

*Golden Saudi Literary Figures: Al-Qarni, Al-Harithi, Al-Maliki and
Al-Zahrani; Readings in their Contributions*

شخصيات أدبية سعودية من ذهب: القرني، الحارثي، المالكي،
والزهراني؛ قراءات في إسهاماتهم

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Abstract:

The southern tradition of Saudi poetry known as Al-'arthah has had a profound and lasting influence on the cultural heritage of the region. This poetic form is notable for its use of local dialects, which not only reflect the unique linguistic characteristics of southern Saudi Arabia but also strengthen the connection between the poetry and its audience. This study reviews one of the most important literary and poetic events known as Southern Al-'arthah, specifically the poetic competition known as Al-Shaqr. The Saudi Cultural Channel organized a poetry competition among four icons of the Southern Al-'arthah poetry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Saleh ibn

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Aziz, Saeed ibn Hathban, Mohammed ibn Hawqan (also written as Hawgan), and Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani. They are four poets who form a golden quartet, distinguished by extraordinary abilities and talents in the poetry of Al-Shaqr, which many ordinary poets cannot match. The study, in its first part, revolves around the analysis, explanation, and critique of a number of poetic verses in a bold challenge to the abilities of the mentioned poets.

Keywords Abdul Wahid Al-Zahrani, Al-Shaqr poetry, golden literary figures, Mohammad Al-Maliki, Saeed Al-Harithi, Saleh Al-Qarni, Saudi Southern Al-'arthah

الملخص:

للإرث الشعري السعودي في المنطقة الجنوبية والمعروف باسم "العرضة الجنوبية"، تأثير عميقٌ وخالد على التراث الثقافي والأدبي للمنطقة. يتميز هذا الجنس الشعري باستخدامه للهِجاء العمية وتمازجها مع الفصحى، التي لا تعكس فقط الخصائص اللغوية الفريدة لجنوب المملكة العربية السعودية، بل تُعزز أيضًا الصلة بين الشعر وجمهوره. تستعرض هذه الدراسة أحد أهم الفعاليات الأدبية والشعرية المعروفة باسم "العرضة"، وتحديدًا منافسة "الشقر" الشعرية. نظمت قناة الثقافة السعودية مسابقةً شعريةً بين أربعةٍ من رموز شعر "العرضة" الجنوبية في المملكة العربية السعودية وهم صالح بن عزيز، وسعيد بن هضبان، ومحمد بن حوقان وعبد الواحد بن سعود الزهراني. أربعة شعراء يُشكلون رباعيًا ذهبيًا، يتميزون بقدراتٍ ومواهبٍ استثنائية في شعر "الشقر"، هذا النوع من الشعر الذي لا يجيده كثيرٌ من الشعراء العاديين. تدور الدراسة في جزئها الأول حول تحليل وشرح ونقد عدد من الأبيات الشعرية، في تحديٍّ جريءٍ لقدرات الشعراء المذكورين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العرضة الجنوبية، جنوب السعودية، شعر الشقر، شخصيات أدبية ذهبية، سعيد الحارثي، صالح القرني، عبد الواحد الزهراني، محمد المالكي.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is rich in diverse and varied folk traditions, a testament to its vast geographical expanse. The

Southern Al-'arthah is a tradition unique to the southern region of the kingdom. Recently, the Southern Al-'arthah has gained widespread popularity and resonated deeply throughout the country. A profound meaning characterizes it, readily grasped and comprehended only by a poet or someone with a broad vocabulary, as its poetry blends classical and colloquial Arabic, in addition to its use of alliteration. The rhyme scheme in the Southern Al-'arthah, particularly in "Al-Shaqr" style (also written as ash-shaqr or Al shagr), is unique, often rhyming not only with the final letter but also with one or more words. Another distinctive feature is the alliteration, which is frequently perfect. A third characteristic of the rhyme in Al-Shaqr style is the requirement that the meaning differs while the words remain the same or very similar.

