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Expressiveness and evaluation in Arabic: the singular development of the diminutive in Ḥassāniyya Arabic

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1. Introduction

As explained by Grandi and Körtvélyessy in their introduction to the *Edinburgh Handbook of Evaluative Morphology* (2015), the notion of evaluative morphology is closely linked to that of evaluative affixes which, in a language such as Italian, serve to form categories like the diminutive, augmentative, pejorative and meliorative.

The label was proposed by Scalise (1984: 132-3) who noted that such affixes show specificities in their derivational and inflectional morphology, thus constituting a sort of third morphology, somewhere in between the previous two:

– As in inflectional morphology, adding these suffixes changes neither the syntactic category of the base (*casa* 'house' – *casina* 'little house'), nor its subcategorization (such as gender, number, actionality...).

– As in derivational morphology, adding these suffixes changes the semantics of the basic word (e.g. *ragazzo* 'boy' – *ragazzino* 'little boy') and the composition rule can apply recurrently (*fuoco – fuocherello – fuocherellino* 'fire – little fire – nice little fire').

– These affixes have the particular feature, among others, of being external with respect to other derivational suffixes and internal with respect to inflectional suffixes, cf. *-ucol-* in *contrabbandierucoli* 'small-time-smugglers' (= compound-word *contrabband* + *iere* AG + *ucol(o)* PEJ.(M.SG) + *i* M.PL).

Evaluative morphology languages are far from presenting the same characteristics. However, if one considers Arabic, one notes that the derivation known as *taṣġīr* (literally 'diminution') by scholars of Classical Arabic largely corresponds to Scalise's remarks on Italian. Indeed, it is a type of double derivation which applies more or less similarly (infixation of the diphthong *-ay-*) to a very large number of different patterns without modifying their category or subcategory. Examples: M.SG *kalb* 'dog' M.PL *kilāb*, F.SG *kalba(t)* 'bitch' F.PL *kalbāt*; diminutives M.SG *kulayb* M.PL *kulaybāt/kulayyib*, F.SG *kulayba(t)* F.PL *kulaybāt*.

Because this area of the evaluative morphology of Arabic is so widespread and systematic, it is important to explore, and that is what I will do here. However, if one considers the category of Quantity as the basic reference and examines what

derivations there are, it would have been legitimate to take other domains into account, as noted by Štekauer (2015 : 43) :

« [...] evaluative morphology encompasses, in addition to the 'traditional' cases of evaluative morphology, some categories of Aktionsart (frequentativeness, iterativity, intensity and distribution as well as pluractionality), attenuatives and morphologically realised forms of comparatives and superlatives: they obviously represent deviations from default values. ».

Derivational morphology is applied over a vast domain in Arabic. It extends namely – in contrast to what one finds in many languages – to comparatives and superlatives. They are regularly formed on the pattern *(ʾ)a*R1R2*a*R3. (e.g. in literary Arabic: *kabīr* 'big', *ʾakbaṛ* 'bigger').[1] Contrary to diminutives, they only marginally take on expressive value, in exclamatory phrases with the so-called verb of admiration: *mā (ʾ)a*$R_1R_2aR_3$ + N/PR! (e.g. *mā ʾakbaṛ aḥmad!* 'How big Aḥmad is!').[2]

The category of the highest degree and the augmentative cannot be reduced in Arabic to that of comparative-superlative. It extends to various word formations based on reduplication. In some cases this pertains to roots and one thus sees verbs with $R_1R_2R_1R_2$ roots often having expressive, and sometimes iterative, meaning (e.g. *karkara* 'to laugh out loud and repeat laughter', *katkata* 'to laugh softly', *ṭaxṭaxa* 'to laugh sneeringly').

Other cases, more akin to true morphological derivation, show reduplication of the second root (pattern $R_1aR_2R_2aR_3$*(a)*). This gives verbs, among other possible values, meanings of iterativity and/or intensity (e.g. Ḥassāniyya *kṣaṛ* 'break' – *kaṣṣaṛ* 'break into pieces; to break several times').[3] It is fundamentally these values which one finds in nouns where gemination is accompanied by lengthening of the second vowel (cf. Ḥassāniyya *kaṣṣāṛ* 'which breaks a lot, which has the habit of breaking'). It is on the same $R_1aR_2R_2\bar{a}R_3$ pattern that adjectives expressing qualities and various names of professions are based (e.g. *xayyāt* 'tailor').

The array of derived expressive forms has been well described for Classical Arabic (see for example Fleisch 1961: 365 and *sq.*). Most of these forms have survived in the dialects to differing degrees, but specialists of Arabic dialectology generally focus on the nominal forms, forming nouns or adjectives, of the diminutive (*taṣġīr*), of which almost all dialects have retained at least a trace.[4]

In the first three sections of this article I will study the diminutive in the Ḥassāniyya dialect. This is a variety of Arabic spoken in the west Saharan region of West Africa (Mauritania, northern Mali, southern Morocco and Algeria) by approximately 3

[1] By convention, subscript numbers are used for the root consonants of the root (R stands for any root consonant, the subscript number shows its position in the root).

[2] A detailed study of the formation and uses of the superlative comparative (called *elative* in Arabic grammars) can be found in Taine-Cheikh 1984.

[3] These values, frequent in Ḥassāniyya Arabic, are more or less so in other dialects. See for example in Syrian (Lentin 1991).

[4] The augmentative forms are much more rarely mentioned (see however Singer 1984: 477-497). This confirms the non systematic and more secondary nature of the formation.

million people, today almost wholly sedentary. This change in lifestyle however has had little impact on the linguistic traits of the language, the effects of the opposition « Bedouin dialects vs. sedentary dialects » are still highly visible in dialectal comparisons. My study of Ḥassāniyya began in the 1970s, and has mostly been carried out in Mauritania where the majority of inhabitants speak the language. Despite the size of the territory where it is spoken, it remains exceptionally unified. One of the numerous specificities of the dialect is its formation of the diminutive (Taine-Cheikh 1988).

Following Section 2 devoted to the morphology, I will study the use of the diminutive in two distinct corpora, a corpus of tales (section 3) and a corpus of poetry (section 4). In Section 5 I will compare the uses to those of the diminutive in other Arabic dialects, so as to clarify both crosslinguistic convergence and the specificities of Arabic (in its entirety and in various dialects).

2. Diminutive derivation in Ḥassāniyya

Broadly speaking, formation of the diminutive is very similar in Ancient Arabic and Ḥassāniyya. The principal characteristic is infixation of the diphthong *-ay-* following the second consonant (whether it belong to the root or an affix)[5] and mainly concerns nouns and adjectives.

Overall, diminutive patterns show fewer distinctions than patterns for basic lexemes. They do however vary depending on the root (number of root consonants: triliteral roots $R_1R_2R_3$ or quadriliteral roots $R_1R_2R_3R_4$). They also vary depending on the presence (or absence) of a consonantal prefix and/or long vowel in the basic lexeme. On the subject of gender and number, which remain unchanged in the diminutive pattern, I have two general observations. On one hand, the external plural feminine marker *-āt* tends to be used in all genders and with all diminutives, cf. (1d). On the other, feminines without the feminine ending *-a(t)* (2a) have a regularized diminutive (2b).

(1)	a. SG	M *kälb* ‘dog’	F *kälbä* ‘bitch’
	b. SG.DIM	M *kläyb* ‘little dog’	F *kläybä* ‘little bitch’
	c. PL	M *klāb* ‘dogs ’	F *kälbāt* ‘bitchs’
	d. PL.DIM	M/F *kläybāt* ‘little dogs/bitchs’[6]	

(2)	a. F.SG	*šäms* ‘sun’	*kärš* ‘belly’
	b. DIM.F.SG	*šmäysä* ‘little sun’	*kräyšä* ‘little belly’

[5] In Ḥassāniyya, the diphthong *-ay-* can be reduced to the long vowel *ē* but never to *ī* as in many Maghreb dialects.

