Because I consider each one of you
A brother, now that my brother is gone

***

Castle of Beit Mery, you can’t forget this face
I’m your native son and you know me well
My father carried me, an infant, from the Shouf Mountains
And showed me around in town after town
I was born next door and climbed higher and higher
I could see the sun lower than my brow
And many a poet, flock after flock
Passed like sheep to my left and my right
And Castle of Beit Mery, were you to feed a thousand doses
Of courage to those who dare enter my lair
I would let my voice ring out from castle to castle
Exploding like the bomb
The Americans dropped on sad Hiroshima

***
And you, year of nineteen-seventy-one, you be
The judge between harshness and tenderness
Keep vigil with us over the deceased one’s jawqa
Like a tender-hearted mother spending the night awake
And Mousa, after Mishrif brought us together
And we stocked you up with ten months of provisions
Now your cupboard is bare and here we are again
Call on me, orphans, and you’ll find me
Eat ‘til you’re full, we filled up long before you
Wear us around your neck like icons on a chain
Go, reap the harvest of honor we planted for you
You’re used to feeding on me in the dark of night
And denying me when the cock crows

***

O lovers of zajal and creative genius
It’s important you favor Mousa over me
Because he still has a steep hill to climb
Before reaching these heavenly heights
It’s important you clap for him after each line
It’s important he feels the majority on his side
It’s important for his eyes to see the dawn
Morning prayers are better than those at night
I am waiting for the yeast of poetry to rise
I won’t break the fast on a dainty bite
And if I get fed up with Moses over here
I’ll bring Moses’ mountain crashing down on Harajil
And finish him off before Jarring arrives

***
And what if at Mishrif with the final qaṣīd
Mousa got the last word, it’s not a stretch to say
That I let him have what was rightfully mine
And he blabbed the story according to his whims
And at the end of the round there he was
Crawling around like a lonesome baby girl
I squeezed out the blood of my compassion and gave him to drink
I realized the bullet was worth more than the prey
Owf...Owf..Even though his oil was spilled he puffed himself up
Strutting about like a robin with wine-colored wings
He started bragging before the children of his household
Like a singer at harvest time
And to rid him of his vanity I invited him
To this party, to this new battle
Bear witness, everyone, to the words I have spoken
And may my hands never touch the tambourine again
If I don’t make this conceited fool kiss my hand

***

Luck has given you many gifts, Mousa
And even built you a house with four solid walls
It was bad luck for you when that eagle and frontrunner died
Who clothed you and your ilk when you were naked
And it’s lucky for you we didn’t meet in another spot
Where shrapnel would clash with shrapnel
It was your bad luck when all the bottles were emptied
I found you at the bottom, a dreg among the dregs
But I, when the homeland called on me
To sing in the cities and villages
To honor my blonde beloved’s request
I did not disappoint the young men and women
And long before jewels were born on my tongue
I donned the mantel of tender zaghloul doves
And if I were to shake my feathers between cedars and oaks
You could build a grand palace with their dust
I gave to poetry deep meanings from my own soul
In gratitude Lebanon cried, “What wonderful gifts are these!”
And if I were to record a record album
It would turn deaf stone into a thousand mirrors
I am Joseph, the one God has chosen
To raise the one who washed away sin with his blood
And if Moses your namesake stepped into the present
I’d swipe that stone tablet right out of his hands
O Zayn Sh‘ayb, sturdy foundation and cornerstone
And you, son of Hamdan, hawk of death
And you, Harb, storehouse of treasures
Don’t bother to analyze matters too much
I alone, were I to saddle my horse
With that saddle I’d tie up all four of their mounts
And the jawqa of Mousa the Keserwani
Who rode in in the evening as four shining knights
Will go home in the morning four victims of my slaughter

