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Internal Prose Contestations in the 5th-century AH Andalusia: Between Innovation and Imitation

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Abstract:

This article explores the concept of prose contestations, their origins, development, and importance in Andalusian literature, while attempting to shed light on the areas of innovation and creativity in them, as well as to prove the worthiness of the subsequent text, which may equal the previous text in its artistic value or may surpass it at times, since the real objective of contestation is not limited to imitation, but to expansion and refinement. Prose contestations contributed to the prosperity of artistic prose in the 5th century AH in Andalusia. Among the aspects of this innovation are the contestations of Al-Zahriyat, Al-Matariyat, Al-Zarzuriyyat, and Al-Mu'tadhdiyat, in which the Andalusian prose writer set out in his creativity from nature, the disordered political conditions in Andalusia.

**** Dr. Asma CHAOUI***

Introduction

The process of reviving a previous literary model requires a device that helps resurrect that same text in a new form. This device is literary contestations, both poetic and prose, which are among the valuable literary phenomena in the ancient Arab tradition.

Unlike the poetic contestations that received the attention of both ancient and modern literary critics and scholars, Andalusian prose contestations did not receive their due share of study and analysis. Most literary studies focused on the forms and types of contestations, whereas other studies distinguished between them, plagiarism, and contradictions.

Andalusian prose contestations are divided into two types: external contestations, which include the contestation of the Andalusian prose pioneers to the Oriental prose pioneers, in which Andalusian prose texts followed the same approach of Oriental prose texts, and many literary studies have addressed them through research and analysis. Internal contestations, on the other hand, are concerned with Andalusian prose texts, emphasizing the areas of influence and innovation among the Andalusian prose pioneers, a new prose style born of Andalusian literature.

Problematic

The problematic is based on the following:

What is the relationship between the previous and subsequent Andalusian prose texts? Is it a relationship of imitation and reproduction or a relationship of creative interaction and transcendence? The problematic can be detailed by raising a number of questions:

1. What are internal prose contestations and what is their importance in Andalusian literature?
2. How did the Andalusian contestation writers deal with the previous models? What are the similarities and differences between the previous and subsequent texts?

Methods

In order to answer this question, the historical method is utilized to understand the concept of the contestations, their origins and motives. The descriptive method is also used to study the similarities and the dissimilarities in the Andalusian prose contestations among themselves, using the 5th century AH as a model.

Hypotheses

The aforementioned problematic generated a number of hypotheses that can be summarized as follows:

1. The contestations are a cultural intellectual product that portrays the political, economic, social, cultural and literary life in the 5th century AH.

2. In the art of literary contestations, the previous text gives the subsequent one a legitimate position in the literary achievement, while the subsequent text maintains the continuity of the previous one.
3. The contestations are based on the principle of growth and refinement, not on the principle of precedence.
4. The 5th century AH represents the prime time of artistic prose in Andalusia, despite the social disintegration and political disorder.
5. The differences between the contestation prose texts demonstrate the nature of the relationship between the contesting text and the contested one.

Study objectives

This article aims to explore Andalusian prose texts that have not received their due share of research and study, and to discuss the conception that the previous text is better than the subsequent one, which found it difficult to confront and prove its existence in the face of the successful perception of the contested model.

Literature Review:

After reviewing previous studies that tackled the topic of contestations, one can notice that most of them focused on poetic contestations instead of prose contestations that did not receive their due share of research and study. Despite their scarcity, scholars were interested in studying their contents and styles without focusing on the nature of the relationship between contesting texts and contested ones.

Among these previous studies, we mention, for instance:

- Ali bin Muhammad's book: “Andalusian prose in the 5th century AH, its contents and forms” in which the author mentioned the types of prose contestations without in-depth examination.
- Fawzi Saeed Issa’s book: “Zarzuriyyat: their origin and development in Andalusian prose”, which dealt with the Zarzuriyyat merely as a type of prose contestation in Andalusia.
- Mahdia Muhammad Abd al-Samad al-Khuwaildi’s Magister Thesis “The Art of Literary Contestations in Andalusian Prose in the 5th Century AH: a descriptive and analytical study” (2013-2014), University of Tripoli. The researcher focused on Andalusian prose contestations, their contents and artistic methods.

The advantage of the present study is that it sheds light on a topic that was scarcely studied, namely Andalusian prose contestations, and specifically on what most literary studies have overlooked, as it was impossible to find a single study that tackled the differences between the texts of prose contestations in Andalusia and how its writers dealt with previous models.

1. The Concept of Contestation

1.1. Lexically

The word contestation is found in Arabic dictionaries and lexicons having different meanings, including conformity, exaggeration, and sharing. Ibn Faris, in the dictionary of language standards, states that: "the letter 'ayn, the letter 'ra' and the letter 'dad' are a structure with many branches, and despite their many branches, they go back to one origin, which is the 'ardh' (projection) (.....). This meaning is an indication imitation with a successive time difference, motivated by challenge and admiration." (Ibn Faris 2001, pp. 727-728) Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad Al-Farahidi (d. 175 AH) also states: "you contested him with something similar to what he did if you came to him with something similar to what he came to you with, and from this, contestation was derived" (Al-Farahidi, 1986, p. 272) Therefore, contestation is the reproduction of the text in a similar manner. It is also when the subsequent prose writer or poet writes similar to the previous prose writer or poet.