The verses of Al-'arthah are often interwoven with wise sayings and proverbs, offering practical guidance and timeless wisdom that resonate deeply with listeners. Such a notion reminds us of with what Dahami has stated, "poetry was limitless in number and is transmitted from mouth to mouth. It was of great attraction where all listeners admired them, whatever people were, high or low, rich or poor. Poetry in the Arabic language is full of music and exquisite accent" (Dahami, 2019b; Dahami, 2015). Moreover, the poetry is distinguished by its captivating melodic rhythm, which enhances its appeal and makes it particularly memorable when performed or recited. In addition, "with its unending reliance on connotation and sound, poetry plays an indispensable part. As the eminent contemporary Arab poets and versifiers have often backed, poetry might have a leading approach to the transformations ascending in various cultures, civilizations, and societies (Dahami, 2020a). So, Southern Al-'arthah can be likened to a lyrical epic, as each poem typically narrates a vivid and emotionally charged story. These stories often explore themes such as heroism, love, honor, and the challenges of daily life, painting rich pictures of the

people and landscapes of the region. The combination of expressive language, local color, and musicality enables Al-'arthah to evoke powerful emotions, allowing both performers and audiences to experience a deep sense of shared identity and cultural pride. Through its storytelling and artistic beauty, Al-'arthah continues to be a vital and cherished element of Saudi Arabia's literary tradition. Moreover, "literature in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with its poetry, stories, and novels, is among the world's literature, and its trends were influenced by various factors such as education and journalism, and Saudi writers discussed various topics of culture, the economy, society, and various types of literature" (Dahami, 2025b; 2024).

It is extremely difficult for an ordinary poet to repeat, in response or reply, the same number of verses as the original performer (poet). Indeed, only someone with exceptional talent can achieve this. If the second poet responds simultaneously, fluently, with proper meter and rhyme, then he is a truly gifted and creative poet of Al-Shaqr genre, possessing an extraordinary talent. Not every poet can be of this literary form. I have come across some claims that critics argue that the verses of "Al-Shaqr" poetry lack meaning. The opposite is true; the poetry of Al-Shaqr contains profound meanings that may elude those with a superficial understanding or a lack of linguistic background.

Poetry remains, as Abu Firas Al-Hamdani declared, "the Arabs' record and the epitome of literature." It carries their hopes and sorrows and expresses the stirrings of their souls throughout recorded and unwritten history. Poetry, in all its forms, purposes, and genres, springs from sensitive souls and fluid spirits, creating something of a linguistic miracle, imaginative imagery, and unique expression. In addition, "Poetry is the richest and most profound in language and the most moving among the makings and inventions of thought and mind. Poetry alone has the ability to touch the uppermost degree of eloquence, fluency and coherence" (Dahami, 2020b). For such reasons, many

theories and disagreements have arisen concerning its essence, secrets, and the reasons for its creation and occurrence.

Poetry has been associated with jinn and demonic possession, and some valleys and places have been named after its practitioners. If we examine the poetry of Al-Shaqr and penetrate its depths, readers might find that its practitioners are distinguished by a unique kind of rhetorical brilliance in their quick wit, understanding of meaning, precision of expression, and ability to counter the other's initial improvisations. Therefore, the response is consistent and harmonious with the initial improvisations in the conclusion of its words and verses, even while conveying a different intended meaning. This type of poetry requires special talent and constant practice so that the poet can keep pace with other poets in what is called "Al-Qari'ah," the ultimate challenge that proves the poetic merit of Al-Shaqr poets. See more at Al-Hunaidi (2022).

According to Dahami (2022), "poetry is the most notable example of the Arabic language's inspiration and originality in literature". In the realm of Southern Al-'arthah poetry, specifically Al-Shaqr style, we know that a poet reaches a stage of creativity when he absorbs the techniques, approaches, and characteristics of this genre. This is in addition to their innate talent, whether inherited or acquired. Here, the poet begins to manipulate words, employing wisdom, proverbs, and resonant vocabulary in a powerful and organized manner that makes their verses easily memorized by the audience. Furthermore, the poetic verses become more firmly established within the annals of literary history (Bani Malik, 2022). Al-Shaqr differs from other art and poetry forms, possessing its own unique characteristics. One of the features that distinguishes this art, Al-Shaqr, to the point that it is named after it (Khamis, 2021), is the term "Shaqr." This colloquial term refers to Southern Al-'arthah poetry; it is used when two words sound alike but have different meanings; this is a rhetorical device known as "alliteration"

(Turath Al-Jazira, 2000). What concerns us here is the similarity in pronunciation, that is, in the letters of the word, while their meanings differ. The letters in the two words are the same, but their connotations are different.