***

كرامة عين ولفي الاشقر اني
ما سفهت الشباب ولا الصيايا
وقيل ما الدار يخلق عن لساني
لبيست بدنة زغاليل الطرايا
ويا بنتفضوا بينوا سرايا
وليشي بين ارزة وسندان
صخر لبنان يا نعم الخطايا
عطية الشعر من روحي معاني
ويا سجلت هوني اسطوانى
عا صخر الصم يبصفي مرابى
ويا يوسف انا الله اصطفائي
انا مربي المحا بدمو الخطايا
بيجي، تا شلحو لوح الوصايا
ويا موسى سميك عا زمائي
ويا زين شعيب، يا ركن المباني
وا حبديان يا صقر المنايا
وانت يا حرب، يا خزنة ملاني
لا تهتموا بتحليل القضايا
انوا وحدي اذا بسرج حصاني
بسرجو بكتف الأربع مطايا
وعناصر جوق موسى الكسرواني
عشي عشي عشي عشي عشي فوارس
وعا بكر يا برجعوا اربع ضحايا

***
APPENDIX B: Verbal Duel and Closing *Qaṣīds* – Zaghloul al-Damour vs. Mousa Zoghayb

Zaghloul:

What ails the stars, are they falling asleep?
Time to bring brilliance back into their eyes
Tell your fortress, O monastery, we’re ready for battle
Each one of our chests as vast as infinity
At Mishrif, Mousa wasted time doting on himself
My lion’s eyes took pity on that doe
But today, Mousa, when calamity runs its course
You’ll find the opposite of your heart’s desire
Our decisive battle will not end
‘Til I shred your soul and finish you off
‘Til I shred your soul and finish you off
‘Til I shred your soul and finish you off

Mousa:

Owf! Be proud, Beit Mery, light up the dark
The nights again crown kings within your walls
Zaghloul, forget the dawn of your future, scratch it out
The decisive sword will sever your limbs
At Mishrif, he who made you weep at your own doorstep
Didn’t lure you here to pamper you
Yours truly is a fortress and I’ve trod the path to this one
We are two fortresses now, challenging the stars
So go ahead and choose one of the two
And bash your head on whichever you like

And bash your head on whichever you like
And bash your head on whichever you like
Zaghloul:

Mousa, at Mishrif my fame still resounds
   You were my guest and for a guest I sacrifice all
You can visit me at my home any day you wish
   You can eat my own heart for breakfast and lunch
But here in Beit Mery the arrows of death
   Will pierce you 'til the end of time
I knocked on the fortress. Where are the enemies? I asked
   It froze in fright finding itself alone
When fear appeared on the fortress I went back
   And knocked on you, but knocking was in vain
An echo rang out from your head that said
   There’s nobody here, they’ve all gone away
   There’s nobody here, they’ve all gone away
   There’s nobody here, they’ve all gone away

Mousa:

Owf...O Mishrif, you who adored my poetry
   Remember, I was the god of your poetry and its prophet
Zaghloul, you bashed your head on an electric shield
   And woke up reaping the scary results
My head and the mother of endless time are siblings, you fool!
   We brought you lightning, thunder, and the prideful night
And violence and long-lasting sharp blades
   We brought you the gusts of tempests, brains and talent
And to see where they went with a worried clang
   Lightning and thunder blasted through the thick night
Violence shouted, “Winds, prepare for battle!”
   And talent sped off to nourish the library
Before the duel, steadfastness lay hiding
Then surprised the world with a rebellion of flames
Only brains stayed behind to lay a snare for you
And finish you off with one last blow

Zaghloul:

Mousa fell in the trap and his buddies were erased
A pity how they swayed and looked like fools
Mousa fell in the trap and his buddies were erased
A pity how they teetered and swayed
You think you can restrain the eagle and grab his wings?
You can barely spy him out with binoculars!
Your analysis puts a strain on any brain
People are tired of you, Mousa, and embarrassed, too
If you keep on adding and subtracting like that
You’ll force me to open your record for all to see
Leave the libraries alone; let them enjoy our books
Those who put their faith in your talents got nowhere
Arm yourself with inspiring thoughts
The war of zajal is not won with little traps
Someone with a sound mind in its place
Shouldn’t put traps ’round himself, I say
But you, on purpose you set up the trap
To stop us from prying and exposing you
To stop us from prying and exposing you