Contestation is one of the literary terms which are difficult to define precisely. It is based on the idea of similitude, which springs from imitation, and the idea of contrast, which is founded on the spirit of challenge and competition.

1.2. Technically

According to Ahmad Al-Shaib poetic contestations is "when a poet recites a poem on a certain subject in any meter and rhyme, and another poet admires this poem for its artistic aspect and excellent formulation, so he recites a poem in the same meter and rhyme of the first poem and its subject" (Al-Shaib 1954, p. 7) with some changes, whether few or many, in which the contestation writer tries to match the model literary work artistically or to excel it. In the dictionary of Arabic terms in language and literature, contestation is "when the writer imitates in his literary work the work of another writer with an accurate imitation that demonstrates his competence and skill" (Majdi and Al-Muhandis, 1979, p. 203). Contestation is not limited to poetry, however, it is present in both poetry and prose, and its purpose is to imitate and highlight literary competence.

Contestation is the process of producing an old text. Regardless, it is not limited to reproducing that text only, but it is a complex process in which attention must be paid to techniques adopted in presenting the text in a new form matching the prose writer or the poet's inclinations. The contestation writer must choose the model text carefully and excel in writing his own in order for him to succeed in this process.

Contestation occurs between ancient and modern writers and may be related to writers from the same era. It maintains the connection between the past and the present, and preserves the tradition and revives it in a new form. It is proof of the

quality and distinction of the previous literary texts and the competence and skill of their writers.

2. Contestations: their origins and the motives for their prosperity in Andalusian literature

The emergence of contestations goes back to the pre-Islamic era. They can be seen in poetic and prose exchanges between writers, where poets were interested in memorizing poetry and reciting it and knowing the days of the Arabs to refine their talents, sharpen their minds, and expand their knowledge. Contestations are present, for instance, in the poetry of Al-A'sha, Al-Musayyab bin Alas, Zuhair bin Abi Salma, Aws bin Hajar, Abu Dhu'ayb Al-Hudhali, and Sa'idah bin Ju'bah. As for the era of Early Islam, they can be found in the verbal duel between the poets of Quraysh and the poets of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), when it was closer to contradiction. With the escalation of the political conflict in the Umayyad era, the art of contradictions flourished with Jarir, Al-Farazdaq, and Al-Akhtal, which is different from the art of contestations. Literary conflicts continued until the Abbasid era, like the poetic work that called for renewal, which encouraged contestation in Abu Tammam, Bashar bin Burd, and Abu Nuwas... etc. Contestations flourished in the Andalusian era along the civilizational conflict between Andalusia and the Orient, where the Andalusians contested the Orientals in poetry, prose, and composing.

Ihsan Abbas states in the second edition of his book "The History of Andalusian Literature: The Era of Taifas and Almoravids," published in 1997 :

> Now, as I look at the reality of what happened, I find myself inclined to believe that imitating the literature of the Orient, although it was something natural, could not weaken the Andalusian authenticity. This compelled me to observe literature within the overall picture of Andalusian civilization from its various perspectives. (Ihsan, 1997, p. 3)

The alteration in this scholar's point of view was not the result of coincidence or a desire to change; however, it was the essence of thirty-five years of studies and research in the field of Andalusian literature. Andalusian literature cannot be judged in a fragmented manner, but rather in a comprehensive manner across all its literary eras and all its poetic, prose, critical, and compositional works.

Andalusian literature has gone through major phases. In the first phase, the Andalusian poet or prose writer tried to imitate the Oriental model due to the lack of a cognitive reservoir from which to draw knowledge. Given that knowledge is cumulative by nature, no civilization has ever emerged out of the blue. Throughout the years, the Andalusian identity started taking shape and spreading its roots. Consequently, the Andalusian writer began to sense his belongingness and identity, which he embodied in his creative works, and as a result he transcended the phase of imitation to the phase of creativity, innovation, and

distinction. Among the aspects of this distinction are the contestations of the Al-Zahriyat, Al-Matariyat, and Al-Zarzuriyat, in which the prose writer drew inspiration from the Andalusian nature.

Just as the Andalusian writer was influenced by the Andalusian nature, he was also influenced by the disordered political conditions of internal and external strife and wars, which resulted in a prose art known as the Al-Mu'tadhdiya contestations. The political conflict in the fifth century AH served artistic prose in Andalusia, as artistic writing experienced "a unique renaissance and took a new path in its purposes, meanings, and style." (Khafaji, 1992, p. 602) Hence, it was an era of quality, generosity, and abundance, despite being dominated by social disintegration and political unrest. Demonstrated below are some contestations examples of the Andalusians among themselves.