[6] Some nouns can however form their diminutive plural directly on the base, e.g. *ṛžäyžlä* DIM of *ṛažžālä* ‘men’ (rather than a plural formed on the DIM.SG *rwäyžəl*).

The diminutives will be presented in four stages. I will begin with the regular diminutives of nouns and adjectives, first triliteral roots (§2.1), then quadriliteral roots (§2.2). I will continue with rarer formations, some of them innovative: those having the pattern $aR_1R_2aR_3$ (§2.3) and those found in verb forms (§2.4). We will then see that diminutives are not always used with the same value. To simplify presentation, I will often attribute a 'quantitative' gloss ('small', 'a little'...) or the simple abbreviation DIM.

2.1. Triliteral root nouns and adjectives

The ubiquitous triliteral roots are composed of three consonants in sequence found in all of the root's lexemes (except for particular issues such as those raised by the presence of the glide W or Y).

2.1.1. *Patterns without long vowels*

Patterns without a long vowel – i.e. $R_1R_2vR_3$ and $R_1R_2vR_3(a)$ – make up the majority of cases. These are generally nouns, e.g. *kälb* 'dog' and *kälbä* 'bitch'.

There are fewer adjectives than nouns without a long vowel, but their diminutives are formed in the same way, cf. (3a). This is also true for a few adverbs and prepositions with the same pattern, cf. (3b) and (4e).

If R_3 = W/Y, the root glide is retained, cf. (4a and b). However if R_2 = W/Y, the root consonant is always represented by *w*, cf. (4c, d and e).

(3)	a. KḶ	F.SG	*kaḷlä* 'black'	DIM	*kḥaylä* 'a little black'
	b. ḌRK		*ḍaṛk* 'now'	DIM	*ḍṛäyk* 'just now'
(4)	a. ŽRW	M.SG	*žärw* 'puppy'	DIM	*žräyw* 'little puppy'
	b. ŽDY	M.SG	*žd(y)* 'goat kid'	DIM	*ždäyy* 'little goat kid'
	c. ĠWL	F.SG	*ġūlä* 'female ghoul'	DIM	*ġwäylä* 'little female ghoul'
	d. XYM	F.SG	*xaymä* 'tent'	DIM	*xwäymä* 'little tent'
	e. BYN		*bäyn* 'between'	DIM	*bwäyn* 'a little between'

2.1.2. *Patterns containing a long vowel following the 2nd root consonant*

Many nouns and adjectives show a long vowel (*ā, ū* or *ī*) after R_2. In the diminutive, the vowel is replaced by *y(i/ə)*:

(5)	a. M.SG	*kbīr* 'big'	DIM	*kbäyyər* 'a little big'
	b. F.SG	*kbīrä* 'big'	DIM	*kbäyyrä* 'a little big'
	c. M.SG	*xṛūv* 'lamb'	DIM	*xṛayyəv* 'little lamb'
	d. M.SG	*lžām* 'bit'	DIM	*lžäyyəm* 'little bit'

2.1.3. *Nouns and adjectives bearing a suffix*

Some lexical items (nouns and especially adjectives) are derived from a nominal base by addition of a consonantal suffix such as *-ān*, *-āni(yy)*, *-āwi(yy)* and *-i(yy)*.

The diminutive is regularly formed by insertion of *ay* following the 2nd root consonant, with no change to the suffix:

(6)	a. ʕTŠ	M.SG	*ʿaṭšān* ‘thirty’	DIM	*ʾʿṭäyšān*
	b. TḤT	M.SG	*taḥtāni* ‘lower’	DIM	*tḥäytāni*

2.2. Quadriliteral root nouns and adjectives (or suchlike)

Contrary to suffixal consonants, prefixal consonants count as root consonants. Thus the rules that apply are the same as for quadriliteral roots.

2.2.1. *Patterns without long vowels*

Quadriliterals without a long vowel form their diminutive by insertion of *-ay-* after R_2, cf. (7a). The same holds for triliteral root nouns bearing a consonantal prefix, cf. (7b). The quality of the final vowel is always *ə* in masculine diminutives (even when *a* in the base).

(7)	a. ʕGRB	M.SG	*ʿagrəb* ‘scorpion’	DIM	*ʿgäyrəb*
	b. RVG	M.SG	*maṛväg* ‘elbow’	DIM	*mṛäyvəg*

2.2.2. *Patterns containing a long vowel following the 1st root consonant*

Triliteral root lexemes having a long vowel following R_1 show the same behavior as quadriliterals where R_2 = W, cf. (8a). The same is true for adjectives where the diphthong *iy* precedes R_2 = Y, cf. (8b).

(8)	a. XTM	M.SG	*xātəm* ‘ring’	DIM	*xwäytəm*
	b. HYN	M.SG	*hiyyən* ‘easy’	DIM	*hwäyyən*

2.2.3. *Patterns containing a long vowel following the root final consonant*

Where the quadriliteral root lexemes bear the long vowel *ā* or *ū* between R_3 and R_4, it changes to *ī* in the diminutive (9b and c). The same holds for assimilated triliterals bearing a consonantal prefix (10a and b)or a geminate R_2 (10c).

(9)	a. BHNS	M.SG	*bähnīs* ‘beast’	DIM	*bhäynīs*
	b. ḤWBR	F.SG	*ḥawbāṛa* ‘debauched woman’	DIM	*ḥwäybīṛa*
	c. VKRN	M.SG	*väkrūn* ‘turtle’	DIM	*vkäyrīn*

(10)	a. FTḤ	M.SG	*məftāḥ* ‘key’	DIM	*mfäytīḥ*
	b. GRS	M.SG	*təgrās* ‘freezing’	DIM	*tgäyrīs*
	c. BRM	F.SG	*bärrīmä* ‘crankshaft wick’	DIM	*bräyrīmä*

Some nouns (namely ‘Berberized’ lexemes) do not come under this rule. Thus *āxläyxəl* DIM (without *ī*) from *axəlxāl* ‘anklet’ (XLXL).

2.3. A specific case: *a*R_1R_2*a*R_3 patterns

For *a*R_1R_2*a*R_3 patterns, the diminutive is expressed by infixation of *-ay-* after R_1 (and not R_2) – a change which can be explained by the original presence of an initial glottal stop *ʾ* no longer found dialectically.[7] There are two case figures.

2.3.1. *Adjectives of colors and bodily defects*

aR_1R_2*a*R_3 is the pattern of adjectives of colors and bodily defects in the masculine singular. Its diminutive follows the pattern *a*R_1*ay*R_2*ə*R_3 (*ʾu*R_1*ay*R_2*i*R_3 in classical Arabic):

(11) a. KḤL M.SG *akḥal* 'black' DIM *äkäyḥəl* 'a little black'
b. ṬRŠ M.SG *aṭraš* 'deaf' DIM *aṭayrəš* 'a little deaf'

2.3.2. *Elatives*

aR_1R_2*a*R_3 is also the pattern of the comparative-superlative (elative). Unmarked for gender and number, it applies to all triliteral adjective roots. Its diminutive in Ḥassāniyya follows the pattern *a*R_1*ay*R_2*a*R_3:

(12) a. *kbīr* 'big' *äkbaṛ* (*mən*) 'bigger (than)' DIM *äkäybaṛ (mən)*
b. *ṭwīl* 'long' *aṭwäl* (*mən*) 'longer (than)' DIM *aṭaywäl (mən)*

Only the final vowel (*a*) distinguishes this diminutive pattern from the preceding one. Thus adjectives for colors and bodily defects (13a) and elatives (13b) follow the same basic pattern, but have different diminutives (13c and d).