وراح الصمود قبل التحدي يختبي
ويفاجئ العالم بثورة لاهبٍ
أما ولحن غايل العقل ناصبٌل شرك
تا ينتهي منك بآخر ابتجح
وأما ولحن غايل العقل ناصبٌل شرك
تا ينتهي منك بآخر ابتجح
تا ينتهي منك بآخر ابتجح

زغلول:

موسى وقع بالفخ ورفاقٌو انمحوا
يا وليلن شو تمرحوا وشو تشرحوا
موسى وقع بالفخ ورفاقٌو انمحوا
يا وليلن شو تطوطحوا وشو تمرحوا
يا قاصد تهدي النسر بجوانحو
بالكاد بالناضور تقدر تلمحو
بها الشرح يلي عا العقل عم تشرحو
تعبا يا موسى الناس عنك واستحوا
انضليت تجمع هالحاسب وتطرحوا
بضطر للعالم سجلك افتحوا
خلي المكاتب في كتبنا يفرحوا
الي توكلوا عمواهبك ما استفتحوا
وعود افكارك بالولي يسلحوا
بنصب الشريك حرب الرجل ما بتزححو
البيكون عنو عقل صاغ ببطحو
تا ي حدث من حولو الشرك ما بنصحو
لكن انت عن قدض حطيت الشرك
اهلي ما نوصل للمخبي ونفضحو
اهلي ما نوصل للمخبي ونفضحو
Mousa:

Zaghloul, don’t let my kindness deceive you
Like the hissing of serpents before they attack
Even if Jupiter came to your aid
You’d still be cowering in the shade of my stage
I will not reign in the great gem of a mind
That stores in its depths Ma‘arrī, Bin Burd, and Buḥturī
And Sartre, Nietzsche, and that genius Shakespeare
And the ants of ma‘annā procuring provisions at my threshing floors
I’ve built a fortress ‘round my mind to withstand an attack
Not for fear of Zaghloul with his tender beak
You want to see what’s in store for you?
Your first surprise is a violent, barbaric death
Next some lacerations from Antar’s sword
And a decree of death straight from Caesar’s palace
So that finally after history’s heroes and all their blood
I’ll cleanse this castle with a little bird’s tears
I’ll cleanse this castle with a little bird’s tears
I’ll cleanse this castle with a little bird’s tears

Zaghloul:

Let your volcanoes erupt, Equator
And draw the line between ripe and unripe
That bird you mentioned, his proverbial deeds dot the annals of Time
This whole fortress will tremble and quake at the sound of his voice
And were you to brandish Hannibal’s unbending sword
Or unsheathe Moses’ staff and the serpent of Tuwa
And King David’s armor with all its might
And a fatal whiff of that plague-laden wind
And an army of giant jinns, each battalion a brigade
And a net to save you from death and dangerous winds
I won’t let you go ‘til I bring down this castle onto your head
And bury you and grind your bones with your flesh

And bury you and grind your bones with your flesh

And bury you and grind your bones with your flesh

Mousa:

Owf...Zaghloul delved deep to choose his metaphors
The judges will regret their long trip here
The more potent a wine is
The more valuable to its vintners
Let go, release poetry’s eagles from their nests
Until the winds blind the planet with their dust

We brought Moses’s staff and all its hidden magic
And King David’s verses and his lyre
And this fortress whose stones my feathers have brushed
Mousa is its king, its glory, and its motto
In charge of its stances and protector of its grounds
His chest a plate of armor culled from its stones
But you, sir, are a bird of bad omen come to visit
And it would suit you, bird, to have such a chance
Have the king die and this castle in ruins
So you could dance on the rubble to your heart’s delight

So you could dance on the rubble to your heart’s delight
So you could dance on the rubble to your heart’s delight

موسى:

أخ...زغلول عمّق والمعاني اختارها
رح تأسف اللجنة على مشوارها
الخمرة إذا بيتقل كثير عيارها
بتزيد قيمتها بنظر خمارها
فيلت نسور الشعر من أوكارها
تا الريح تعمي الكوكب من غبارها
จบنا عصا موسى وسرير اسراها
ايات داود النبي ومزمارها
وهلقلاعه الريشي نتر عاججارها
موسي ملكها وعرّا وشعارها
وسيد مواقفها وحمي ديارها
وصدره درع مقدون من اسوارها
لكن جنابك طير شوم وزارها
ويبناسبك يا طير نيل جوارها
تا يموت الملك وتصير هلقلاعة خراباً
تا تفضل ترقص عا زوايا عمارها

تا تفضل ترقص عا زوايا عمارها

تا تفضل ترقص عا زوايا عمارها
Zaghloul:

Not everyone who climbed high on the stage
Deserves to be called a poet of prestige
O morning stars, come down to this duel
Before I make the earth start to tremble and shake
The judges who came to this packed fort
Came to carry your coffin when the duel is done
We are the cooing doves of poetry
What a shame to waste our time on vultures like these
Go disappear, let truth shine forth
Leave me to dance and prance and strut about
From beginning to end, King of the house of decay
You’ve been sitting on a broken, worn-out chair
At the end of this duel, your prize will be death
And dancing and howling will be mine

Mousa:

Owf...Flutter, O wings of insight, and swoop down
Lift Mousa Zoghayb to a wider world
Rest assured, Khalil, the eagle you left to guard the fortress
Has forbidden the baby chicks of zajal to climb the stage
Zaghloul, don’t pretend not to know your master and king
Get down on your knees and beg his command
Were the king to die, his name would stay high
Terrifying and squeezing you through his sieve
Gather your little friends the day of my burial and dance
Do a dabke, serve wine and dessert to the guests
But no matter how much you howl and rejoice
I will not allow you to savor the joy
Just like the Jews howling at the burial of Christ
Who bowed down in worship the day he rose
Who bowed down in worship the day he rose

Zaghloul:
Son of Mary, rise and tell your deputy
To cast out your enemy from the ranks of your loved ones
God help you, Zoghayb, with all your troubles
Who do you think you are, telling us to kneel?
You think you’re Jesus Christ? What’s gotten into you?
You’re not even Moses, you’re the one-eyed Moshe!
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your cousins!
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your cousins!
The Antichrist is your brother and the Jews are your cousins!

Mousa:
Owf...Zaghloul, I gave you words of marble. Go get some sleep
Or bring the same kind of quarry and the same kind of marble
To get attention, you beg for help from a one-eyed man
This hurts the feelings of all Arabs everywhere
Let me now bolster my argument with harmony and zeal
The name Mousa has no dots, like the word “endurance”
Like “sky” and “God” and “peace”  
Like “good luck” and “promise” and straight “arrows”  
And what business is it of yours, little Pigeon?  
To dot my letters, and turn me into Mousha for rebuke  
For revenge I will pluck out your eyes  
And add the eye of Moshe you alluded to before  
And put them as three decorative dots  
And turn my name into “Mousha”, not to puff myself up  
But to forbid that one who can’t make good rhymes  
From dotting peoples’ names and changing their words

From dotting peoples’ names and changing their words

Zaghloul:

Have no fear, wings of the baby dove
Your feathers are culled from the cedars and the oaks
What did you come to Beit Meri for, Mr. What’s-Your-Name?
Don’t you know my fine odes soften the hardest of rocks?
And as for my rhyme and meter and eloquent words
I change them and mix them and leave no chaff on the floor
I’ll keep pouring it on you and emptying you out
I’ll fill in the empty space in your eyes and empty what is full
Perhaps I’ll plant your heart where your tongue ought to be
And perhaps I’ll put your head where that other thing is
I’ll squeeze you and squish ‘til you fit in a thimble
And with three drops of your blood we will end the fair
We’ll take one of those drops and put it in Japan
And another one in the smoldering heart of hell
That will leave one drop of you in Beit Mery
So people can point and say, “Mousha” Zoghayb was here

And people can point and say, “Mousha” Zoghayb was here
And people can point and say, “Mousha” Zoghayb was here

Mousa:

Owf... Pack up your wings and leave, Zaghloul
Don’t suffer Zoghayb’s arrows and slings
Pack up your wings and leave, Zaghloul
Don’t suffer this night’s arrows and slings
You should beg to go home to your house instead
Not suffer the tyranny of Zoghayb and beg for help from God
Squeeze a great hero into a thimble? That is but an illusion
I have no time for these magic tricks and abracadabra of yours
If this stage wants my blood, it is welcome to it
A saint isn’t stymied by the demands of prayer
Your picture went ‘round, a letter from so-and-so to so-and-so
Like a cheap official stamp in times of boon and bounty
And if three drops of my blood have spilled
They symbolize to the world what’s in the heart of man
The first drop is that of the war hero splattered upon
The flag, soaking it red and rending the skies
The second is the blood of Christ upon the cross
And the third, the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala

And the third, the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala
And the third, the blood of al-Husayn in Karbala
Zaghloul:

You’re suffering from a blood-clot, these drops are serious
   Into my hands you have fallen, and that is no joke
That flag drenched red with martyr’s blood
   Your black blood does no honor
And Husayn’s precious blood, shed in Karbala
   Great men bow their heads before his glory
And the blood that saved the people of the bell and minaret
   Was not shed for Mousa of Khaybar and his lowly actions
The three drops of your blood in that sad hour
   Led you to a fig tree and to a noose
Those drops were the blood money for betraying Christ
   They splattered on your palm, each drop to a different world

Mousa:

Owf…Before the money, the blood on my wounded palm
   Turned into new commandments; read them with care!
First commandment: Let the real jawqa
   Lift our zajal to the eloquent heights
The second: Any rooster who can’t crow right
   Must suffer here the butcher’s knife
The third: Beware of standing before a hurricane
   And the fourth, if you break this one, you’ll never rest
The fifth and the sixth: Avoid all ugliness
   And the seventh and eighth: Give comfort to the crippled
The ninth: Muzzle the vipers, stop their hissing
And the tenth: Don’t deceive yourself with excessive praise
This is how Moses in the past was blunt
Flooding with his commandments the spacious universe
That was long before the law, the messengers, and the prophets
And long before you and profiteers of Christ’s blood

And long before you and profiteers of Christ’s blood
And long before you and profiteers of Christ’s blood

Zaghloul:

Stars of the skies, it’s your right to be mad and burn in anger
Hearing all this nonsense from Mousa and his people
What is your problem, Mousa? Why don’t you understand?
I address you here and you answer in Abu Dhabi
A moment ago you were the master of the trade
All puffed up and crowing like a rooster on the rooftop
What’ve your tambourine and palm got to do with me, you fool?
Go ask some gypsy fortune-teller to read your palm for you
We’ve had our fill of your evasiveness, O talentless one
Settle on one thing, quit doing cartwheels and clowning around
So far I’ve heard you claim you’re the grandson of the Prophet
And that you’re Jesus Christ, raised in his mother’s embrace
And when you started feeling your life was a failure
You turned to that foreigner Moses for help
The Savior of Christians and the Messenger to the Arabs
Leave those two to the men of turbans and robes
Go get me the staff from your buddy Moses
So I can smack you over the head, little boy

So I can smack you over the head, little boy
So I can smack you over the head, little boy
Mousa:

Come into my kingdom, all ye who hunger
To the realm of Zoghayb, of Jafar Barmaki
To the realm of literature and poetry, not the battlefield
Your talk of the staff is shameful, dim-witted, and laughable!
Man’s glory is in his well-chosen words
Not in the staff he needs to lean on
The most cherished talk is Muhammad’s Quran when it speaks
And the gospel of Jesus and the Ten Commandments
I gave you commandments holy and blessed
You turned them down though religious law would’ve heard them and cried
Dear judging panel, go ahead, laugh and cry
I am sick to death of this one challenging my intelligence
He rejected the commandments and asked for the staff
But nothing can make Zaghloul understand, not the staff
and not the words!

But nothing can make Zaghloul understand, not the staff and not the words!

