

Qateeni Gabbara: A William Daniel's Legacy

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Biographical Notes

William D. S. Daniel was born in 1903 in Urmi, Iran.[†] He lost his mother when he was only three years old. His father, a prominent physician, died from an infectious disease while caring for thousands of his compatriots suffering from typhus, typhoid and cholera under the worst health conditions of overcrowded Assyrian refugee camps during WWI. His three sisters disappeared along with thousands of other young Assyrian women who were either lost in the stampede, perished on the way or forced into conversion. He himself was only fifteen years old when the massive Assyrian flight and march out of their homeland into the unknown began.

He traveled to Europe and received a decent education in classical music after which he returned to Iran to work for the artistic and cultural advancement of his people and put his musical talents at their service. In early 1940s, he founded the first Assyrian musical and dance group which performed some of the musical compositions and songs that he had created. He was first introduced to the folk tales of Qateeni in 1946 and was profoundly impressed by them. It was then that he contemplated the initiation of a massive poetic work to be later known as the *Epic of Qateeni Gabbara*. The work is in three volumes containing some 6000 verses. The three volumes were published several years apart.

Introductory Notes

The *Epic of Qateeni Gabbara* as created by William Daniel contains some of the most beautiful poetry in the contemporary Assyrian language. The native epic is a chain of folk tales recited by the Assyrian storytellers in the mountains of Hakkari and the villages in the plain of Nineveh [Mosul] for as long as any one can remember. Daniel has taken the core of those tales, embellished them with stylistic and poetic ingenuity, and artistically transformed the tales into a complete epic that is in and of itself an exquisite piece of artistic creation. Perhaps, being a gifted poet and a refined musician had much to do with this enhancement of the tales into an epic.

The folk tales of Qateeni are most well known among what Maclean calls the *Ashiret* group of Assyrians, especially the Tiari and Tkhuma.¹ One of the

[†] Passed away on December 10, 1988 in San Jose, California.

¹ Arthur John Maclean, *Grammar of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1895), xiv.

authors² relates that his father, an illiterate person, was able to recite hundreds of verses from those tales accompanied by some simple melody. As a child, Odisho grew up in a family where the tales of Qateeni were commonly sung during social gatherings of his paternal relatives. According to Hozaya,³ segments of the original tales are also still being recited by the villagers living in the plain of Nineveh [Mosul]. A short specimen of the original version is translated at the end of this article to give the reader a comparative view of Daniel's version of the epic and the various versions of it in circulation before him.

Translating poetry is always a difficult task. The difficulty is attributed to the cultural and linguistic contexts in which the poetry is embedded and the stylistic skills and craftsmanship of the individual poet. The multiplicity of the strands of a culture- any culture of any nation or people- and the complexity of its texture conveyed by the language-specific linguistic structures result in poetic constructions that are primarily unique of a given language or culture and ultimately of a given poet. This should not deny some degree of universality and commonality in human language and culture, but the specifics of a culture and the linguistic [phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic] modes of expression render poetry quite difficult to translate without some extraordinary poetic skills and linguistic talents. There are hardly any one-to-one cultural and linguistic cognates across languages; however, there are always approximates to those cognates. The accuracy and proficiency of the rendition of poetry from one language to another depends on the extent to which approximates in the two languages match. It may be easier to translate the meaning of words, in general, but poetry is more than just meaning. Poetry is meaning, melody, imagination, rhythm and rhyme all collaborating in an infinite number of patterns and formations. In the process of poetry translation, it is the transmission of rhyme, rhythm, imagery, melody and sensations that is more challenging. Consequently, poetry is at its best when it maintains its native cultural and linguistic habitat.

Evidently, it was never the intention of the writers to embark on the translation of Daniel's poetry. However, a limited attempt at translation is made for the sole purpose of affording those who cannot read the Assyrian language an image of what Qateeni's epic as envisaged by Daniel is all about. To truly enjoy the beauty of Daniel's poetry, one has to read it in the Assyrian language. This explains why some of the citations are deliberately meant to remain untranslated. Certainly, much greater enjoyment is guaranteed through direct listening to Daniel passionately reciting his own verses.

² Edward Odisho's father was from Lower Tiari and his mother from Qarajalu of Urmi.

³ Younan Hozaya, "Hoomasa d'katine w'swootan omtanayta," *JAAS* 10, no.1 (1996): 70-86.