(13) a. *aṭṛaš* 1° 'deaf'
b. *aṭraš* (*mən*) 2° (elative of 1°) 'deafer (than)'
c. DIM of 1° : *aṭayrəš* 'a little deaf'
d. DIM of 2° : *aṭayṛaš (mən)* 'a little deafer (than)'

The elative diminutive is also used in exclamatory expressions.

(14) *mäkᵊbṛ=u!* (< *mā=akbaṛ=u*) 'how big he is!' DIM *mäkäybṛ=u!*

2.4. Verb forms and suchlike

Broadly speaking, verb forms in Ḥassāniyya are either agentive, reflexive or passive. Most have a diminutive form, beyond forms with passive meaning or bearing the long vowel *ā* (Cohen 1963: 141-2, Taine-Cheikh 1988: 107-9).

The infix *ay* remains the diminutive marker, but its placement varies depending on the root and the verb pattern. Reflexive (or 'middle' voice forms) are characterized by the addition of the affix *t* (prefixed or infixed) which does not appear to impact placement of the infix *-ay-*.

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[7] This prefix *a-* < *ʾa-* is not governed by the same rules as the prefix *a-/ā-* of nominals such as *axəlxāl*, whether they have been borrowed from Berber or 'Berberized'. See above, §2.2.3.

2.4.1. *Basic verbs and their reflexives: triradicals*

The diminutive of basic verbs is characterized by the presence of the infix *-ay-* following R_1, cf. (15a and b).[8] Excluding the presence of pre-root *a-*, the diminutive pattern is the same as that of quadriliteral verbs where R_2 = Y such as *gäymär*. In 'middle' voice forms bearing the infix *-t-* following R_1, the diminutive marker *-ay-* is placed between the *-t-* and R_2.

(15)	a. KTB	*ktəb yəktəb* 'to write'	DIM	*äkäytäb yäkäytäb*
	b. WGV	*ugəv yūgəv* 'to stand up'	DIM	*äwäygäv yäwäygäv*
	c. ŠMR	*ʾštmaṛ* 'to show courage'	DIM	*ʾštäymaṛ*

2.4.2. *Basic verbs and their reflexives: quadriradicals*

Quadriradicals and their reflexives bearing the prefix *t-* form their diminutive by infixation of *y* between R_1 and R_2. Thus for verbs having the root GRMS and their action nouns.

(16)	a. *gaṛmaṣ* 'to pinch'	DIM	*gäyṛmaṣ*[9]
	b. *tgaṛmaṣ* 'to pinch himself'	DIM	*tgäyṛmaṣ*
	c. *tgaṛmīṣ* 'pinch'	DIM	*tgäyṛmīṣ*

2.4.3. *Patterns where the 2nd root consonant is a geminate*

Verbs with a geminate R_2 form their diminutives by infixation of *y* between R_1 and R_2. The same holds for adjectival-noun forms in $R_1aR_2R_2\bar{a}R_3$ which derive from them, cf. (17c).[10]

(17)	a. *bäddäl* 'to change'	DIM	*bäyddäl*
	b. *tbäddäl* 'to get changed'	DIM	*tbäyddäl*
	c. *bäddālä* 'seller F'	DIM	*bäyddālä*

2.4.4. *Patterns bearing a prefix in* s(t)a-

Derived verbs bearing the prefix *sta-*, as well as the few verbs bearing the prefix *sa-* exclusive to Ḥassāniyya (Taine-Cheikh 2003), form their diminutive by infixation of *y* before R_1. Thus for the root KḤL.

(18)	a. *stäkḥal* 'to become blackish'	DIM	*ʾstaykḥal*
	b. *säkḥal* 'to make blackish'	DIM	*säykḥal*

[8] For each verb, the 1st form, with suffixed inflection, is a Perfective and the 2nd form, with prefixed inflection (in *yə-* or *i-*), an Imperfective. I only give both forms for the first few examples.

[9] Some passives in *u-* appear to have diminutive forms, thus *ugäyrmaṣ* 'he was pinched a little' DIM of *ugärmaṣ* 'he was pinched'.

[10] The infix *-(a)y-* is not between the two R_2 as for the other adjectival-noun forms, cf. (10c). Moreover the long vowel *ā* is maintained.

The morphology of the diminutive in *(a)y*, widespread in Ḥassāniyya, thus tends to apply to almost all of the patterns used in the dialect – a feature which is particularly surprising in verb forms. Moreover this applies to almost all possible cognitive categories. The value can be that defined by Štekauer (2015: 43): « The quantity-founded deviations from the default value run across the fundamental cognitive categories of SUBSTANCE, ACTION, QUALITY and CIRCUMSTANCE ». There are however other values, as we shall demonstrate in the following corpus study.

3. Diminutives in Ḥassāniyya folktales

The *Contes arabes de Mauritanie* (Tauzin 1993) contains 28 tales of a diversity of lengths.[11] The author's transcription and translation have only been marginally modified (with a few rare exceptions, which will be noted). I alone however am responsible for the morphematic analysis as well as the summaries presented here.[12]
No diminutives were found in ten tales. In the other eighteen, the frequency and importance of diminutives is highly variable.

3.1. Lexicalized diminutives

Some diminutives (of nouns and adjectives) are lexicalized and more common than their corresponding basic forms. Fives tales only have this type of diminutive if one excepts, in tale 7, the ritualized opening formula: « [...] it is God alone who quenches my thirst and yours, and that of all little Muslim throats (***xräyzāt*** – DIM de *xarzāt* '(internal) throats') [...] » where the use of the diminutive *xräyzāt* '(internal) throats') is conventional.
Tale 24 contains only one diminutive, ***ṯfäylä*** 'girlie', from *ṭəvlä* 'girl'. Each form corresponds to a different age range: from birth to age 8 for *ṯfäylä*, from 8 to 12-13 for *ṭəvlä* (as for *ṯfäyl* DIM from *ṯfəl* 'boy').
In tales 9 and 12 one finds ***bläydä***, which is practically a synonym of *bläd* 'place; function, office'. The expected meaning 'small office' for *bläydä* is contradicted in tale 9 (p. 28) by the presence of the adjective *kbīrä* 'big'.
In tale 5, a piece of charcoal (*ḥmūmä* F.SG) is compared to gold and characterized as ***šwäyn(ä)*** 'ugly (F)'. In this case it would not have been possible to use the basic form *šäyn(ä)* as it is restricted to abstract uses.
Lastly there are a few adjectives, generally of the pattern $R_1R_2\bar{i}R_3$, which are habitually used more often in the diminutive form $R_1R_2äyyəR_3$ than in their basic form. This is often the case namely of ***ḍ^{ʕ}ayyəv*** 'weak.DIM' and ***rgäyyəg*** 'sickly.DIM' which are used in tale 7 instead of *ḍ(a)^{ʕ}īv* 'weak' and *rgīg* 'sickly'. As for ***ġayyər*** (DIM de *ġīr* 'small' – with *ġ / q* depending on the region), found in

[11] Tauzin classifies them as follows: to laugh (1 and 2); on wisdom (3 to 9); on the cunning of women (10 and 11); on demons (12 and 13); on blacksmiths, slaves (14 to 17); for children (18 to 28).
[12] The events as well as their unfolding are not always easy to understand, Tauzin stayed as close as possible to the original versions provided by local speakers. One must therefore not be surprised if some events remain somewhat hazy.

other tales, the frequency of the form in *-ay-* has led them to lose their diminutive meaning.[13]

3.2. Pejorative diminutives

Pejorative uses clearly dominate in seven tales. Depending on the context, pejoratives can express a broad array of emotions (disdain, pity, mockery, contempt, or even hatred or fear).