2.1. Al-Zahriyat

Also called Al-Nawariyat, and this type of poetry composition appeared with Rumi. The credit goes to the Andalusian writers in transferring it from poetry to prose in the form of imaginative prose letters describing the picturesque nature of Andalusia, which embodied a prominent feature in the fifth century AH. Among the pioneers in this regard was Ibn Burd Al-Asghar (d. 428 AH), also known as Abu Hafs, in his Al-Zahriya letter that he sent to Ibn Jahwar. This distinction in the writing style urged writers to imitate it, given that their ability to compose similar prose proves their literary competences. In the Andalusian era, if a poet or prose writer wanted to attain a notable position and recognition, he had to contest the great writers or poets. Three writers of his era contested him: Abu Omar Yusuf bin Jaafar, also known as Ibn al-Baji (d. 520 AH), Abu al-Walid Ismail bin Muhammad al-Himyari (d. 440 AH), and Abu al-Fadl bin Hasdai.

2.2. Al-Matariyat

Rain has a special place in the Arab mindset, as it is a symbol of life, while drought is a symbol of death and hunger. This notion was embodied in the in the Andalusian literature, both poetry and prose. This idea was mentioned in Ibn Bassam's book Al-Dhakhirah fi Mahasin Ahl al-Jazeera (d. 542 AH) under the title "Sifat Matar ba'd Qahdat" (the description of rain after drought) (al-Shantrini 1981, p. 196-onward). These are descriptive prose texts in which the writer compares the state of the land during drought and fertility, through which he conveys his symbolic dimensions. This style is deemed a fertile field in which writers compete to demonstrate their ability and superiority in the description arena. Al-Matariyat contestation is usually divided into four units:

- Unit One: Opening with the Belief in Fate and Destiny
- Unit Two: Describing the Effects of Drought and Rain on Earth and Humans

- Unit Three: Describing the state of the earth after rain and how it becomes green and flourishing.
- Unit Four: Concluding with thanks and praise to Allah

Among the most renowned contestations that were composed in this style is the contestation of Ibn al-Baji (d. 520 AH), and the contestation of Abu Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Ghafur (d. 531 AH).

2.3. Al-Zarzuriyat

Andalusian prose letters limited to the Almoravid era. The Zarzuriyah letter is similar in structure to the Ikhwani letter. It starts with a short introduction containing a prayer and references to the one being praised, and ends with a brief conclusion written in a style similar to the introduction. It describes the Kediyah people in a humorous, sarcastic style based on the condensation of symbolism, where the image of the starling is employed borrowing some of its qualities such as intelligence and wit, etc. The purpose of this style is to ask for intercession and affection, and to portray and criticize reality. It indicates the social changes that took place during the Almoravid era, including: the spread of Kediyah and classism, etc. Among the contestations that were mentioned within this style are the contestations of: Abu al-Qasim ibn al-Jadd, Ibn Abd Al-Ghafur, and Abu Bakr Abdul Aziz Al-Batalyusi (d. 520 AH)

2.4. Al-Mu'tadhdiyat

Are prose texts resulting from turbulent political conditions. The beginnings of this prose art go back to the letter of Abd al-Barr al-Namri (d. 474). It is among the letters which are distinguished by their subject matter and the circumstances of their composition. This style has great literary value, as it sheds light on the civilization of Andalusia from the political, social and literary aspects of the Taifa Kings era.

Among the factors that led to the success of Andalusian prose contestations:

1. The rulers and relatives' encouragement to Andalusian writers to compete among themselves and show their literary skills.
2. Critics' (such as Ibn Shahid al-Andalusi) encouragement to Andalusian writers to delve into the art of contestation since it was a standard for excellence. (Ihsan, History of Literary Criticism among the Arabs 1971, p. 484)
3. The writers of the History of Andalusian Literature also played an effective role in encouraging the art of contestation. An example of that is Ibn Bassam in his book "Al-Dhakhirah" often repeats the expression: "it was presented to him... so he contested it...)
4. The Andalusian poets and writers' deep-rooted inner feeling of marginality and insufficiency in contrast to the sacredness of the Oriental model provided an inciting motivation to liberate them from dependency and demonstrate their belonging to the Andalusian society. "Therefore, they explored the horizons of

contestation, driven by a sincere desire to prove that the Andalusian writers can be equal to the prominent figures of the Orientals" (Maydan, p. 100), and there are countless examples.

3. The absent text and the present text: a relationship of agreement or transcendence

In this article, I will focus on meaning as the source of difference between previous and subsequent texts, as well as the nature of the relationship between subsequent texts and the contents of absent texts. This relationship may be classified within the circle of similarity, contradiction, distinction, difference, etc.