Poetic and Aesthetic Values of the Epic

It was pointed out earlier on that poetry is not solely meaning; it is the artistic construction of meaning that is further enhanced and embellished through the skillful crafting of rhythm, rhyme and melody and the majestic choice of words. The poetic value of the *Epic* is the depth and breadth of meaning that Daniel manages to exquisitely instill in his words, between his words and all throughout his poetic compositions. Whichever way one moves between and along his verses, there is always concatenated semantic enhancement both vertically and horizontally. This is not solely attributed to the popularity of the *Epic*'s theme and its historical intimacy with the psyche and soul of the Assyrians. It is equally attributed to a careful survey of the sources of the oral tradition through which the tales of the epic have been transmitted across centuries. Undoubtedly, as one will notice in due course, Daniel's profound nationalistic passion and his artistic talent, both as a poet and as a musician, have much to do with the magnitude of meaning he could charge his poetic structures with. The last two talents have tremendous role in making Daniel the best poet in the modern history of the Assyrians. Obviously any poet labors on his works more than a reader may ever envisage. This is not a weakness, but rather a keen intent on the part of the poet to create the best work possible. However, regardless of how much a poet consciously constructs his poetry, no creative works will be brought into being without an innate artistic talent- a quality that Daniel certainly possessed. [see lines, 17-20 and 212-215 of the translated specimens below]

A poet is said to work with five elements; thought, tone, imagery, melody and rhythm.⁴ Daniel excels in the implementation of those five elements and he blends them both dynamically and artistically. Very much like other creative poets from other nations, his poetry is rich in metaphors, similes, imageries. What is interesting to note, however, is that as an Assyrian poet, Daniel had the artistic sensitivity and acuteness of a musician, which often enabled him to produce excellent rhyming structures governed by dynamic rhythm. For instance, in describing the boyhood village of Qateeni, readers marvel at his use of imagery:

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⁴ Edmund Fuller and B.J. Kinnick, *Adentures in American Literature*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), 249.

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Cultural and Nationalistic Values of the Epic

Like most of the Assyrian poets of the twentieth century, Daniel's poetry is influenced by nationalism both historical and contemporary. The *Epic's* hero, Qateeni, is willing to sacrifice everything to liberate his nation from the evil forces aiming at destroying it. [see lines, 255-258 and 277-2792 of the translated specimens below] According to Odisho, the *Epic's* pivotal theme is the struggle between virtue and vice; virtue symbolized in Qateeni, the hero, and vice symbolized in Shidda, the Monster. The author creatively, but very indirectly, charges his verses with political overtones that render Qateeni the *hero* and Shidda the *enemy*.⁵

Symbolically, Qateeni represents the Messiah that every Assyrian hoped would come one day to save his people. Throughout Daniel's Qateeni, the message of deliverance recurs frequently in different forms and styles. [see lines, 267-272 and 276-279 of the translated specimens below]

Culturally, the work mirrors scores of folkloric and social events of the daily life of the Assyrians in their native homeland foremost of which being appreciation of courage, sacrifice, profound respect for the elderly, and the love of accompanying the herd to the pastures.⁶

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 ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ

⁵ Edward Y. Odisho. "Comments on the Epic of Kateeny," *JAAS*, 1 (1987): 47-48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

دحمتا كتي تدهو دي عجبتي: كيمتيني كمي مئا سديتي
 يكتي كيد يي حة: ييكتي كيد دذتني
 عجتني كمي كي ايب: اسيه كسيه مفا ملب
 كباي ديكيه توكيتي، كاصدبهه، وم عديني

Those who were close to Daniel know that he was well aware of the ancient history of Mesopotamia and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Thus, it is only natural for the reader to find some similarities between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Epic of Qateeni* in both the theme and the characters. Of particular interest is Daniel's use of *Shidda* for the monster. Readers should be aware that in the authentic folk tales of Qateeni as recited by Hakkari Assyrians the monster is named *Lilitha*. In any case, both appellations of *Shidda* and *Lilitha* are as old as the Mesopotamian mythology is.

At Tuma's Castle

كه صي دي ديكلي دوما

A vast table was spread,
 In Tuma's castle
 Where a large crowd had gathered,
 From the resort and the town (4)

فاسي سةو يوه كدي ده بي،
 كه صي دي دوما.
 يعبكي سةو كلفي دي،
 مي مدبكي هوه دي.