Objectives of the Study

One of the objectives of this task is to explore the depth and breadth of Saudi literary legacy represented by four influential poets of Southern Al-'arthah, particularly within the framework of Al-Shaqr poetry. As some distinguished poets of the foremost voices in Saudi Arabia's contemporary southern poetic tradition, the selected poets' contributions stand out not only for their creative and inventive merit but also for their cultural tone and literary character. Their Al-Shaqr poetry functions as a living manifestation or voice of the southern Saudi Arabia's spoken and performative rituals, which are intensely rooted in tribal customs and mutual life. Through this analytical critical investigation, the role of the poets shows that they have well-maintained, redefined, and raised Southern Al-'arthah. Their competitive poems extend beyond just entertainment—the verses summarize and portray the ethos of a people, their principles, their struggles, and their pride. This objective allows both the researcher as well as the reader to contextualize Al-'arthah poetry as both an artistic manifestation and a form of national documentation.

Methodology of the Study

The methodology used in this study is an analytical, critical, and interpretive approach, centering on literary analysis. Primary sources include the poets' selected segments of the competition conducted and presented on Al-Thagafiah Saudi Cultural TV Channel among four Saudi literary pioneers. They are Saleh ibn Aziz Al-Qarni, Saeed ibn Hathban Al-Harithi, Muhammad ibn Hawqan Al-Maliki, and Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani who presented their challenging verses respectively. The study also utilizes intertextual, evaluations, comparisons, and assessments of poets and their verses from the same tradition to track

influences and convergences in the style and content of southern Al-'arthah poetry known as Al Shaqr. Secondary literature and regional folklore archives support the interpretation of the poets' common, literary, and cultural activities. The poetic work of the four pioneers is outlined within theories of vernacular Saudi poetry, traditional memory, and identity edifice in modern Saudi poetry.

Results and Analysis

1. Al-Shaqr poetry

"Al-Shaqr" is one of the most prominent forms of popular Arabic poetry. It has gained widespread popularity in southern Saudi Arabia to the point that it has become a rich cultural heritage cherished by the people of the region. Specifically, this art form flourishes in the Al-Baha region, where its echo resonates among its towering mountains and sprawling plateaus, imbuing the area with a unique spirit and authentic literary flavor. Al-Shaqr poetry stands out for its comprehensiveness, tackling a wide range of topics that mirror people's lives, emotions, and societal concerns. Al-Shaqr does not stop at description or narration; rather, its aesthetic dimension is revealed through the characteristics of contrast and parallelism between the verses, which lend it a refined artistic character and a musical balance that delights the ears and captivates the hearts. One of the unique characteristics of this type of poetry is the challenge that exists between two parties, one of which is called "Al-Bad'a" (البدع : الذي يبداء) and the other "Al-Rad" (the response). In this poetic exchange, the first poet recites his poem, declaring a challenge, and the second poet responds within the same poetic meter and rhyme, preserving the poetic spirit and adding his own creativity to enrich the text and enhance its brilliance. Thus, Al-Shaqr poetry transforms into a literary arena where poets compete, each displaying his talent, eloquence, and fluency. Al-Shaqr poetry is not merely poetry that resonates in gatherings; it is a mirror that reflects the culture

of society, a preserver of its history, and a vessel that carries its values and experiences, keeping them vibrant, generation after generation.

Al-Shaqr represents a shining example of oral creativity in South Arabian culture. Its presence is not limited to improvised poetry in a moment of ecstasy or gathering but rather transcends that to become a way of life and a culture rooted in the collective consciousness of the people of Al-Baha. It is the hidden link that unites generations, weaving threads of communication between the past and the present, carrying within it the memories of ancestors, tales of heroism, and the sounds of joy and sorrow. In Al-Shaqr gatherings, the noblest meanings of honorable literary competition are manifested, where poets meet face-to-face within a framework of mutual respect and a desire for creativity and excellence. Al-bada' (البدع), the poet who begins the poem, raises a topic, issue, or question that requires wisdom and intelligence in a response. The response from the other party completes the meaning, discusses the idea, or even opposes it in an elegant poetic style.

Through this interaction, Al-Shaqr poetry transforms into a rich literary dialogue that enriches the language and develops the ability to think and create among participants and listeners alike. The importance of Al-Shaqr goes beyond its literary aspect, becoming a tool for expressing identity and belonging and a means of disseminating social values and moral principles. Its verses convey lessons in courage, patience, and generosity, reflecting the feelings people feel toward their homeland, their land, and their loved ones. Through these unique characteristics, Al-Shaqr remains a landmark in Arabic folk literature and a cultural heritage worthy of care and preservation so that it can remain a source of pride for present and future generations.