3.1. Zahriyat Contestations

a) Ibn Burd Al-Asghar's Zahriyat: Ibn Burd wrote a praise letter, to the minister Ibn Jahwar, in a fictional narrative style based on dialogue on the tongues of flowers and buds. It opens as follows: "As for what follows, my master, and for whom would I sacrifice my life, some of the early literary scholars mentioned (...), that there are kinds of basil and types of garden flowers... (Al-Shantrini 1981, p. 127)

Ibn Burd claims in his letter the superiority of roses over other flowers, and perhaps in this he is referring to Ibn Jahwar, whom he preferred over other rulers of the Taifa kings era. Ibn Burd tries to refute his judgement by presenting a series of arguments to persuade the flowers of the kingdom's wise man's decision. Furthermore, he hints at the superiority of Ibn Jahwar over other rulers, or perhaps he hints at himself himself and his own superiority over other writers of his era.

b) Ismail bin Muhammad Habib al-Himyari's Contestation: Muhammad Habib wrote a long praise letter to al-Mu'tadid bin Abbad, in which he contested Ibn Burd. He differed from him on the number of flowers, as he described seven flowers while Ibn Burd described five flowers. He also disagreed with him and criticized him on his judgment of the superiority of roses over all other flowers, and he hence presented a number of evidence and proofs. The quarrel between the flowers in the Andalusian prose contestations may reflect the political conflict between the rulers of the Taifa kings.

c) Al-Himiri's Contestation: in his contestation, Al-Himiri employed the narrative style interspersed with dialogue, concluding it with poetic verses by Rumi satirizing the rose. Ibn Burd Al-Asghar's Zahriyat agrees with Al-Himiri's contestation in the artistic construction of the letter.

Al-Himiri tried not to reproduce the model text through repeating its images and meanings, but rather he attempted to change it, stating: "the best comparison of the rose is to the freshness of the cheek for those who are familiar with it, and the most noble of the senses is the eye." (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 131, vol. 2, no. 1) Al-Himiri prefers comparing the rose to the cheek, a simile, where the compared and

the compared to being tangible, and the quality of radiance and freshness uniting them. He criticizes the writer of the absent text for comparing the rose to the eyes. Zahriyat contestations are rich of all sorts of rhetoric and figurative speech. The writers of Al-Zahriyat rendered flowers and buds into characters that speak, quarrel, boast, and make decisions. Owing to this imagery, their texts acquired esthetics of distinction and uniqueness. "The imaginative personification offers imaginary debates a significant and advanced visual style in expression to awaken the audience's feelings." (Mardini, 2008, p. 421)

Al-Zahriyat writers also used poetry excessively, with the aim of stimulating the imagination and generating literary pleasure.

d) Abu Omar Al-Baji's contestation: was written by Al-Baji to Al-Muqtadir bin Hood. He opened it with a prayer for him: "May Allah prolong the life of Al-Muqtadir, my master and lord..." (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 195) In this contestation, he chose the daisy flower to be the narrator, speaking on his behalf with Al-Muqtadir, complaining to him about the injustice he was subjected to by the roses. The poet's self is embodied in the fictional character of the rose, indicating and declaring on its behalf his loyalty to Al-Muqtadir, hoping to appease him and get closer to him because he sees that he is more deserving of that and that he is distinguished from others."

e) Abu al-Fadl ibn Hasdai's contestation: he wrote it in contestation of Ibn Burd al-Asghar's Zahriyat, in a convincing narrative style, aiming to get closer to al-Muqtadir bin Hood. In his contestation, he chose the daffodil flower to be the narrator, speaking on his behalf with al-Muqtadir bin Hood. Its general context does not differ from Ibn al-Baji's Zahriyat except for the element of dialogue that he did not establish among the flowers, rather between the daffodil and one of Ibn Hood's followers, aiming to maintain a humorous tone. Ibn Hasdai concluded his contestation by praising Ibn Hood and hoping that he would attain a prestigious position next to him, stating: "So breathe into us some of your good morals/If morals could be gifted" (al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 472)

The opening of contestations differs from one to another, as Ibn Burd Al-Asghar's Wardiyat opens with a long introduction in which the writer introduces the main purpose and ends with a statement that the all flowers agreed upon. On the other hand, Abu al-Walid Habib, in his text, delves directly into the topic, as the flowers and trees agreed to refuse to pledge allegiance to the rose, and he ends it with poetic verses that reinforce his position. Ibn Hasdai, however, dispenses with the introduction, while Ibn al-Baji opens it with a prayer.

The general topic of the contesting and contested texts is "the flowers". In the absent text, the writer prefers roses allowing them to represent other flowers, while the later texts prefer other types. In his contestation, Al-Himiri chooses daisies, imitated by Ibn al-Baji in his choice, while Ibn Hasdai selects the

daffodils. Perhaps the writers contested Ibn Burd's meanings in order to show their literary capacities. Contesting some connotations in the later text does not exclude the text from the realm of contestation because contesting connotations is grounded on competition that is called for by the art of contestations that do not require agreement on opinions. The common aim among Al-Zahriyat writers is to win over and get closer to those in power through explicit or implicit praise.