The white bearded sat silent
 Filled with thoughts
 The braves had their head bent
 In distraught. (8)

سهو دصلي سبي سبي،
 تبي تاسفكي.
 يعبدي دي حيو،
 تاهوك سبيكي.

What contagious disease
 Did they all have?
 What common sorrow,
 Chocked off their laugh? (12)

ممد د مديكي حكتي،
 تبي اقبلي سةو.
 ممد د ستي سةو حيم حكتي،
 دكيسخ سبلي سةو.

This famous table
 Known in several lands,
 Where countless brave deeds
 Had begun. (16)

اسي يوه كدي ميمسيه هديكي،
 كه اذوه دي.
 ممي فليبي سوه عدي،
 دكيتوه دي.

The jar of the red wine
 Would enter through the door
 From the barrel and beyond
 It would not touch the floor (20)

اكمكي ديمصدي ممد دي،
 تكبدي سةو تاديكي.
 مي كبي كيه كدي هكتادي،
 دكي سةو كدي.

They too might die. (56)

ثَمَّ مَلَأَ دَمْعَهُ سَمَّهَ لَسَهَ .

Death will arrive
One way or another.

مَوْتُهُ إِذْ هُوَ أَيْ سَمَّهَ لَسَهَ ،
أَيْ بِأَيِّ طَرَفٍ .

In his mind Tuma decided
To raise the cup. (60)

فَلَمَّا فَكَّرَ تَمَّا فِي رَأْسِهِ ،
لَقَّحَهُ مَعَهُ بِأَيْدِيهِ .

He filled the cup with wine,
And stared at the mighty
His awaited declamation
He conveyed with this song: (64)

مَلَأَ كَأْسَهُ خَمْرًا ،
وَلَمَّا نَظَرَ إِلَى الْعَظِيمِ ،
كَانَ يَتَوَقَّعُ نَجْوَاهُ ،
فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُ بِأَيْدِيهِ :

Who is the mighty man,
The mightiest of this time?
Who will cross the plains and deserts
The valleys and the highlands. (68)

مَنْ هُوَ الْعَظِيمُ فِي هَذِهِ الزَّمَانِ ،
مَنْ هُوَ الْعَظِيمُ فِي هَذِهِ الزَّمَانِ ،
مَنْ يَتَجَاوَزُ السَّهَابَ وَالرَّيَّ ،
مَنْ يَتَجَاوَزُ الْوَادِيَّ وَالْجَبَلَ .

Will pass over the mountains
And all the awful places.
Soar like an arrow in flight
To reach the monster's orchards. (72)

سَيُفِيءُ فِي الْجِبَالِ ،
فِي كُلِّ مَوْضِعٍ مُرِيدٍ .
سَيُفِيءُ كَمَا يَفِيءُ السَّهْبُ ،
لِيُصِيبَ بساتينَ العنكبوت .

The most fertile farmlands
And the greenest of the fields.
Find the monster as it sleeps
Beat her till death (76)

أَفْضَلُ الْأَرْضِ حَضْرًا ،
أَخْضَرُهَا حَضْرًا .
يَجِدُ الْعَنكبوتَ فِي نَوْمِهِ ،
وَيَضْرِبُهَا حَتَّى تَمُوتَ .

Dump her body in the deeps
Into the hell from where she emerged,
Open up the water dams
Give new life to dying lands. (80)

تَدْفِنُ فِي الْبُحْرِ جَسَدَهَا ،
تَدْفِنُ فِي الْبُحْرِ جَسَدَهَا ،
تَفْتَحُ السُّدُودَ ،
تُعْطِي الْحَيَاةَ لِلْأَرْضِ الْمَيِّتِ .

Can I see this mighty man
The greatest man of our age
Who will dare to drink this toast
That he may leave but not return?" (84)

أَسَافِيءُ الْعَظِيمِ ،
أَسَافِيءُ الْعَظِيمِ فِي هَذِهِ الزَّمَانِ ،
مَنْ يَدْرُسُ لِيُشْرِبَ مِنْ خَمْرِي ،
لِيُفَارِقَ بَلَدَهُ وَلِيُجِئَ .