3.2.1. *Tale 1: 'The ball of gum'*

A woman sends her children – three sons and a daughter – to harvest gum. One of the sons is 'the one with scrawny legs': *bū* ***ṣwäygāt rgäyygīn*** (DIM of *ṣīgân rgāg* 'skinny legs'). The other is 'the one with the big belly': *bū* ***gḷäyḷa*** (DIM of *gəḷḷa* 'portbelly'). The third is called 'the one with the narrow mouth': *bū* ***fwäym ḍwäyyəg*** (DIM of *ẏuṃṃ ḍiyyəg*)[14]. The daughter is called 'buttery cream' (*əz=zäbdä*).

Trying to reach the ball of gum in the tree, Scrawny-legs falls on Big-belly. One's belly bursts, the other's legs break. Narrow-mouth laughs and his small lips split. Cream, the daughter, runs to tell her mother. She is melting because the day is hot.

The diminutives, which play a fundamental role in the tale, apply to the children but are pejorative. Each of the boys is characterized by a ridiculous physical feature which plays a crucial part in the sequence of catastrophic events. As in many languages, the stigmatized feature is turned into a (nick)name.

3.2.2. *Tale 2: 'The three deaf people'*

A deaf woman is tilling her field carrying a child (***ṯfäyl*** – DIM of *ṯfəl*) on her back. A man comes along, deaf as well, and asks her if she hasn't seen a small herd (***gḷäyvä*** – DIM of *gaḷve*) of goats (*lə=mʿîz*). He finds it at the other end of her field. To thank her for the help she inadvertently gave him, he wants to give her a goat (***mʿayzä*** – DIM *of ʿanz* 'goat' SG irregular) with a broken leg. Thinking he is accusing her of having broken its leg, she wants to go see the judge. The judge, also deaf, believes that the issue revolves around the paternity of the child. He orders the man to marry the woman.

The three nouns in the diminutive refer to elements which play a central role in the tale. *gḷäyvä* and *mʿayzä* are markedly pejorative: the first denotes the man's poverty, the second the negligible worth of a goat with a broken leg. Their presence reinforces the globally negative tone of the tale which mocks the behavior of three deaf people.

3.2.3. *Tale 4: 'Deyloul and the two-humped she-camel'*

To trick his enemies on the point of attacking his camp, Deyloul leads their spy to believe that he won't move that night. But he organizes the departure of his people in the night, leaving behind only an 'old she-camel' (***nwäygä*** – DIM of *nāgä*) with her calf, a dog and an 'old old old servant' (***xwäydəm*** – DIM of *xâdəm* + ***khäylä khäylä***

[13] The same is true for *gläyyil* and *gräyyib* — a phenomenon which is found namely in Negev Arabic: « Lexemes that have superseded their original forms include *ṣġayyir* 'small', *gḷayyil* 'little', *gṛayyib* 'near', *gṣayyir* 'short' [...] » (Henkin 2008: 366).

[14] *Fwaym* is the specific diminutive form of an originally biliteral root noun (cf. classical Arabic *fam* 'mouth').

khäylä – DIM of *kählä*), to whom he gives a 'small mortar' with millet to grind all night.
Misled by the barking, bleating and sounds of grinding, the enemies arrive too late to steal the herd.
The systematic use of diminutive forms to denote the she-camel, servant and mortar corresponds to a (non stigmatizing) minorative intention as to the means used by Deyloul to beat his enemies. It is a way of ridiculing them.

3.2.4. *Tale 8: 'The young man and his cousin'*

A young man studying the Koran is begging. He comes to his paternal cousin's place, she is sitting before her tent. He is lousy, 'dirty' (***mwäyssax*** – DIM of *mwässax*) and not very handsome. She says to him: 'Yuck! You're so ugly!' (*tfu* ***mašäyyn****=ak*). Then she throws him a 'small kid' (***ždäyy*** – DIM of *ždi*) foot that is so dry and old that there is nothing left to eat.
Years later, educated and wealthy, he refuses all the potential wives his mother proposes: he wants to marry his paternal cousin. But in the middle of the wedding week, when he joins her in the tent set up for them, he shows her the dried foot of the little kid (***ždäyy***) that he had left at his mother's. He reminds her of her insulting behavior and leaves.[15]
The diminutives used are pejorative – one applies to the young man and the other contributes to rendering his cousin's disdain for him.

3.2.5. *Tale 10: 'The woman and the caravan'*

This tale illustrates the capacity for craftiness attributed to women. One of them presents herself to some caravaneers as a 'poor [and] weak woman' (***mṛayyä*** *wä* ***ḍˤayyvä***), having for baggage but 'a small bottle' (***bwäyš/bḍäyš***). The use of diminutives for *mṛa* 'woman' and *būš* 'bottle' constitute self-devaluation for purposes of deception. The goal, as in the use of *ḍˤayyvä*, is to excite the pity of the caravaneers. She then complains that her mount is uncomfortable, and manages to work her way up the train of camels, marking on her way, with her bottle of ink, all of the loads in the caravan as being hers.

3.2.6. *Tale 11: 'The woman and the gob of spit'*

For his future wife, a man chooses a girl who is still very young (***ṭfwäylä***). He decides to raise her in his home to avoid her learning women's craftiness. He locks her in the highest room where there is only a 'small window' (***kwäywä*** – DIM of *kuwwä*) way up high, 'tiny' (***sqayyrä*** – DIM of *sqīrä*). She thus grows up and becomes a 'young lady' (***šwäybbä*** – DIM of *šābbä*). One day she leans out of the 'little window' (***kwäywä***), sees someone and throws him a 'small piece of clay' (***ṭwäybä*** – DIM of *ṭūbä*), then a second one. She makes a clay copy of the key to her room and gives it to the man. He gets into the habit of visiting her every day when her 'father' is at the mosque. But one day the man spits and a gob sticks high on the rafters. Her 'father' sees the sputum, confirms that it belongs to a man and asks the

[15] Leaving the young bride without consummating the marriage is a way for the young man to avenge his honor. He had only kept the little kid's foot in order to remind her of her past misdeeds.

young lady to come swear an oath at the mosque the next day.
When the lover arrives she tells him: « 'Now' (***ḍṛäyk*** – DIM of *ḍaṛk*), put on a 'dirty' (***mwäyssxa*** – DIM.F of *mwässxa*) 'boubou' (***dṛäyṛīʿa*** – DIM of *daṛṛāʿa*), take 'pots' (***gdäyḥāt*** – DIM.PL of *gädḥāt*), makes holes in them and disguise yourself as a beggar. I will be on a donkey twisting and turning and you will come up and ask for a 'little boubou' (***dṛäyṛīʿa***). I will pretend to fall, and you to help me up. »
Everything went as planned and, upon arrival at the mosque she swore that no man had touched her since birth, except for her 'father' and the beggar, just before.
The first diminutives seem principally denotative, even though they highlight the difficult captivity imposed on the girl. As for those found in the episode of the beggar, they stress social minoration (the goal being to appear as humble as possible).

3.2.7. *Tale 26: 'The girl with the bracelet and the girl with the necklace'*

In this tale, where a young girl is victim of her step-mother's jealousy, the only diminutive used is 'the little old lady' (*lə=*ʿ***zäyyəz*** – DIM de *lə=*ʿ*zūz*[16]). Tauzin notes that the first use of ʿ*zäyyəz* is from the outset accompanied by the definite article *lə-* – for her a sign that the diminutive denotes not just any little old lady, but the stereotyped figure of the mean old lady. She, like the step-mother, symbolizes the heroine's bad mother.

3.3. Caritative diminutives

Caritative uses are found in three tales, but the diminutives are rare and are only always positive in tales 20 to 22 which portray lovers and attractive feminine figures.