But nothing can make Zaghloul understand, not the staff and not the words!
Zaghloul:

Find your way to my threshing floors, Judging Panel
See all the boon and bounty pouring forth
If I were talking to some vagabond
   Or some garrulous chatterbox
Or some madman who’s lost his marbles
   Or some statue on display in a tinsmith’s museum
Or some deaf man with no idea of what’s happening around him
   Or a mute whose tongue can’t be fixed with glue
I’d understand from such a barbaric fool
   Much more than I’m getting in Beit Mery from you!
Your words make no sense to anyone, nor are they fresh
I don’t want your name inscribed in my book
   Between the commandments, the staff and all the buying and selling
   When I found you making a travesty of poetry
I left the commandments and opened my storehouse of knowledge
   And handwrote your will and testament here on my stage
I will not leave this place until I take this staff
   And whip you and tear your skin to shreds!

   And whip you and tear your skin to shreds!
   And whip you and tear your skin to shreds!

زغلول:

يا لجنة الحكم اهتدي عا بيدري
وشوف الرزق والخير عم بدي دري
لو كون عم بحكي شي واحد همشري
أو شي حدا كتير الكلام وثرتري
أو أخوت وفاقد صوابو الجوهر
أو شي صنم وافاف بمتحف سنكري
أو أطرش وشو صار حولو ما دري
أو أخرس وما بيلحم لسانو بغري
أكتر ما عم بفهم عليك ببيت مري
حكيك ما بيفهم حدا ولاأنو طري
ولا يريد اسمك ينكتب في دفتر
وبين الوصايا والعصا وبيع وشرى
لما لقيتك عالشعر عم تقفري
تركت الوصايا وجيت افتح عنبري
واكتب بابيدي وصبت عا منبري
ومن هون مش رح روح تا خلي العصا تلعب على جنابك تا جلدك بيتري
تلعب على جنابك تا جلدك بيتري
تلعب على جنابك تا جلدك بيتري
Mousa First Closing Qaṣīd:

Owf.. What a crime this is, after the great Rukuz
For me to have to stoop so low
And every time the poets ask about me
To have to be found in the company of Zaghloul
Seventeen years, the fortresses of my art
Were studded with one victory flag after another
I am a mirror that exposes every flaw
Your faults, too, on this mirror I have exposed
When poetry entrusted poetry to me
I swore by my homeland, my God, and my heaven
Never to discriminate between Maronite and Sunni
And never to destroy a man’s house without purpose
You come here to test me, Zaghloul
But your sorry state was exposed under the lens of my intellect
You looked so cold and frozen beside me
Like a shack shivering in the shadow of a building
I got you as a fruitless tree so you could blossom
I grafted onto you the apple tree of my heartfelt concern
But your flower’s was a mother-in-law and your fruit a daughter-in-law
Because the barrenness was in you from the start
I came back and flung wide for you the gate of hope
And I freed you from a cruel and oppressive jail
I gave you the first-born of my poetry for nothing in return
And before you blasphemed against my generous gift
I embraced you as my adopted son
And wrapped you in the blanket of my longing
I said maybe you will turn out as good as I hoped
And trade that staff for a feather and some ink
But oh what shame! You’re stuck on that same old tune
That staff in your hand from beginning to end
You have the kings of poetry singing beside you
And the kings of criticism staring you in the eye
You sure have some nerve to harp on that staff!

Zaghloul First Closing *Qaṣīd*:

Owf..Mousa, better to abandon that silly argument of yours
And not suffer the calamity of its blows
You’re better off not being raked on this rasp
And your lips not tasting its blood
You’ve been bobbing up and down for an hour now
Like a water-wheel circling round and round
While my thoughts were aimed at more distant realms
Where I can pluck each star from its sky
I granted a date to the daughters of poetry
They peeked out from hiding to see Zaghloul
You made yourself a king, but we all bear witness
To the kind of king you really are
If you ask to sit on poetry’s throne
I will topple the whole kingdom on its builder
King Kafur was black like you
A slave with a fat lip hanging down and another like a lid on top
And when al-Mutanabbi attacked him in his poem
He pulled the chair out from him and his court
And his staff, with which your skin is familiar
He bought it before he bought the slave
I went and paid a whole lot more
So I could get that staff and drag you with it