Ibn Burd's Zahriyat is the only letter in which the author's voice is completely absent, while in the other contestations the author's voice can be noticed clearly in some paragraphs of the contestation. It also differs in its introduction and conclusion from the other contestations, which all ended with poetic verses.

The use of symbols is the prominent aspect in Al-Zahriyat contestations. The meanings of these symbols differed from one text to another. In the previous text and Al-Himiri's contestation, the symbol was contradictory and rich with political connotations, while Ibn al-Baji reserved it for himself. Ibn Hasdai, however, employed it as a means to get closer to Ibn Hood.

The contestation texts conform to the contesting text in citing poetry, as one can notice the excessive use of it in Ibn Hasdai's contestation. Its use differed from one writer to another according to the context. Some mentioned a complete verse of poetry, some mentioned it implicitly, and some mentioned the verse's beginning or end. For instance, Ibn Burd mentioned in his text a verse of poetry by Al-Khansa, and Al-Himri mentioned a verse of poetry by Rumi, whereas Ibn Al-Baji, concluded with a verse of poetry of his own composition, in which he states: "Don't humiliate me after you've honored me/ It is arduous for me to quit a habit (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 195)

Al-Zahriyat contestations are similar to the previous text in the writing technique and general topic matter and differ from it in intention and purpose. Given that the aim of Al-Zahriyat letters is not to highlight the beauty of flowers and buds, it is rather an innovative writing style to achieve explicit or implicit purposes. The roses in Ibn Burd, like Ibn Jahwar, or the author's "I", the daisies in Abu al-Walid, embodied the character of al-Mu'tadid, while the daffodils in Ibn Hasdai represented him. The subsequent writer draws inspiration from the previous text and employs it to serve his requirements and the changes of his era.

3.2. Al-Matariyat Contestations

a) Matariyat Abi Al-Qasim Ibn Al-Jadd (d. 515 AH): the first prose text written on this subject and in this style tackled the effects of drought and fertility. The writer commenced his text by talking about the greatness and power of Allah the Almighty. He described the state of nature after the drought and its impact on nature and the human soul since drought causes sadness and depression. Following this daunting scene, the writer moves on to describe Allah Almighty's mercy manifested in the precipitation of rain in a completely different scene, when

life and happiness are restored. The writer esthetically depicts the effects of rain on nature and the human soul. He concludes his text with praise and thanks to Allah the Almighty: "Praise be to Allah for the pouring rain and new dawn..." (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 196)

b) Omar Al-Baji's contestation: it conforms to the model text in the introduction and the general content of the Matariya, and it differs from it in few simple details, including: the use of quotes from the Quran (such as verse 28 of Surat Ash-Shura), the elaboration in describing the effects of drought on the psychological and material side of human life, and the conclusion with a supplication: "and we ask the Giver for more of the blessings of success and we seek His guidance in fulfilling rights.." (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 179) Regardless, this text does not rise to the level of the preceding text in terms of style, and in which the writer excelled in employing imagery and the use of poetic language.

c) Ibn Abd al-Ghafur's contestation: in his contestation, he was not limited to contesting the letter of Abu al-Qasim Ibn al-Jadd, but he also contested the contestation of Omar al-Baji, which opens by: "By God, His greatness commands, changes the nature of the radiant / and strips the stars of their glow..." (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 342) His text is similar to the two previous texts in the introduction, the conclusion, as well as the general content of the letter, and its size, except for the use of some structures through which the author expressed the greatness of Allah and His power in managing the universe, as well as in his use of obscurity while describing the falling of rain after he portrayed the state of the earth during drought, a melancholic feeling dominated this prose text. The author was able to keep up with Ibn al-Jadd in his description of the impact of rain on the earth. He also paid great attention to the smallest details during his description, as he employed colors and flowers, which transferred the contestation through these connotations from the melancholic feeling to happiness and optimism, similar to what can be noticed in the two previous letters. However, he changed the structure of the previous text. After describing the rainfall and praising Allah, Ibn al-Jadd depicted a scene of delight and the restoration of life. On the other hand, Ibn al-Ghafur, after his descriptions of the rainfall and drought and its effects on life, returns to the initial scene, which in fact, does not comply with the audience's expectations. This also allowed the author to manifest his ability to imitate, as well as to distinguish himself from the first text, and thus his creativity, which is the foundation of contestation.

The contestation texts comply with the previous texts in the external form of the letter's structure and the general semantic framework. It does not focus on the meaning, but rather on how the meaning is presented. For instance, Ibn al-Baji's letter does not rise to the level of Ibn al-Jadd's text in terms of eloquence, solidity of structures, and flow of meanings. However, Abu Muhammad Ibn Ghafur's

contestation surpassed the first text by adding some narrative techniques like the poeticization of prose, adding new connotations such as praise when the rain falls, and employing some unfamiliar connotations. The similarities and differences resulted in a relationship of interaction and assimilation between the texts of Ibn al-Jadd and Ibn Abd al-Ghafur. The latter attempted to draw inspiration from the model text to commence his prose experiment towards distinction and privacy.