Shaqr poetry in the south of the Kingdom holds a prestigious position among a wide audience of folk literature enthusiasts, but demand for it doubles when it comes to Al-Gareeth poetry (الشعر)

(القريض), the genre of Arabic poetry that represents the pinnacle of eloquence and beauty of expression. Al-Gareeth poetry, in essence, is traditional Arabic poetry that adheres to the rules of prosody, meter, and strict adherence to rhyme, giving it a formal character and literary prestige no less than its place in the anthologies of great poets. Perhaps this strict adherence to rules is what impresses connoisseurs, who see in Al-Gareeth's poetry an embodiment of authentic rhetorical abilities and an extension of Arab poetic traditions from the pre-Islamic era to the present day. The challenge of preserving meter and rhyme while maintaining the power of meaning and the richness of rhetorical imagery makes each Al-Gareeth poem a complete work of art, deserving of admiration and appreciation.

The appeal of Al-Shaqr is not limited to poets alone. Still, it extends to the audience of listeners, who observe in its lyrics a musical balance that evokes ecstasy and stirs feelings of pride and honor in their identity and heritage. Al-Shaqr gatherings also provide a rare opportunity for cultural interaction among members of society, as people of all ages and levels come together to appreciate the splendor of the quality and the beauty of the rhythm in a social ritual that embodies the spirit of harmony and solidarity. Thus, Al-Shaqr remains a pillar of the literary heritage in the south of the Kingdom, an authentic tributary that nourishes the creative movement, reflects the depth of the relationship between the Arab people and their language, and emphasizes the importance of preserving this unique poetic form for future generations.

The origin of the name "poetry الشعر القريض" goes back to the linguistic root "garatha," قَرَضَ which carries the meaning of cutting. From this meaning, the term (Gareeth قريض) is derived, meaning, "to cut a poem," i.e., to organize it into equal verses with regular meter and rhyme, just as fabric is cut or tailored with precision and care. This derivation reflects the deep connection between the linguistic structure of poetry and the

sensory concept associated with the act itself. Each verse of Gareeth is evident in the poet's careful arrangement of words and coordination of images, making the text appear as a complete work of art. The use of the term Gareeth is not merely a linguistic classification; rather, it expresses the distinction of this type of poetry from other poetic forms. In literary and poetic contexts, Gareeth specifically refers to classical, metered, and rhymed poetry that adheres to the traditional rules of Arabic prosody.

In this definition, classical poetry, sometimes referred to as Gareeth poetry, stands in contrast to popular poetry, also known as Nabati poetry (الشعر النبطي), as well as free or unmetered poetic forms that do not adhere to strict meter or rhyme. This distinction did not emerge from a vacuum; rather, it arose as a result of the historical development of Arabic poetry. For centuries, Gareeth poetry was the ultimate standard for the poet's expressive power and eloquence and the focus of competition among poets in literary collections and social and cultural events. This concept has remained deeply rooted to this day; endowing Gareeth poetry with an aura of literary sanctity and making it a primary reference for those who wish to appreciate the masterpieces of authentic Arabic poetry and grasp the secrets of its beauty and the depth of its influence.

The literary genre of Shaqr embodies a unique kind of linguistic challenge that lends this art form a distinctive character of excitement and enjoyment. In many of its verses, Al-Shaqr poetry relies on the game of alliteration, a rhetorical skill based on the similarity of words despite differences in meaning, or the closeness of letters despite the distance between connotations. Alliteration is one of the most enjoyable literary arts that poets excel at, as it represents a test of their ability to play with language and harness vocabulary to serve both meaning and form.

In Al-Shaqr's gatherings, alliteration transforms into an arena for intellectual competition, where each poet strives to demonstrate their mastery of phonetically similar words, creating a musical balance that enriches the text and lends it a special aesthetic. It is not simply a matter of verbal repetition; it requires a heightened linguistic sense and a unique ability to derive multiple meanings from the same root or form, reflecting the poet's deep culture and vast knowledge of the secrets of the Arabic language. This challenge is not limited to linguistic dazzle alone but extends to encompass the artistic dimensions of the text, as alliteration helps highlight the dramatic tension between the invention and the response, heightening the suspense of listeners who anticipate how each verse will carry a new meaning behind the similarity of letters. Consequently, Al-Shaqr poetry becomes an arena for the cross-pollination of talents and the competition of minds, a vast space for boundless creativity, where the poets' brilliance and the beauty of language are revealed at their finest.