3.3.1. *Tale 20: 'The hedgehog and the ostrich'*

The 'tiny' (***qṣayyər***) hedgehog is in love with the tall ostrich. As she is wagging her head, walking in the moonlight, he circles around her and sings:

« I have seen the beautiful ostrich //
The 'moon' (***lə=gmäyrä*** – DIM of *l=gämṛa* 'the full moon'), that night was shining //
Ah! 'walking with small steps' (***yähäymsäs*** – DIM of *ihämsäs*) all night long //
To meet a beautiful woman //
A 'little hedgehogess'[17] who 'curls up in a ball' (***təddäykräš*** – DIM of *təddäkräš*) //. »

These affectionate diminutives translate the hedgehog's feelings, while highlighting his tininess. But the hedgehog is mistaken in believing the ostrich the 'little hedgehogess' of his dreams. The size difference between the couple is so large indeed that the marriage cannot be consummated.

[16] ʿ*zäyyəz* is an exception to the rule: it does not bear the ending *-a*, like the feminine noun ʿ*zūz*.
[17] In fact the feminine form for hedgehog is a neologism, only the masculine *gänvūd* 'hedgehog' is used normally.

3.3.2. *Tale 21: 'The bullock who gave birth'*

This tale is exceptional in that it is given in two forms, one in prose and one in verse. It is the story of a he-jackal who has a bullock and a doe-rabbit who has a cow. The jackal takes advantage of the rabbit's absence to pretend that his bullock has given birth to a heifer. When they go to consult a judge, the latter pretends to give birth himself, thus forcing the jackal to admit his lie.

The two diminutives in the prose version are found in the names given to the cattle (***qšäywä*** – DIM of *qašwä* '[the one with the] white mark on the forehead', with *q/ġ*; (***ṛwäymä*** – DIM of *ṛāymä* '[the one which] she was used to'). They are terms of endearment such as often given to cattle.

In the verse rendering, there is an additional diminutive. The jackal, when called upon to return the heifer to the rabbit is addressed by the pejorative 'oh little thief' (*yä* ***ṣwäyṛəg*** – DIM of *yä ṣāṛəg*).

3.3.3. *Tale 22: 'The little gazelle'*[18]

The little gazelle (*l=****ūḥayšiyyä*** DIM of *waḥšiyyä* 'gazelle') was roaming with the other animals. One day they were so thirsty they decided to dig a well but the ***ūḥayšiyyä*** said that she couldn't dig with the others because her hands were 'tiny' (***sqayyrīn***). After that she goes to fetch water at the well at night, in secret, with her 'little canary' (***gdäyrä*** – DIM of *gədrä*). She washes and sings.

After several attempts, the animals manage to catch her while she is bathing. The lion asks to remain alone with her because he wants to know what she sings at the well. The *ūḥayšiyye* tells him: « I am 'bound' » (***mušäykᵊrvä*** – DIM of *mušäkᵊrvä*). Untie me and I will dance for you. Once freed, she ties on her skirt and sings. But she escapes when the lion starts to dance with his eyes closed.

The hero of the story is a female animal. The use of diminutives to characterize her make her a « fragile and endearing protagonist » (Tauzin 1993: 101 n.1).

3.4. Other cases

In three tales, the dominant tonality in the diminutives is neither pejorative nor caritative. In tale 13, what rare diminutives there are appear solely denotative. In the two other tales, the more numerous diminutives concern – as in tale 2 on the three deaf people – most of the story's important elements. Diminutives thus appear to serve to single elements out, both to facilitate their identification and to stress their special role in the narrative.

3.4.1. *Tale 13: 'The woman who married a demon'*

This tale describes relations between humans and demons, which the Moors believe in quite firmly. One of the episodes narrates the woman's departure for the demon world. Her husband had warned her never to invoke God, even if she saw strange things such as a dancing head. However, she cannot refrain herself from invoking God and causes the destruction of the demon city. The diminutives bear on the

[18] Tauzin translated this by *The little wild animal* – a translation which does not make it possible to render the feminine gender of *uḥayšiyyä* and which is contested by my informant (the hassāniyya meaning is different from that of Classical Arabic).

threshold between the human and demon worlds. At the first mention, only the adjective (***ḏwäyyəg*** – DIM of *ḍiyyəg* 'tight') is in the diminutive. At the second, the noun (***fwäym*** – DIM of *ɣuṃṃ* 'door') is too: *lə=**fwäym** əḍ=**ḏwäyyəg*** 'the very small, narrow door'. The narrator insists on the narrowness of the passage between the human world and that of the devils.

3.4.2. *Tale 25: 'The green bird'*

A woman loses all her sons at birth. To ward off evil, she promises to give her first born to an ogre as soon as he is able to recite the entire Koran. In this fantasy tale, the boy escapes from the ogre and successfully overcomes a series of hurdles to obtain the hand of a princess, satisfy the desires of his mother-in-law and obtain the love of his wife.

In his escape, the boy receives help from his mare: it is out of her belly that is born a 'little horse' (***ḫwäyli*** – dim. of *hawli*), half silver, half gold. He arrives under a tree where there is a green bird, and when he leaves he carries away the bird's jewels. He continues until discovering a 'small mortar' (***mhäyrīz*** – DIM of *məhrāz*) pounding near a 'little fire' (***nwäyrä*** – DIM of *nâṛ* F.SG). Although the mare had warned him against the objects, he approaches and finds a 'tiny old woman' (***ʿzäyyəz***) who is adding 'tiny kindling' and pounding in a 'small mortar' (***ʿwäyd*** – DIM of *ʿûd* + ***sqayyər***). He recognizes his mother. From that day on, she churns milk for him to make little balls of cream to treat his ringworm. He is then called the 'ringwormed one' (*əl=**gäyṛəʿ*** DIM of *ägṛaʿ*) 'with the little balls'.

Following a first ordeal, he marries the king's daughter but she refuses his advances. With the help of his little horse (***ḫwäyli***), he assists the other sons-in-law in bringing home the green bird that the queen wants to hear sing. But the bird demands the presence of a particular young girl, who has her own demands. The ringwormed one satisfies the first demands using 'little boubous' (***qšäyšibāt*** – DIM of *qaššābāt*), 'small knives' (***mwäysāt*** – DIM of *mūsāt*), 'little bits of string' (***ṣräyʿāt*** – DIM of *ṣṛəʿ* 'necklaces') and a little meat. Each time he helps a son-in-law in an ordeal, he asks him for something by way of payment – an earlobe, a toe, a 'small piece' (***tšäyšä*** – DIM of *ṭaššä*) of nostril – which in the end allow him to prove the role he played and to win his wife's heart.

Apart from the pejorative epithet 'ringwormed' (***gäyṛəʿ***) the other diminutives serve above all to specify or even highlight various elements.

3.4.3. *Tale 27: 'The sultan's son who married a monkey'*

The sultan's youngest son falls in love with an ogress's daughter. When she elopes with him, the girl takes various little things with her. These will serve to slow her mother down when she sets off in their pursuit: grains of sand which will change into sand dunes, 'little pebbles' (***ḫžäyrāt*** – DIM of *ḥažṛāt*) which will transform into mountains, a 'small sip' (***žqäymä*** – DIM of *žuqmä*, avec *q/ġ*) of water which will change into a sea, pine needles which will change into forests. But they will not prevent the ogress from catching them and transforming her daughter into a monkey.

The use of diminutives is denotative and highlights the contrast between the paucity

of the means and the magnitude of the results.