The echoes of his song
Had not yet died out
When a crowd spilled into courtyard
Singing this other song. (88)

أَمْ لَمْ يَمُوتْ صَوْتُ غَنَائِهِ ،
أَمْ لَمْ يَمُوتْ صَوْتُ غَنَائِهِ .
عِنْدَ مَا تَوَدَّعَتْ الْجَمْعُ ،
عِنْدَ مَا تَوَدَّعَتْ الْجَمْعُ :

Malik Tuma:

Come sit, and hear the question
That brought us together today
Later the virtues
Of my sister Kurikmu we will discuss. (123)

مَلِكُ تُمَا هَمَّكُ:
أَمَّا هَبْ جَمْعُ لِهْ جَمْعُ تَمَّكُ،
دِكْمُ مَلِكُ بِلِهْ دِكْمُ
تَلَسُّدَا تَدَّجَسْ كَلْبَقُّدَا،
دَسَّهَبْ حَمَّ ذُحْمَمُ.

Qateeni:

Beautiful words
Are not enough
To mend the shattered hearts
Or to resurrect the dead.
Insults to honor and name
Which bring forth shame
Can only be cleansed
By the payment of life.
The accuser or the accused,
Whoever is at fault
Shall be punished by my hand
I swear to God." (135)

قَاتِينِي:
هَمَّ مَهْمُتِي جَفِيَّةً،
كَلَّ نَعْنُ مَكْنِيَّةً.
دِيَهْمَبْ كَلِيَّةً تَمَّ جَبِيَّةً،
هَمَّسَبْ كَمَّهً تَمَّ.
كَلَّ دِيَهْمَبْ هَدَّ جَبِيَّةً،
دِيَهْمَبْ حَمَّ مَبِيَّةً.
تَمَّسَبْ حَمَّ تَمَّ كَلَّ تَمَّ،
تَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ دِيَهْمَبْ.
بُ هَمَّسَبْ بُ هَمَّسَبْ،
حَمَّ دَمَّكُ تَمَّ.
تَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ تَمَّ هَمَّسَبْ،
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ.

Malik Tuma:

About the innocence of my sister
I have been enlightened
After being misled by
A cursed man." (139)

مَلِكُ تُمَا هَمَّكُ:
تَمَّ هَمَّسَبْ دِيَهْمَبْ دَسَّهَبْ،
كَلَّ تَمَّ مَمَّ كَلَّ،
سَدَّ تَمَّ مَمَّ مَمَّ تَمَّ،
سَدَّ تَمَّ كَلَّ.

Sitting among the nobles
Was a mighty stranger
From his wicked heart
Ceaselessly dripping evil (143)

تَمَّ هَمَّسَبْ تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ،
وَسَمَّ تَمَّ جَدَّ.
دِيَهْمَبْ مَمَّ كَلَّ سَدَّ،
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ.

Stranger:

You are tricky as a fox.
He said to Tuma
With flattery you want to kill
The bastard orphan.
Or may be your heart trembled
Because of his broad shoulders
Therefore with false words of praise
His claims you hope to erase.
Length of body and limbs
Though symbols of youth
Are not solely enough

مَمَّ جَدَّ:
فَمَّ تَمَّ مَمَّ مَمَّ تَمَّ،
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ.
دِيَهْمَبْ تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ،
كَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ.
بُ حَمَّ هَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ دِيَهْمَبْ،
مَمَّ مَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ مَمَّ.
دِيَهْمَبْ تَمَّ تَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ،
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ مَمَّ.
مَمَّ جَمَّ دِيَهْمَبْ هَمَّ تَمَّ،
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ.
تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ تَمَّ،

To make a man." (155)

دثعب سد يمه بظن.

Malik Tuma:

"Shut your filthy mouth
The depraved of the desert
I never found out
Where you came from (159)

شكح 28هه 28هه:
كجمه كسه كه صمري يسه 28هه،
سد بظن د بظن.
دكك كل د بظن 28هه،
مظن 28هه 28هه 28هه.

Stranger:

I am the very man
Who gave you my advice
For putting up with you
You are paying me thus." (163)

مه جظن:
28هه 28هه 28هه 28هه 28هه،
د مه مه مه 28هه،
كسه د بظن ي بظن مه،
ده مه مه بظن.

Malik Tuma:

To hell with you
And your advice
Tell me of your aim
In my sister's case.
If we ever survive the hell
Looming over our head,
be warned stranger,
I will decide your fate (171)

شكح 28هه 28هه:
د مه مه 28هه مه د مه مه،
كسه مه مه مه مه.
ب 28هه د مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه.
28هه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
د بظن ي بظن،
د مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
د مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه.