2. The contribution the four golden poets

This study offers the researcher an important opportunity to discuss, analyze, and describe a significant literary exchange between four of the most prominent figures in the southern Saudi Arabian poetry tradition, particularly in Al-Shaqr style. In this distinguished creative endeavor, the poets Saleh ibn Aziz Al-Qarni, Saeed ibn Hathban Al-Harithi, Muhammad ibn Hawqan Al-Maliki, and Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani took turns participating. The commencement is with Saleh ibn Aziz, who chants:

صالح ابن عزيز

يا الله يا خالق جميع الطوائف والجناس
وزير ولا ذنوب علينا تكتب يا الله لا
بيت بيت وطيبه مكة شرفت الذي يا
اليوم عاني صباح من البصر مديت أنا
حاجرها وفنونها في العين تضام ما

Saleh ibn Aziz

O Allah, Creator of all sects and races,
O Allah, do not record any sins against us, nor any transgression,
O You Who honored Makkah and Al-Madinah, house by house,
I have been looking since this morning, with intention.
The eye is not oppressed in its socket and its arts.

The poet Saleh ibn Aziz begins his poetic competition and performance in the first verse with a spiritual supplication imbued with reverence, addressing the Almighty Creator and praising His power to create all sects and races. This reflects his belief in the oneness of Allah and his awareness of the magnificence of the diversity in His creation. This opening is common in all poetic competitions and performances, acknowledging the sanctity of Allah Almighty in all matters, enormous and small, serious and trivial.

In a related attitude, the poet Saleh ibn Aziz moves to a sincere prayer, beseeching Allah not to record any sin or transgression against him or anyone else. This passage embodies the state of spiritual purity the poet seeks, revealing his fear of falling into sin and his yearning for mercy and forgiveness. The prayer here is not merely a request but a reflection of a profound religious sentiment that fills the poet's soul with purity of heart and piety. The poet adds another dimension to the text by invoking the sanctity of the holy places, glorifying Makkah and Al-Madinah, and exalting their status in his own heart, as well as in the hearts of Muslims. The reference to Allah's honoring of these two cities highlights their centrality in the religious consciousness. It underscores the poet's profound appreciation for them and conveys to the reader feelings of reverence and awe for this ancient spiritual heritage.

Following this, the poet expresses a human condition filled with longing and anticipation, describing himself as having gazed intently since morning, as if searching for or awaiting a

cherished encounter or goal. The word "gaze" here suggests intentionality, or that his gaze was deliberate and purposeful, thus embodying, between the lines, the depth of the poet's yearning and longing. The text becomes more relatable to humanity, its concerns, and its feelings. The poet concludes his verses with an eloquent image expressing dignity and self-confidence, affirming that the eye is neither dishonored nor humiliated as long as it remains in its place, between its eyelids. What you see is a drawing and an art form created by the Almighty Creator. This is a beautiful opening, launched by the poet ibn Aziz, as he engages in a poetic duel with premium poets of the southern region, opening the field for them to complete the depiction of creative images. This imagery carries meanings of pride and the preservation of self-respect and even carries an implicit message that a person is not wronged if he remains steadfast in his principles and authenticity. Thus, the verses coalesce into a poetic scene that combines faith, supplication, glorification of the sacred, and expressions of human longing and pride. All of this is conveyed in a smooth style and refined eloquence, making these verses a text pulsating with emotions, spiritual, and human significance. The role shifts to the second golden voice, ibn Hathban. He sings:

سعيد ابن هضبان
والجناس بالمعاني استمتعوا صفوف، يا
وزير وشعار مجمل صف الله شاء ما
بيت بيت وينقض ويجمع يسمع والحكم
معاني لاكثر الجمهور معنى وللشاعر
وشعارها وفنونها العرضة شوفوا

Saeed ibn Hathban

O rows, revel in the meanings and the alliteration!
What a magnificent row, a slogan, and a drum!
And the judge listens, gathers, and refutes verse by verse!
For the audience, there is much meaning, and for the poet,
meanings!

Witness Al-'arthah, its slogan, and its arts!