3.3. Zarzuriya Contestations

a) Abu al-Hasan ibn Siraj's letter: the minister and author Abu al-Hasan ibn Siraj (d. 508 AH), is a pioneer in this style, as he wrote a letter to Ibn al-Jadd asking for intervention for someone known as Azzarizir, commenced with a short introduction in praise. Ibn Siraj used the connotations of this name and linked it to the starling bird ("Zarzoor" in Arabic) (Fawzi 1990, p. 14), where he projected the man's life, characteristics, behaviors, and toil on the starling bird. He concluded his Zarzuriya with a praising conclusion in which he pleaded Ibn al-Jadd to have mercy on the man's condition and intervene for him, among what he said: "you come with you goodness and generosity, …" (Al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 347)

b) Abu al-Qasim Ibn al-Jadd's contestation: Ibn al-Jadd founded his contestation on Ibn Siraj's idea, and produced a parallel text to the model text, which he commenced with a long introduction in praise and commendation of Ibn Siraj. In his text, he employed sarcasm in describing the starling, and symbolism in expressing the lived reality that he mirrored through the migration of the starling in search of olives after being unable to have any in his homeland. He concluded his letter with a prayer for Ibn Siraj, on whom he attributed some of the characteristics of the starling jokingly, saying: "especially since your generosity guides to the lavishness of gardens and ponds, while in your presence there is abundance of love, endless bounty, and warm abode." (al-Shantrini, 1981, p. 350) Ibn al-Jadd attempted to contest the previous text with his verbosity and artistic skill, through employing some well-known places to serve his main theme in the contestation and to demonstrate his wide-ranging knowledge, among these places are Souq Okaz and the locations of Yabrin And Darin, and the evocation of some literary figures such as Qass bin Sa'idah Al-Ayadi, and Arbad bin Rabi'ah Al-Amiri, etc., and even the well-known singer Ma'bad. The author aims to outdo the previous text in its size, and tries to innovate in order to prove his text's distinction. The similarity between the contesting text and the contested one is inevitable, yet it does not mean conformity. Although distinct, the author's artistic experience does not appear in some parts of the text and disappear in others, but it rather appears in the structure of the letter as a complete and homogeneous whole, given that a text cannot be judged through partial comparison.

c) Ibn Abd al-Ghafur's contestation: he has two contestations in the zarzuriyat style; one about reproach and the other one about intercession. In his first contestation, the author reproaches Ibn Siraj for his shortcomings in loving him and not caring about him. He says: "It is strange how the minister favors the insignificant weaklings, and barring the heart that almost flies to him with yearning." (Al-Shatrini 1981, p. 351) The author describes him with bad qualities, some are related to the qualities of the starling and some to human qualities that he attributed to the starling bird such as: stuttering in speech, lack of piety, stupidity... etc., and then he concluded his letter with a prayer for the Caliph. The author aimed to highlight his personal experiences and his distinctiveness by deviating from the primary purpose for writing the contestation, through following the principle of disagreement with the model text in terms of topic. As for his contestation in intercession, it conforms to the contents of Ibn al-Jadd's contestation. He depicted the struggling person, for whom intercession was made, as the starling bird, a weak creature whose condition has deteriorated due to poverty and need.

Verbosity and the desire to show the author's subjectivity are clear in the contestation of Ibn al-Jadd and Ibn Abd al-Ghafur, compared to the model text that was written in a concise style. Their use of symbolism differed from the model text in which Ibn al-Siraj attributed the characteristics of a starling bird to the struggling man aiming to seek intercession for him, while Ibn Abd al-Ghafur used the image of the starling bird to reproach and blame Ibn Siraj. The author is aware of his benefit from the experience of the previous text in a way that serves his reality and renewed desires. His text mirrors his awareness, interaction, and struggle with the previous text and with what he lives in the present reality.

d) Abu Bakr Abdul Aziz Al-Batalyusi's contestation: it was written on the theme of intercession. He commenced by describing the starling in a convincing narrative style that differed in its words and connotations from the two previous texts. He says: "You reign over Abu Al-Hassan the free, you are admired by the greatest people in your era, and your generosity is seen in every land, even the birds chirp their gratitude to you in their tunes." (Al-Shatrini, 1981, p. 758) It is not necessary for the contestation writers to surpass the model text in all aspects, but rather in the content of the text or its artistic structure. Since the literary contestation may be complete or partial, the author cannot separate his text from the model text as the relationship between both of them is that of similarity and assimilation while adding the special touch of each author. The contestation is founded on similarity as well as difference, which preserves the worth of the subsequent text. Hence, contestation is an arena of challenge and competition, revealing the author's knowledge, and it is an aspect of independence and distinction.