Qateeni;

Don't let your judgment err
My uncle Tuma
From father to the son
All rights are inherited.
He deserves to earn his pay
For what he has done
And shall receive it right away
By this very hand." (179)

شكح 28هه 28هه:
د مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه.
مه مه،
مه مه.
مه مه،
مه مه.
مه مه،
مه مه.

The leach of the society,
And the spreader of disease,
Qateeni with one blow
Smashed him on the floor. (183)

مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
مه مه،
مه مه.

All this event sank
In the ocean of time
But it is only remembered
When the devil is cursed. (187)

مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه،
مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه.
مه مه،
مه مه.

Malik Tuma's Invitation

The old cup of gold
The sad Malik,
Filled with old wine
Sweet and fine. (191)

جِدِّدًا دَمَكِيَّةً دَمَكِيَّةً

خَمْرٌ قَدِيمَةٌ دَرَسَتْ،
مَلِكٌ سَادٍ،
مَلِكٌ لَيْسَ فِيهِ نَبِيذٌ هَبِيءٌ،
سَيِّئَةٌ مَذِيذٌ تَعَبٌ.

Cup in hand he stood
Staring at the nobles.
His voice thundered in the castle
As he shared this song: (195)

[يَمْلِكُ] هَوَّجَهُ كَمَا لَبَّيْتُ،
هَلْ كَلِمَةٌ سِيَّئَةٌ.
فَلَيْسَ تَحِيَّةً لِمَنْ دَخَلَ،
لَا تَعَبٌ وَفَضْلٌ دَوْمِيَّةً:

Who is the mightiest man
The man who will never retreat
Who will drink a cup with me
Here now for all to see (199)

مَنْ بَلَّغَهُ هُوَ الْبَعْدُ،
دَلَّ عَلَى كَيْفِيَّةِ دَرْجَتِهِ كَلِمَةً.
فَدَرْجَتُهُ دَعَا لِي بِأَنْ يَشْرَبَ،
هَذَا حَسْبُ تَبَيُّنٍ مَهْمُومٍ لَيْسَ

Who will take the stride that I took
Whatever I command he will do
He will travel from dry land
Dry of water and pastures (203)

عَمَّا دَلَّ دَعَا بِي أَن يَمْشِيَ،
كَمَا يَدْعُو لِي بِأَنْ يَفْعَلَ.
فَيَسِيرُ فِي دَرَجَتِهِ لِي،
دَلَّ عَلَى مَبْنَى دَلَّ عَلَى مَبْنَى.

Cross the frightful mountain
His head wrapped in gloom
Find the monster as she sleeps
with his arrows bring about her death (207)

لَوْ كَلِمَةٌ لِي،
ذِيهَا مَذْمُومٌ كَمَا كَلَّمَ.
يَجِدُ الْبَلْبَلَةَ مَتَحِيَّةً كَمَا،
يَحْمِلُهَا بِالْكَوْمِ هُوَ مَلِكٌ كَمَا.

Dump her body in the deeps
Wreck its dams and levies
Let once more the water flow
Revive again the desert below (211)

يُحْمِلُهَا كَمَا لِكَلِمَةٍ يَدْعُو،
أَلَيْسَ كَمَا هُوَ تَدْعُو هُوَ مَدْعُو.
تَعْقِبُ كَمَا دَلَّ عَلَى مَبْنَى،
بَسْبِ مَدْعُو تَدْعُو.

Pick from its garden and bring
An armful of the plant of life
That restores a blindman's sight
It's smell revives those who died. (215)

كَلِمَةٌ فِي حُدُودِهِ هُوَ مَبْنَى،
بَسْبِ سَفْعَةٍ يَكُونُ دَيْتَةً.
هُوَ دَعَا لِي بِأَنْ يَمْشِيَ،
تَدْعُو دَعَا لِي بِأَنْ يَمْشِيَ.

Who will drink to the love
That he may leave but not return to?
Who is the brave man
The bravest one of this time? (219)

مَنْ شَرِبَ كَمَا هُوَ سَمٌّ تَعَبٌ،
لَوْ كَلِمَةٌ تَعَبٌ دَلَّ عَلَى مَبْنَى.
مَنْ شَرِبَ كَمَا هُوَ الْبَعْدُ،
هُوَ الْبَعْدُ دَلَّ عَلَى مَبْنَى.