The turn then goes to the second contender, the poet Saeed ibn Hathban, who must master the art of wordplay in the five verses presented by his first competitor, Saleh ibn Aziz. In his opening verses, ibn Aziz used the following words: (wordplay “والجناس،” meaning “وزير، بيت بيت، اليوم عاني، وفنونها” meaning “kinds” but in a colloquial, vernacular style; “wazeer” meaning “sin” or “wrong”; the repetition of the word “house بيت بيت” to signify the sacred sanctuaries of Makkah and Al-Madinah; the word “عاني” meaning “intentionally”; and the final word in the fifth line, “its arts وفنونها”). Ibn Hathban must replicate these words as wordplay, but with a slightly altered meaning.

Here, the poet Saeed ibn Hathban responds with a verse brimming with creativity, just as his predecessor did, but in a different and captivating way. Ibn Hathban successfully fulfills the requirement of using words that harmonize with those written by ibn Aziz. As we find in the verses above, ibn Hathban crafted the following words: the word “al-janas” which has the same literal meaning alliteration; in the second verse, he used the word “wazir,” which means the drum accompanying the poetry of Al-'arthah; in the third verse, the poet deviated from the meaning by repeating the word “bayt بيت,” which means a poetic verse. Ibn Hathban was able to change the meaning of the verse and evoke a new context by transforming the meaning of the word into a poetic one. The next word is “ma'ani,” where the poet skillfully took the last letter of the word “al-yawm” and added it to the word “عاني,” thus becoming “معاني ma'ani.” Likewise, it is clear to find in the repetition of the last words of the last poetic verse the same context that Saleh ibn Aziz used; But with a beautiful meaning and in an even more beautiful context, where he addresses the viewers and listeners, asking them to see the beauty of the southern 'arthah through its poets and the artistic creativity that results from it. The third star is ibn Hawqan who melodically chants:

محمد ابن حوقان
الشعر حضرت فكرة واقتباس بحور من
قصدي اشرحها وأفصل من الأول للأخير
وشريت بعت، سوقها، في بحر والمعاني
حصاني، ولساني الشعر، شرّد أتخير
صونها يطيح يحاول عن من صنتها

Muhammad ibn Hawqan

From the meters and rhythms of poetry, I prepared an idea
and an excerpt

I intend to explain and elaborate from beginning to end

And the meanings are a sea in its market; I sold and
bought

I choose the stray verses of poetry, and my tongue is my
horse

I protected it from those who try to bring it down.

Now it is the turn of the brilliant poet Muhammad ibn Hawqan to challenge those who came before him. As we noted, the words in ibn Hathban's last verses were ("والجناس و زير بيت بيت معاني وفنونها") pun, zeer, verse by verse, and their arts). Ibn Hawqan managed to dazzle the audience with his extraordinary talents, skillfully producing five verses of profound meaning. His poetic style confirms his ability to improvise and elaborate on profound wisdom in concise poetic lines. Ibn Hawqan focused on poetry and the poet's ability to conjure up deep ideas and meanings; then, as a poet, he explains and elaborates on what he says in detail. The third verse, "And the meanings are a sea in its market; I sold and bought," is considered one of the finest and most powerful verses produced at that moment. Its power is evident in the richness of its meaning, as the profound meaning is a product of creative poetry. In doing so, the poet paints more than one artistic picture; the first is that he transforms the competition into a market like the ancient Okath market (سوق عكاظ), which represented a forum, gathering, and promotion in the pre-Islamic era. "Before the era of the Prophet, poetry had

attained some degree of excellence. At the annual festival of Okatz [Okath], the poets met and made public recitations, and competed for prizes” (Dahami, 2019a: Arbuthnot, 1890, p. 27).

Who does not remember Okath market (سوق عكاظ) and the competition of poets in that literary season, which resulted in some of the most beautiful things the Arabs have said? These are the odes written in gold ink, sung in honor of the most honorable wall—the wall of the Holy Kaaba, which God has honored as the purest and most sacred place, both physically and spiritually. Another image, inspired by ibn Hawqan's words, is the portrayal of the competition between him and the leading poets of the blond verse as a literary gathering, but in a modern context, it resembles a marketplace where buying and selling takes place. However, this marketplace is different from those dealing in goods. It is a marketplace where meaning is bought and sold. The buying and selling here is the poetic duel and challenge between him and the poets mentioned in this event.