The frequency of diminutives varies, and, beyond lexicalized uses, they are particularly present in 'joking' tales, in poetic passages, and some fantasy tales. Pejorative uses are more frequent and varied than meliorative ones. Some diminutives are even used as (nick)names, through mockery or affection. There are times however where the use of the diminutive is more neutral, serving above all to aid the narrator in singling elements out.
Distribution across the various categories is highly unequal. The best represented is that of nouns with 37 tokens (42 including those with *tfäyl(ä)* or *bläydä*).[19] Adjectives total 6 tokens (15 if the 4 lexicalized diminutives are included) – for only 4 (or 8) different adjectives. The other categories are even rarer: two verbs (both in verse), a past participle, a set expression of « admiration » and an adverb.

4. Diminutives in Ḥassāniyya poetry

Poetry in dialect is very dynamic in Moor society (Taine-Cheikh 2008). There are various genres of poetry, but it is in love poetry, studied in this section, that diminutives are most frequent.[20] This poetry, which is neither panegyric nor quite descriptive, is all the more appreciated as it plays on forms (puns, alliterations, assonances...) and expresses the poet's feelings indirectly. This section reproduces in large part my 1988 article where I present the major role the diminutives play in allusive expression – a role which is unfortunately highly difficult to render in translation (which is why I have maintained DIM in some non interlinearized translations). The poem references are only mentioned when they are not from my own corpus.

4.1. Declarations of affection

Courtship situations are favorable to the use of diminutives used as terms of endearment. Below is the example of a short poem where the originality resides in a to and fro between the physical charm (*välāḥ* – DIM *vläyyiḥ*) and the spiritual charm (*mälāḥ* DIM *mläyyiḥ*) of the beloved woman, as if the poet felt obliged to choose between the two attributes but couldn't.[21]

(19)	***ᵊvläyʸḥ***=*ək*	*bī*=*h*	*ᵊn-xammäm*
	DIM.glamor[of]=PR.2F.SG	with=PR.3M.SG	1SG.IMPFV-think
	ᵊmläyʸḥ=*ək*	*mā*=*ni*	*ḍāhək*

[19] Diminutives are counted only once per tale.
[20] With the possible exception of obscene wedding songs (Tauzin 2001: 158ff).
[21] This was observed for the first time by the Lieutenant Le Borgne. I corrected the transcription but was unable to find the foot missing from the last hemistich. Moreover, a *y* in one of the diminutives is superscribed because it does not count in the syllable formation.

DIM.wit[of]=PR.2F.SG NEG=PR.1SG laught_at.PTCP.M.SG
u ***vläy^{y}ḥ=ək*** *mā* *n-aʿṛav* *kämm*
and DIM.glamor[of]=PR.2F.SG NEG 1SG.IMPFV-know how_much
[*u*] *lā* *n-aʿṛav* *gədd* ***ʾmläy^{y}ḥ=ək***
and NEG 1SG.IMPFV-know greatness[of] DIM.wit[of]=PR.2F.SG
u *txallaṭ* *əʿliy=yä* *vämm*
and mix.PFV.3M.SG on=PR.1SG there
ʾmläy^{y}ḥ=ək *u* ***vläy^{y}ḥ=ək***
DIM.wit[of]=PR.2F.SG and DIM.glamor[of]=PR.2F.SG

'I think of your charm.DIM // But do not forget your wit.DIM,
'Your charm is incomparable // The same is true of the brilliance of your mind.DIM,
'And I am getting confused here // Between your charm.DIM and the brilliance of your mind.DIM.'

In this *ṭalʿa* (a poem of 6 verses of *aaabab* rhymes), as in the *gâv* which follows (poem of four verses of *abab* rhymes), the diminutives have clearly affectionate overtones. This adds to the denotative effect corresponding to an attribute of the beloved. It is often a physical or moral quality. Thus in (20) of the 'diastema (space between the teeth)' (*välžä*) and the 'fact of having the area around the lips of a very dark color' (*kmāmä*) which, in Moor aesthetics, are considered desirable attributes.

(20) *bäyn=i* *w* *hiyyä* *təžlīžt=ək*
between=PR.1SG and she affliction[of]=PR.2F.SG
hāḏu *l=ək* *əl=baxīlä*
these_ones for=PR.2F.SG DEF=niggardly.F.SG
bə=ʿwäynāt=ək *u* ***vläyžt=ək***
with=DIM.eyes[of]=PR.2F.SG and DIM.diastema[of]=PR.2F.SG
u ***kmäyyəmt=ək*** *lə=khäylä*
and DIM.black_lips[of]=PR.2F.SG DEF=DIM.black.F.SG

'I am going to tell you something you are not going to like,
'It will be for niggardly you,
'You who deprive me of your soft eyes.**DIM**, the gap between your teeth.**DIM**
'And your little black lips too black.**DIM**.'

The two other diminutives – *kḥäylä* (DIM of *kaḥlä* 'black.F') and especially *ʾʿwäynāt* (PL de *ʾʿwäynä* – DIM of *ʿayn* PL *ʿaynīn* 'eyes') must be understood more in their connotative rather than denotative meaning: they serve to express the poet's feelings,

not to faithfully depict the woman being wooed.[22] As for the presence of the adjective 'niggardly', it is not in contradiction with the use of diminutives of endearment because *b(a)xīlä*[23] must be understood metaphorically in the sense 'miserly with one's time'. This reproach, frequently heard from aspiring lovers, is less the expression of a defect than an indirect compliment to the beloved whose presence is always felt to be too rare.

4.2. Ambiguous declarations

The frustration can however be real, with the poem leaving room for serious doubt as to the poet's true feelings for the woman he is wooing. This is the case for poem (21), where diminutives are particularly abundant:

(21)

gūlī=li		*ṛāžəl*		*žā=k*
say.IMPER.2F.SG		man		come.PFV.3M.SG=PR.2SG
š=idäwwaṛ			*huwwä*	*ḏāk*
what=3M.SG.IMPFV.seek			he	that_one
əntiyyä		*mān=ək*		*hāk*
you.F.SG		NEG=PR.2F.SG		certainly
ʾmṛa		*gämm*		*ʾsmīnä*
woman		really		big.F.SG
w	*awʿar*	*mən*	*ši*	*mälgā=k*
and	more_difficult	than	thing	meeting[of]=PR.2SG
wə	***dxäynä***	*wə*	***šwäynä***	
and	DIM.dull.F.SG	et	DIM.ugly.F.SG	
wə	***ṛwäyṣ=ək***		*lə=mšäkräd*	
and	DIM.head[of]=PR.2F.SG		DEF.frizzy.M.SG	
ḥadd=u		*l=ək*		*l=**uḏ**äynä*
end[of]=PR.3M.SG		for=PR.2F.SG		DEF=DIM.ear
wə	***ffʷäym=ək***		*kəll*	*ʾbläd*
and	mouth[of]=PR.2F.SG		each	place
mənn=u		*vī=h*		***ʾsnäynä***
of=PR.3M.SG		in=PR.3M.SG		DIM.tooth

'Tell me, this one who comes to woo you // What may he hope?
'You are certainly not // A buxom woman.
'It is so difficult to see you! // You are a bit dull and ugly
'And your sparse frizzy hair // Barely covers your ear.DIM,
'And in your mouth.DIM // In disarray are your little teeth.

[22] Small eyes are not a quality for the Moors. Mentioning them is therefore equivalent to criticizing the physique of the desired woman, which makes no sense in the context.
[23] It is the meter which imposes the classicized form *baxīla* (for *bxîla*).

The portrait sketched by the poet is hardly flattering to the woman who is keeping out of his sight: skinniness, dull skin, frizzy hair, above all short, are all features which are considered physical shortcomings in a Moor woman. However the use of diminutives[24] lends an affectionate tone to the portrait of the beloved and largely takes the sting out of the criticism. The poet is clearly disappointed, but the warmth of his feelings persists.

The same could be said of poem (22) a *ṭalʿa* 'topped up' with *aaababababab* rhymes. The poet expresses four harmful wishes and only the presence of some diminutives (beginning with that of the desired woman's name) softens the harsh tone.