These Zarzuriyat contestations rely on a new and innovative style in presenting the theme of intercession, the goal of which is to mediate for a poor person with a person of prestige and influence in order to change his miserable conditions, as well as to convey and criticize the reality of the Andalusian authors in that era in a symbolic, coded style. The subsequent texts conform to the model text in the general content and in the structure of the letter which is divided into three major parts: opening with a prayer and talking about the theme of intercession, which differs from one text to another (it was short in the model text and long in the contestation of Ibn al-Jadd and Ibn Abd al-Ghafur), followed by the main topic, and a brief conclusion.

The contestation shows the author's cumulative knowledge and artistic ability that produced the prose text that shows the author's wisdom in dealing with the tradition, "for every text refers to a countless number of texts that were written before it" (Hamad, 1997, p. 20). Among the authors who most employed the religious, historical, and literary traditions in their prose are Al-Batalyusi and Ibn al-Jadd, and in doing so they were trying to highlight their vast knowledge in contrast to the model text that employed a verse of poetry by Abu Tammam in the letter's conclusion, however, the brevity of his letter rendered his text exceptionally esthetic.

Ibn al-Sarraj lowered Man to the level of the starling; however, Ibn al-Jadd and al-Batalyusi completely reversed the image and raised the starling to the level of Man. "This has nothing to do with reproducing the quoted material in its original existing state, but rather to transforming, transferring and changing it." (Bakchi, 2007, p. 24) These contestations should not be explained as a reproduction or re-creation of the text, since each text has its own characteristics. Also, the agreement or difference in form and connotations between the first text and the second one is not a criterion for judging the literary text as good or bad, given the fact that the goal of contestation is to make good use of the meaning in a way that serves the author's new vision. It should be noted that, usually the second author admires the first author's prose, because admiration is one of the influential reasons in the art of literary contestation, however, it is not a fundamental condition.

Generally, in contestations, there is an espousal in employing the language of one era with the language of another era if the contestation is between an author from the past and another in present. In the model contestations used in this study, the language is similar, derived from the language of the era of the Taifa kings. The agreed upon characteristic of the Zahriyat and Matariyat contestations is the ease of the language and the clarity of the meanings. Despite the development of the connotations of the Andalusian prose contestations, their authors opted to the ease of artistic styles, influenced by the new prose schools in the fifth century AH,

except for Al-Zarzuriyat, the words and connotations of which require deep thinking.

3.4. Mu'tadhiyat Contestations

a) Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Namri's Mu'tadhiyat: it is an improvised letter that al-Mu'tadhid Ibn Abbad ordered him to write on his behalf to the ruler of Valencia, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Abi Amir, in which he describes how his son betrayed him for the sake of the throne and how he, too, ordered him and his followers to be killed after he gave him life, a good name, trained him, raised him, and favored him over his brothers in the hope that he would be his heir. In Al-Mu'tadhiyat, he describes the stages of Ismail's life and how Satan and bad company tempted him, so he tried to plot against his father and kill him in the hope of power, but Al-Mu'tadhid realized this and executed them after forgiving his son many of his previous mistakes, and this is what he blamed himself for. He then gave the rule to his son Muhammad instead of Ismail after him, and concluded his letter with an apology to Ibn Abd al-Barr for the verbosity. The author of this letter cared about the style, so he used a lot of rhyme and employed literary, religious and historical intertextuality.

b) The First Contestation by an Unknown Author: the features of attraction between the two texts are clear. The present text does not differ from the model one in content, but it was formulated according to a new linguistic mold in which the author relied on verbosity (so in terms of quantity, he greatly exceeded the size of the previous text) when elaborating on the ordeal of Al-Mu'tadid with all its details. The two authors agreed on the general topic, which is the incident of Al-Mu'tadid with his son, although the method of tackling the topic and the size of the prose text were different. This level of addition granted the subsequent text distinction and creativity and exempted it from total imitation and stagnation despite the meaning being fixed between the two texts.

c) The Second Contestation by an Unknown Author: in this contestation, the author relied on brevity, renewing some of its contents, such as knowing the number of Ismail's followers in the attempt to assassinate Al-Mu'tadhid, which amounted to nineteen men. He also made good use of his rhetorical equipment, which was described as: "the originality of belonging and the creativity of the self." (Al-Tatawi, 1998, p. 87) The author breathes new life into the contestation text, which was a mixture between creativity and imitation. The contestation interacts with the stability and originality of the previous and the transformation and renewal of the current. Abu Hilal Al-Askari talked about the necessity of change and innovation after imitation, stating that: "if they take it, they should clothe it with words of their own and display it in exhibitions of their own composition, present it in a way other than its initial decoration, and increase it with the esthetic of their composition, the quality of its structure, and the

perfection of its decoration and its display. If they do that, they are more deserving of it than those who came before." (Al-Askari, no date, p. 1)

The two texts completely agree in content with the model letter, as both of them similarly discussed life and its calamities, consoling Al-Mu'tadhid, the ideal life of Ismail and the influence of his bad friends, the calamity in all its details pointing out that such an ordeal was experienced by prophets and kings, and they also talked about the psychological state of Al-Mu'tadhid during the execution of his son. These elements highlight the positive textual interaction between the subsequent prose contestations and the model text. Sometimes, the contestation writer not only imitates the form and content of the model text, but rather imitates the psyche of the writer and the context in which he composed the text. The two authors live the same emotional state, and their texts differ from the model text in elaborating on religious figures and historical events. The previous text and the two present texts are linked in terms of the similarity of content, which did not free the two present texts from the model one and deprived them from their distinctiveness.