The fourth verse is a continuation of the previous one in its approach to poetry, as if it were a commercial competition, where he says, "I choose the most eloquent verses, and my tongue is my horse." Here, the aesthetic meaning of the implicit market emerges, understood through a tangible or sensory example. When a person goes shopping, they undoubtedly choose the best merchandise. This applies to ibn Hawqan's statement, who made poetry a literary marketplace where the poet selects the appropriate verses, even if those verses are inconsistent. He must choose the most eloquent verses, even if they are elusive, for he can reach them. Like a knight, winning the bet is not difficult for him, as he rides the finest and strongest horse. It is the horse of words, and the well-known Arab saying, "My tongue is my horse," means that the tongue and what is said are like a horse, and various kinds of bets are placed on it. If the tongue errs, the consequences are dire; a person must understand and appreciate the meaning of every word that comes out of his

mouth. This phrase brings to mind the Arabic proverb, Your tongue is a horse; if you protect it, it will protect you. Much more could be said on this subject.

In addition, much more could be said on this topic. Your tongue is your horse; if you protect it, it will protect you. This Arabic proverb uses a powerful metaphor, comparing the tongue to a horse. It alludes to the tongue's ability to carry a person to beautiful or distant places or to lead them into predicaments and danger. The meaning here is to use your tongue wisely (as if you were caring for and respecting it) just as you would care for your horse, so that this horse—your tongue—becomes a supportive choice rather than a source of trouble. At its core, this proverb encourages us to control our speech and the words we use. The tongue, despite its small size, is a powerful tool: it can leave a positive impact with kind words or wound with a sharp tongue. Here, "protects you" does not just mean safeguarding but also guiding us: that is, to choose our words carefully and avoid backbiting, gossip, or hurtful mockery.

The metaphor here is witty and direct; after all, who among us does not carefully train their horse? If you take care of your horse (feed it, clean it, and train it), it will repay you and serve you faithfully. Likewise, your tongue: if you give it your attention and use it wisely, it will serve you well in your conversations, relationships, and life and career opportunities. This proverb carries a clear educational value, as it promotes effective communication skills and teaches self-control. It also reflects the wisdom of previous generations in constructing simple yet meaningful images. When we teach our children this proverb, we instill in them the value of thinking before speaking and the awareness that every word has weight and impact. "Your tongue is your horse; if you protect it, it will protect you" is not just a saying but also a renewed call for verbal awareness. It is about appreciating the power of words, practicing self-control, and using our tongues as tools for building, not destroying. See

more at (Al-Zu'bi, 2022, p. 388; Munib, 2014, p. 74; Marzouq, 2003, p. 86; Hanafi, 1976, p. 115). It is a reminder that kind words can be the key to people's hearts, and a responsible tongue is your horse that carries you toward respect and success; this was the aim of the poet ibn Hawqan.

عبد الواحد الزهراني

باس وقت ما نحن في بالعافية أبشروا

خير ليلي إنه الله شاء حلم وإن فيكم شفت

ويش ريت تدري ريتها وأنت بيوت في

للحصاني للضباع سدى تركناها ما

Al-Mughni, 2025(حصونها) طيح بين المقرحي والرصاص

Abdul Wahid Al-Zahrani

Rejoice in good health, for we are not in a time of hardship.

I saw a dream in you, and God willing, it is a good omen.

In houses I saw, and you know what I saw.

We did not leave them in vain for the hyenas and the horses.

Now it is the turn of Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani, who, along with his fellow poets, formed the Golden Round. They are truly golden figures in Saudi literature. Al-Zahrani excelled in his choice of paronomasia in the verses he designed, creating images brimming with optimism for the future and good fortune. The “poet Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani demonstrates a rare and refined ability to master an impressive range of poetic styles” (Dahami, 2025a). Even more impressive is his ability to emulate the paronomasia in the final words of the verses of his predecessors.

Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani represents one of the most compelling poetic voices to emerge from the southern region of Saudi Arabia. His contributions to vernacular and traditional poetry, particularly the Southern Al-'arthah genre, mark him as a pivotal figure in the nation's modern literary renaissance. The poet opens his verses with a warm, hopeful phrase: "Rejoice in

well-being; we are not in a time of hardship." Here, the poet reassures his audience that well-being is coming, despite the harsh circumstances. He uses the imperative mood in the word "rejoice," reflecting a collective motivation and instilling a positive spirit. The expression "we are not in a time of hardship" implies that adversity is temporary and will pass, however long it may last, thus urging patience and acceptance.