يا عيب الشوم باقي بفرد رئي
بملاصي من البداية للنهائي
ملوك الشعر حذك عم تغطي
وملوك النقد قام عينك
وكيف لك عين تحكي بالعاصيَّإ
Stop evading the issue and acting hurt  
Enough trying to confuse everyone, enough!  
Even if you appeal to Jesus and Muhammad  
I won’t let go of you, I won’t throw down my staff  
*Not 'til Hrajil declares a day of mourning for you*

**Mousa Second Closing Qaṣīd:**

Owf…There you go drawing your sword again  
And prefacing your talk will killing  
If that’s the kind of prelude you want to dwell on  
Why make the people suffer? Let them leave  
I beg you, Judges, listen and make your ruling  
Tell me what I should say to this guy  
Shall I tell him we’re hewn from the very same quarry  
A crime not even the law can undo  
We read a prelude in Jirdaq’s book  
The winking and backbiting over it was endless  
It’s true, and the truth stings most  
When it is told at just the right time  
Mr. Critic, only one poet has lifted himself  
From the mire that drowned others in shame  
Like you I wonder what is to stop us  
From taking advantage of this critical realm  
To talk of the poor and hungry people  
Whose daily bread the rich man exploits  
Or talk of orphans with tears in their eyes  
Lost with no honest soul to show them the way  
Zaghloul, break out of this prison  
Fly high and teach your wings to soar  
With you here is a poet of vast horizons  
Reaching farther than the invaders of space
I’ve never let myself be afraid of death
No matter from where its soldiers loom
Because from death a man has no escape
No matter how many or few his years may be
If my bones are called back to the dust
I will hop on that train to eternity
Willingly I would die so that death can join
The glory of Mousa with the glory of Khalil
And I’ll tell you what grief my death would stir
Not only would Hrajil cry for me and mourn

All of Lebanon would weep and wail my death!

Zaghloul Second Closing Qaṣīd:

Owf…Sing, poetry, sing out my praises
It was my voice that taught the songbird to sing
The April moon would have sallow cheeks
If not for my poetry’s henna tattoo
Mousa, the sword blade of your greatness has gotten quite dull
Be very careful before you utter a word
If you die I wouldn’t consider that
A great loss to Muslims and Christians
And Hrajil, whose everlasting name I adore
And for whose people my loving heart swells
It said “Oh well, he died, may God never bring him back”
Because today he triggered his own demise
People like you should answer to me
Because as the great and famous cedars know
I am your father and your father’s father; kiss this hand
And I am the father of our dear departed friend
And the father of all those my companions defied  
The father of the spear and the sharp blades of swords  
All brilliant children are children of mine  
I am the nurturer of zajal who made poetry bear fruit  
If you die and people start mourning for you  
It’s not for your sake our homeland will weep  
It is for your father’s sake that Lebanon will  
Weep tears of blood, at home and abroad  
Zajal enthusiasts, reign in your thoughts  
Compare where he was with where we are  
Judges, get ready to make your choice  
And give every poet what his heart desires  
Now, facing his foe, each opponent  
Salutes you, most cherished of us all  
So this poetry will remain exalted on high  
May God keep you and keep eternal  

The cedars of Lebanon and the nights of ma'anna!
APPENDIX C: Glossary

‘ajz  literally the “rump”; refers to the second hemistich of a two-hemistich line

‘atābā  traditional, homonym-based genre of oral poetry consisting of four-line stanzas with the last word of the first three lines being homonyms with different meanings; often paired with a mījanā choral refrain