The opening of the model text conforms to the opening of the text of the first anonymous author, while the opening of the letter of the second author was distinguished by its length compared to the previous text and the abundance of evidence related to the topic. His style in exploring the main topic was distinguished by its brevity, whereas it was lengthy in the text of the first anonymous author. The two anonymous authors tried to support their contestation with Quran verses, poetry, and proverbs as needed in order to increase and excel over the letter of Ibn Abd al-Barr, which is unique because it was improvised. Among these many examples is what was mentioned in the contestation of the first anonymous author about the state of panic that Ismail is experiencing: "the time is now over, and the eye is blinded" (Al-Shatrini, 1981, p. 157) and he described bad company as: "deceptive people who showed the opposite of what they concealed" (Al-Shatrini 1981, pp.155-156)

It is a critical fallacy to judge prose contestations as imitations simply because they are written in the same style and on the same topic, because the contestation writer needs rhetorical equipment, literary ability, skill and courage that enable him to transcend the aesthetics of the first text or at least imitate it. The evidence of the difficulty of the art of contestations is the numerous attempts that failed in this regard.

Creativity does not mean producing a text from nothing, "but rather the creation of something new based on the interaction with something or things that are old. This interaction may be a re-establishment or a synthesis, or it may be a refutation and transcendence." (Al-Jabiri,1984) Hence, the art of contestation is a conscious reading of absent texts.

In contestation, it is necessary to employ thought while drawing inspiration from meanings and coming up with something new. Ibn Abd Rabbuh discussed this idea, emphasizing that the success of contestation in poetry and prose depends on it, stating that: “nothing in prose or poetry is suitable for you... unless the craft is mixed with your mind and fused with your nature.” (Ibn Abd Rabbuh, 1983, p. 240) Every prose contestation has special features that indicate simplicity in the style of its content, but it is deeply meaningful, convincing, and symbolic, shows literary eloquence, great care in the science of rhetoric, and mastery in debate. The success and continuity of the art of literary contestations are linked to the extent of the second texts’ success in preserving the initial creative impact and employing it well.

The prose writer establishes his literary identity while he enters the arena of contestation, competition and challenge, because the goal of contestation is not to imitate a previous text, but rather to produce a new text that transcends it in creativity. Judging the contestation prose writer’s composition without his own style will classify his composition in the category of imitation, where the ability of each writer varies between negligence and excellence according to his cultural background.

Conclusion

During the 5th century AH, artistic prose in Andalusia reached the peak of the prosperity despite the social disintegration and political turmoil. This research proved that the contestation is based on the principle of addition and preference, not on the principle of precedence. The study also proved that the relationship of the Andalusian contestation authors with the previous prose texts was not based on complete consumption and imitation, but rather on interaction and transcendence. Hence, it is important to examine the differences in order to explore the relationship between the model text and the contestation text. In this context, the contestation rises to the level of creativity if it equals the model text in quality and fame and transcends and surpasses it.

Al-Matariyat contestation texts are implicitly related to Quran verses and the frequent use of descriptive passages. Furthermore, al-Zarzuriyat texts are among the prose arts that were introduced in the Almoravid era and kept up with the nature of political rule in that era, which compels poets and writers to express their opinions in a symbolic way in order to preserve their lives. Its writers were interested in religious, social, and literary traditions, unlike the previous text. Moreover, most of al-Zahriyat writers employed so much poetry aiming to stimulate the imagination and generate literary pleasure.

It is important to examine the characteristics of the previous text, to judge contestation texts through identifying the aspects of innovation and tradition in the subsequent text. In the art of literary contestations, the previous text gives the

subsequent text a legitimate position in the literary sphere, so that it transcends it while the subsequent text guarantees the indestructibility and continuity of the previous text. Lastly, prose contestations contributed to the development and prosperity of artistic prose in the 5th century AH in Andalusia and the preservation of this literary tradition.

Among the most important recommendations of the study:

- It is necessary to collect the prose letters scattered in various sources of Andalusian literature and compile them in one book.
- It is also important to devote an independent study for each Andalusian writer to delve into the examination and analysis of his prose work.
- Employing modern and contemporary critical approaches to revive the Andalusian traditional prose text, because it still needs to be studied and explored more deeply.
- The study attempted to highlight an important part of the tradition of the lost paradise, hoping that this study would pave the way for other studies to cover the gap in the study of internal prose contestations in Andalusia.

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