The poet then shifts to speaking of hope for the future, saying, "I saw a dream in you, and Allah willing, it will be a favorable night." Here, renewed hope emerges as the poet sees in his people and community a dream or a hope on the horizon. As is the nature of a Muslim, he links this dream to Allah's power and will, saying, "Allah willing", to affirm his reliance on Allah for the realization of good. The use of the plural "among you" indicates that the poet is speaking on behalf of the community, urging them to persevere in their dream and hope and not to despair.

In his words, "In houses I saw, and you know what I saw," the poet speaks of the houses he has seen, addressing an audience that is well aware of what he has witnessed. In this passage, the poet demonstrates his loyalty to the land and his identity, highlighting the strong and interconnected relationship between the Saudi people and their land, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the word "saw" expresses a profound personal and emotional experience, prompting the reader to wonder about the nature of this vision, the feelings and memories it evokes, and the underlying meaning within the poet, ibn Saud Al-Zahrani.

In the final two lines, "We did not leave them undefended for the hyenas and the aggressors," the poet's voice rises, declaring a firm stance in defense of the land and honor. He denies leaving the homes "undefended" (i.e., neglected or unprotected) for the hyenas or the aggressors (the aggressors). He affirms that weapons (the bullets) were present to confront the fall or attack on the fortresses. This imagery conveys a spirit of self-sacrifice

and demonstrates that the poet and his people were, and remain, ready to defend their homes and their homeland, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whatever the cost.

The poet chose a five-syllable rhyme scheme, employing a pun with the preceding lines, echoing the rhymes of previous poets. The final syllable of each line is consistent with the preceding lines, creating a resonant musical rhythm and powerful auditory impact. The rhyme here is not merely a musical element; it carries connotations of perseverance and steadfastness, acting as an anchor that connects the verses and binds their meanings together throughout the twenty lines of poetry.

Among the creative imagery employed by the poet Abdul Wahid is his use of powerful metaphors such as "hyenas" and "horses" to represent enemies. He also evokes scenes of bullets and fortresses to reflect the atmosphere of battle and confrontation. From an artistic and literary perspective, the poet begins with the imperative "Rejoice!"—an encouraging and motivating style. He also uses the rhetorical question, "And you know what I saw?" to capture the listener's attention and involve them in the emotional experience shared by the competing poets. Furthermore, the poet uses the repetition of the plural pronoun to reinforce the spirit of solidarity and belonging, and the negative particle "ma" is used multiple times to emphasize negation and the unwavering defense.

These five verses by Abdul Wahid Al-Zahrani, along with the preceding fifteen verses by the competitors ibn Aziz, ibn Hathban, and ibn Hawqan, reveal deeply rooted values in Saudi Arabian society, such as optimism in times of hardship, renewed hope, loyalty to the land, and defending honor regardless of the sacrifices required. They also highlight the importance of unity and solidarity in facing difficulties and affirm that patience and resilience are the only ways to overcome adversity. All four poets agreed that poetry is the pinnacle of language, expressed through description, pride, noble challenge, and competitive

poetic duels among four giants of the southern Saudi Arabian Ardah poetry tradition.

Conclusion

After contemplating the twenty verse lines circulated among them, the Saudi literary figures Saleh ibn Aziz, Saeed ibn Hathban, Mohammed ibn Hawqan, and Abdul Wahid ibn Saud Al-Zahrani emerge from this investigative reading as more than just regional poets. They are outstanding literary designers whose works bridge the expressive intensity of personal as well as national experience with the communal identity of their people. Their mastery of the Southern 'Arthah genre, particularly Al-Shaqr and Al-Qaltah poetry, indicates a resurgence and revival in Saudi vernacular utterance.

The four pioneers revitalize a genre that is both steeped in ancient tribal practices and attuned to present national spirit. They do this by mixing elements of oral tradition, historical memory, and poetic pride into their work. In addition to serving as a means of artistic expression, their poetry also serves as a means of cultural preservation; hence, their contributions are essential to comprehending the continuously developing literary heritage of Saudi Arabia. In addition to adding more depth to their poetic legacy, their poetry, which is supplemented with imagery of majestic southern mountains and regional landmarks, positions them as both caretakers and developers of Saudi literary traditions.

Recommendations

The literary tradition of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is extremely widespread and extensive throughout all regions. It is important to conduct ongoing research and academic studies on the southern region of Saudi Arabia because it is a part of a large, wide country. In order to reveal the incredible Saudi literature, particularly poetry, the researcher is appealing to academics and critics around the kingdom. Literature in Saudi Arabia deserves much more.

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