Beit Mery  a summer mountain resort town in Lebanon that overlooks Beirut; the location of the historic verbal duel encounter of 1971 between the Jawqa of Khalil Rukuz, led by Mousa Zoghayb, and the Jawqa of Zaghloul al-Damour, led by Joseph al-Hashem (aka Zaghloul al-Damour)

daff  tambourine

al-Damour, Zaghloul  literally the “Baby Dove of Damour”; penname of zajal poet Joseph al-Hashem (b. 1925), leader of the Jawqa of Zaghloul al-Damour and known as one of the giants of Lebanese zajal

dawr  literally the “round” or “turn”; refers to the successive lines of a stanza that follow the maṭla‘

derbakki  (also darbuka) type of hand drum with a goblet shape played under the arm or resting on the player’s leg

Fuṣḥā  the “eloquent” or literary form of Arabic as opposed to the various spoken dialects of Arabic; Modern Standard Arabic; Classical Arabic
ḥafli a party

ḥaflit zajal a zajal party or zajal performance

iftitāhiyyi Arabic term for the opening segment of a verbal duel during which the lead poet of each jawqa sings several stanzas in the qaṣīd form

jawqa Arabic term for a team or band of oral poets, usually consisting of four poets ranked by seniority and led by the most senior poet

kharja literally the “exit”; the “x” rhyme at the end of the penultimate line of a stanza in qaṣīd form; signals the onset of the end of the stanza which is completed in the single hemistich that follows

maʿannā a very common long, melismatic metrical form used in oral poetry most often for more serious topics; a term that is also used by poets synonymously with zajal referring to sung oral poetry in general

manbar (also minbar) literally “stage” or “pulpit”

maṭlaʾ literally the “starting point”; the opening line of a stanza

Mousa see entry below: Zoghayb, Mousa

mubārāt zajal literally a zajal “match” or “contest”; term used to describe the large event when two jawqas of poets compete against each other

nathr al-naghamāt musical prose style of Arabic music characterized by a free rhythm and tendency towards long and frequent use of melisma, coloratura, and other forms of vocal
embellishment; in general, this style is used for conveying more serious ideas and arguments

**naẓm al-naghamāt** ordered musical style characterized by a regularly rhythmed underlay; in general, this style is used for treating lighter topics

**owf** an emphatic expression poets of *zajal* use at the beginnings of lines to express feelings of excitement or exasperation; can range in length with longer “owf” providing poets with opportunity to think out their lines, signal a change in tempo, or showcase their singing voice; sometimes pronounced “*owkh*”

**qarrādī** a common metrical form used in oral poetry characterized by short, rhythmic musical meter used for light topics

**qaṣīd** poetic/musical form used in the *ifitāḥiyyi* and closing odes; belongs to the *nathr al-naghamāt* (musical prose) style of Arabic music, which is characterized by a free rhythm and a tendency towards long and frequent use of melisma, coloratura, and other forms of vocal embellishment; follows the rhyme scheme a a//b a//b a//b a//…//b x// a

**qaṣīda** Classical Arabic ode that follows the same rhyme scheme as the *qaṣīd* form of Lebanese oral poetry

**riddādi** Arabic term meaning “repeaters” and referring to the chorus of singers who accompany *zajal* poets and who repeat refrains throughout the performance while seated behind the poets on the stage; *riddādi* also play a variety of percussion instruments such as *derbakkis*
(drums) and *daffs* (tambourines) or other musical instruments such as electric keyboards or clarinets

**rujū** literally the “return”; refers to the final single-hemistich line of a stanza in *qaṣīd* form which exhibits a return to the original “a” rhyme

**ṣadr** literally the “chest”; refers to the first hemistich of a two-hemistich line

**shurūqi** a form of *zajal* of the *nathr* musical style characterized by a long melismatic ending to each line; considered one of the more difficult forms; Mousa Zoghayb is known among *zajal* poets as a master of *shurūqi*

**zajal** a term with root meanings associated with singing which in Lebanon refers to sung vernacular oral poetry in general; the poet-singers under focus in this study who engage in Lebanese verbal dueling are referred to as *zajal* poets

**Zaghloul** see entry above: *al-Damour, Zaghloul*

**Zoghayb, Mousa** (b. 1937) lead poet of the *Jawqa* of Khalil Rukuz (at the Beit Mery verbal duel) and considered one of the greatest *zajal* poets of his generation