In the English rendition of Qateeni's folk tales hardly any difference can be detected between the so-called *mountain* versions and the *plain* versions simply because the theme and the historical scenario are the same. In both versions, the focus is on the heroic deeds of the mighty Qateeni and the devotion of his powers for the salvation of his people and his nation from the evil powers. However, if the native Assyrian renditions are taken into consideration, there are some linguistic differences. Each version represents a given regional dialect [e.g., Tiari versus Alqosh and the surrounding villages] with some minor phonetic, lexical and cultural variations. Some such dialectal variations in Qateeni's folk tales are reflected in Daniel's Epic. In one instance, his dialect is that of Baznayi [rau ! = exclamation] or Jilwayi/Quchisnayi/Salmasnayi [*biseema* = pleasant or thank you] at others it is Tiari [tla = for] or Marbishu [yalloodi = boys; yaltati = girls]. There is a colorful blending of dialects that is striking to the ear especially in the verses under the section of "The Messenger and Malik Tuma" beginning on page 40 through 48. Linguistically assessed, this section is full with non-Urmi and non-standard words and expressions that are typically representative, according to Maclean's classification, of the modern Assyrian dialects, of the Northern group including Salamas, Quchanis, Gawar and Jilu.⁸ What seems to be obvious is that in this particular section the Jilu dialect is prevalent, a fact which might imply that Daniel's informant(s) [contact persons] on Qateeni's folk tales were of Jilu descent. The rationale for such an assumption is the sudden shift in Daniel's pronunciation of the two typical Assyrian palatal plosives of [c = ܥ , F= ܦ] into the velar plosives of [k, g], the latter sounds being typical of Jilu dialect. It should be pointed out, however, that other dialects have also their linguistic presence though to a lesser extent.

According to Odisho there may be different reasons behind this dialectal variation: firstly, to remind the reader of the folkloric nature of the Epic; secondly, to imply an element of antiquity since the Assyrian dialects are as old as the history of the Assyrians.⁹ Moreover, a third reason seems inevitable; the reason may perhaps be the unfamiliarity of Daniel with the dialectal differences among different Assyrian tribes and regions. Any pronunciation that was unlike Modern Standard Assyrian or general Urmi was footnoted by Daniel as *Li-za Turaya* "ܠܝܙܐ ܬܘܪܝܐ" "Mountain Dialect". This trend is readily noticeable especially on pages 24-27.¹⁰

⁸ Maclean, *Grammar of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac*, xiii.

⁹ Odisho. "Comments on the Epic of Kateeny," 47.

¹⁰ William D. S. Daniel, *Epic of Qateeni Gabbara*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Assyrian Cultural Society Press, 1961).

For any linguist investigating the dialects of Modern Assyrian, the label of *Li-za Turaya* is too generic to be accurate. Virtually, there are as many mountain dialects among the Assyrians as the number of their villages. Nevertheless, it is not unlikely that a romanticist poet with a musical bent such as Daniel would intentionally infuse words from different native dialects of the Assyrians to highlight the folkloric strand in the linguistic mosaic of the *Epic*.

Lessons to be Learned and Conclusions:

Undoubtedly, through the *Epic of Qateeni Gabbara* Daniel has proven, beyond any doubt, that he is the only Assyrian poet who has achieved brilliant success in creating modern written literature on the premises of long standing oral tradition. This is a skill that only artistically brilliant writers and poets may possess.

In the realm of literature, especially among the modern Assyrians, any literate person is entitled to crown him/herself a poet, but genuine and creative poets are those who are crowned by their audience/readers only through the deep appreciation of their works. Daniel is, unquestionably, foremost among those on whom the title of poet was bestowed by the audience; this is deservedly so.

Daniel's example in the domain of poetry is clear evidence that to be a creative poet one does not have to have high academic qualifications. Except in the domain of music where he received some education in classical music and composition, Daniel established himself as a poet through self-education coupled with artistic talents that nature had conferred on him. The latter had much to do with what Daniel was.

William D.S. Daniel was, and still remains, a towering figure in the modern Assyrian literature. In every sense of the word, he is a great poet; indeed a master poet. Of all the works he had created, his legacy will be best symbolized by his literary masterpiece- *Epic of Qateeni Gabbara*.