(22)

yä	***rwäyqiyyätu***		
oh	DIM.Rākiyyatu		
ʿahd=i		*mättänt=u*	
oath[of]=PR.1SG		strengthen.PFV.1SG=PR.3M.SG	
ᵊmʿā=k	*u*	*dərt=u*	
with=PR.2SG	and	put.PFV.1SG=PR.3M.SG	
mā	*yärxa*	*ʿand=ək*	
NEG	3M.SG.IMPFV.relax	at_the_home_of=PR.2F.SG	
qäyr	*ᵊrxa*	*šəft=u*	
but	relax.PFV.3M.SG	see.PFV.1SG=PR.3M.SG	
yägäylaʿ		*wähd=ək*[25]	
3M.SG.IMPFV.DIM.take_away		family[of]= PR.2F.SG	
w	*igaṣṣaṛ*	*ʿəmṛ=ək*	
and	3M.SG.IMPFV.shorten	life[of]= PR.2F.SG	
w	*išäyyän*	*saʿd=ək*	
and	3M.SG.IMPFV.make_ugly	good_luck[of]= PR.2F.SG	
w	*ixaṣṣaṛ*	*xabṛ=ək*	
and	3M.SG.IMPFV.ruin	conduct[of]= PR.2F.SG	
märäyxa		*ʿahd=ək*	
DIM.how_weak		oath[of]=PR.2F.SG	

'Oh dear // My oath, I have strengthened it
'And I laid it at your feet // It was not supposed to come unbound
'But it did, I can see it // May God deprive.DIM you of yours!
'May He [God] shorten your life! // May He give you a bad husband!
'May He make your behavior disgraceful! // Oh how fragile.DIM is your oath!'.

[24] Two adjectives (*dxäynä* DIM of *daxnä* and *šwäynä* DIM of *šäynä*) and four nouns (*ṛwäyṣ* DIM of *ṛāṣ*; *uḏäynä* DIM of *ūḏən* F.SG; *ffʷäym* [irregular] DIM of *ɣuṃṃ* and *snäynä* DIM of *sənn*).

[25] This expression is difficult to understand, although it is clearly insulting because *wähd* is not part of the dialect's ordinary vocabulary.

This degree of criticism can seem very surprising in poetry, but it is linked to the fact that the Moor culture tends to avoid praise, for both aesthetic and social reasons.[26]

Moreover, the antiphrastic use of disparaging terms is widespread in the Arab world to avert the 'evil eye'. Thus Moors will never say that children are healthy or plump. Instead they will mention weaknesses (real or imagined), calling them *šwäyn* (DIM of *šäyn* 'ugly'), from *msäykīn* ('poor little thing' – DIM of *məskīn* 'poor') or *mġäysīl* ('little rogue, little smart' – DIM of *mäġsūl* 'rude, oaf', littéralement 'washed') with a soft caressing tone which leaves no doubt as to the speaker's kind intentions. Intonation alone cannot transform pejorative terms into ones of endearment: it is fundamentally the diminutive form which, in a given context, steers interpretation towards affection. One should also note that the diminutive has an impact beyond the morphologically affected word: its enunciative scope tends to cover the entire context, beyond the sentence in which the diminutive is used.

4.3. Indirect declarations

In general, Moor poets tend to declare their feelings indirectly. Describing the beloved's defects rather than her qualities (especially physical ones), highlighting regrets and reproaches, all of this is ordinary. However Moor poets often go much further in their exploration of indirectness. Thus in the following poem, the declaration of love is addressed to a 'little she-kid'. The animal, singularized by the use of the diminutive, grows in the poet's tender imagination and it is clear that she indirectly represents the woman in his thoughts.

(23)

yowgi	*bī=k*		***ʾždäyyä***
how_much_love	with=PR.2SG		DIM.she-goat_kid
maġaylā=k		*ʾˤliy=yä*	
DIM.how_beloved=PR.2SG		for=PR.1SG	
w ilä	*kəbrət*		*vī=yä*
and if	grow_up.PFV.3F.SG		in=PR.1SG
läyn	*ʾtˤūd*		***ʾždäyˤa***
until	3F.SG.IMPFV.become		DIM.two_year_she-goat_kid_
wə	*tˤūd*		***ʾḥwäyliyyä***
and	3F.SG.IMPFV.become		DIM.young_she-goat
təktəl=ni		*bə*	*l=läyˤa*
3F.SG.IMPFV.kill=PR.1SG		with	DEF.pain
[u] yā	*mättānət*		*wəžd=i*
[and] oh	[the]strengthener.F.SG[of]		loving_sadness[of]= PR.1SG
rāˤi	*ḏīk*		***ʾṭläyˤa***

[26] Praise, which implies a certain reverence on the part of the praiser for the recipient – and often inferior status – is especially practiced in poetry by griots. Even for them however, praise is not devoid of risk as it is easy to offend one person by praising another (Taine-Cheikh 2004).

here_is		this_one		DIM.poème
u	*rāʿi*	*ḏāk*		*ʾždi*
and	here_is	that_one		kid.M
gūlī=l=i			*təbrīʿa*	
say.IMPER.F.SG=to= PR.1SG			distich.	

‘Oh how I love you, little goat // How dear.DIM you are to my heart!
‘If my tenderness continues to grow // Until you become a big kid.DIM,
‘Then that you become a young goat.DIM // Then she will kill me with sadness.
‘Oh source of my torment // Accept this little poem
‘And accept this he-kid // But recite me a few verses of love.’

Four diminutives concern the referent ‘little she-kid’. Three designate her directly (*ʾždäyyä* DIM of *ždiyyä* ‘she-goat kid’; *ʾždäyʿa* DIM of *žädʿa* ‘two year she-goat kid’; *ʾḥwäyliyyä* DIM of *ḥawliyye* ‘young she-goat’), a fourth takes her as argument (*maġaylā=k* DIM of the ‘admirative’ phrase *maġlā=k*). It is the closeness, the spatial proximity between the woman and the goat in the camp, which allows the poet to express his love for the former all while pretending (at least in the six first verses) to address the latter. This ‘displacement’ is made easier by the enunciative function of the diminutive. Given that connotative meaning can ‘float’, i.e. be detached from the linguistic sign (whereas denotative meaning can only apply to the *denotatum*), the poet is able to express his love without making the object explicit. Only the last verse, where the poet asks the beloved for a *təbrīʿa* (a short love poem of two lines composed by women) implicitly poses a change in object starting around verse 7 *yā mettānət wəžd=i*.

This poem illustrates why the diminutive attracts poets, in particular in its enunciative function, but it shows originality in the solution adopted. In general, the poet's feelings focus on the places frequented by the object of his love. Indeed, although nomads are undeniably attached to their various camps, poems which evoke a particular camp with nostalgia are often love poems calling out to the loved one in an entirely indirect manner. A very small dune (*ʿläyb* DIM of *ʿəlb*) or very small well (*ḥsäyy* DIM of *ḥāsi*) could easily play the role of the kid in the preceding poem.

Thus in the following poem by Mḥammäd W. Aḥmäd Yuṛa (after Ould Ahmedou Bamba 1982: 31-2), the ‘little well’ of the Ähl Āṃänniš appears to be the place frequented by his beloved. The circumstances of the meeting are evoked and highlighted by the use of three other diminutive forms (*gṛäyn* DIM of *gaṛn* ‘tuft’; *bṛäyg* DIM of *bṛag* ‘lightning’ and *rwäyḥa* DIM of *ṛīḥ* F.SG ‘wind’), but no mention is made of the beloved directly.

(24) *naˁṛav* *läylä* *və* ***gṛäyn***
1SG.IMPFV.know night in [the]DIM.tuft[of]
əl=vərnān *əlli* *bäyn*
DEF=balsam_spurge witch between
dʲigäynāt *ət̲=t̲əntäyn*
Dyigaynāt DEF=two.F
bətt *ällā* *nətnäymäš*
spend_night.1SG.PFV only 1SG.IMPFV.observe
və= ***bṛäyg*** *aˁmäš* *wə* *mnäyn*
to DIM.lightning bleary_eyed.M.SG and when
əngūl *ʾrtəb* *yaṛmäš*
1SG.IMPFV.say be_stable.3M.SG.PFV 3M.SG.IMPFV.blink
u *mən* *gəblä* *žāt* *ʾgbāl*
and from south come.3F.SG.PFV just
ʾrwäyḥa *nəššət* *nəšš*
DIM.wind.F.SG blow.3F.SG.PFV breath.M.SG
iväggäd *bə=rbəg-ẏāl*
3M.SG.IMPFV.remind with=Rbig_Vāl
wə ***ḥsäyy*** *ähl* *āṃännəš*
and [the]DIM.well[of] [the]family[of] Āṃänniš.

‘I remember that night in the grove.DIM
‘Of euphorbia, between
‘The two Dyigaynāt,
’I spent the night contemplating
‘The faint glow of a lightening bolt.DIM and when
‘I think her gone, she shines once again,
‘Then straight from the South came
‘The breeze of a light wind.DIM
‘Bringing to mind Rbig-Vāl
‘And the small well of the Ähl Āṃänniš’.

This poem, which was composed by one of the masters of allusive expression, well reflects Moor aesthetics where the implicit has great value. Other poems by the same author may be found in Taine-Cheikh 2006, as well as poems showing several toponyms in the diminutive.

These six love poems contain a high proportion of diminutives. In terms of the syntactic categories, the ratios are comparable to what was found in the tales: 18 nouns for only 2 adjectives (3 with *šwäynä*), one verb and two ‘admirative’ phrases. Given the specific context, the diminutives are never wholly pejorative. When the semantics of the basic form are negative, the use of the diminutive attenuates the

sting of the criticism and even leads to a sort of inversion of values. What these poems clearly reveal is that the use of diminutives may be dictated by pragmatics to essentially translate the poet's attitude, feelings and emotions.

5. Arabic diminutives from a typological perspective

In this section, I will consider the « root-and-pattern » formation process from a typological perspective, both formally and semantically. In particular, I will briefly review the other formation processes attested in Arabic with relatively diverse meanings and values.

5.1. The « root and pattern » formation process

5.1.1. *A process rare in the world's languages*

The process for forming the diminutive described for Ḥassāniyya is also found in other dialects. Indeed, insertion of the diphthong *-ay-* (in a given position and for a given pattern) is, by far, the most common process in Arabic for forming diminutives. The same process is also found in other Semitic languages such as Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Akkadian (Zewi 2006: 638).

However, crosslinguistically speaking, this process, characteristic of « root and pattern » type morphology, is, in the works of Štekauer (2015: 53) considered limited to this language family, whereas « the most productive W[ord] F[ormation] processes are suffixation (95 per cent of the languages of the world) and compounding (90 per cent) followed by reduplication (80 per cent), prefixation (72 per cent) and conversion (63 per cent) » (*ibid.*: 47).

While the « root and pattern » inflection process is specific to a few Semitic languages, the evaluative morphology of Arabic is in keeping on other points with universal trends, namely in that its formation of diminutives is much more common and systematic than for augmentatives: « Diminutives are the unmarked evaluative category; that is, the presence of a productive category of augmentatives in a language implies the presence of diminutives » (Merlini Barbaresi 2015: 41).

In addition, as in many of the world's languages, the diminutive derivation holds a rather special place in the inflectional morphology of Arabic. Given that the diminutive pattern depends on that of the basic word (presence or not of a long vowel, prefix, or geminate), it cannot be said that the diminutive is derived directly from the root (even though the nature of the root – triliteral or quadriliteral – also plays a role).[27]

5.1.2. *A more or less broad domain of application*

There is a hierarchy in the types of words serving to form diminutives. It varies with

[27] The diminutives are not the only double-derived forms in Arabic. It is a well known phenomenon which, as for derivation through prefixes and suffixes, does not contradict, in my view, the general rule of root and pattern crossing established by Cantineau (1950). For a discussion of generativist theses, see Watson 2006.

the language, but nouns appear to be the most common category, contrary to more grammatical and less autonomous words (determiners, but also numerals and pronouns, even adverbs) which are the rarest categories (Bauer 1997: 538-540).
This observation also applies to Arabic, where the main (and often only) base concerned by the diminutive derivation in *-(a)y-* is that of nominals – nouns and adjectives. In the Maghreb, where on the whole this process for forming diminutives is the most productive, two main dialect groups are to be distinguished (cf. Taine-Cheikh 1988: 110-115). The first group (the largest and most well documented) is that of sedentary and urban dialects. In these varieties, the diminutive system has grown apart from that of Classical Arabic. The patterns $R_1R_2ayR_3$ (cf. §2.1.1) and $R_1R_2ayR_3\bar{i}R_4$ (cf. §2.2.3) have disappeared and two purely dialectal patterns (where R_2 is doubled or a *w* inserted) provide diminutives of adjectives (of colors and physical defects, but not only) such as *kḥīḥəl*.[28]
In the second, more conservative, group, of dialects spoken by nomads,[29] the patterns $R_1R_2ayR_3$ and $R_1R_2ayyə/iR_3$ (cf. §2.1.2) on one hand, and $R_1R_2ayR_3\bar{i}R_4$ and $R_1R_2ayR_3ə/iR_4$ (cf. §2.2.2) on the other, are generally kept distinct. It is also in this group that one finds most of the dialects with verbal diminutives – essentially reflexive verbs bearing the prefix *t-*, cf. (25).

(25) West Algeria: among the Ulâd Bṛâhim of Saïda (Marçais 1908: 107)
a. *tqeibböh* ‘to become a little naughty’
b. *tᶜeiṛba* ‘to become a little arabized’

In the Middle-East, diminutives bearing the infix *-ay-* are relatively rare, with the exception of particular cases such as Iraqi Arabic,[30] the northern Arabic dialects and Negev Arabic. And yet it is in other dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, namely in the East and in Ṣanᶜāʾ (Yemen), that one finds verbs in the diminutive form.

5.1.3. *Competition across derivations*

Some forms show a tendency to be used on occasion to express the diminutive. This is the case of reduplicated forms, often belonging to a childish register.[31] This is also the case for some diminutives bearing the suffix *-a(t)*, generally used for expressing units and portions.[32] Masliyah gives examples in Iraqi Arabic (26a and b). He further notes diminutives bearing the suffix *-ūn* (26c).

[28] In Classical Arabic diminutive forms have been observed, not only as in Ḥassāniyya, for prepositions, adverbs and admirative phrases, as well as for demonstratives and pronouns.
[29] This could be a dialect spoken by former Bedouins (as is Ḥassāniyya) or a ‘Bedouinized’ dialect.
[30] Iraqi Arabic has retained the pattern specific to diminutives of adjectives of color and deformities. It has even extended it to the feminine: *ixēris* F *ixērisa* – DIM of *axras* F *xarsa* ‘mute’ (Masliyah 1997: 77).
[31] A trend observed both in Arabic (Colin 1999: 114-8, Caubet 1991, Lentin 2012) and crosslinguistically (Morgenstern & Michaud 2007; Ponsonnet, this volume).
[32] Use of the so-called ‘feminine’ marker for the diminutive is particularly clear in Berber Zenaga (Taine-Cheikh 2002), even though it can also serve to express the augmentative in other Berber languages (Vycichl 1961, Kossmann 2014).

Some derivations are found above all in proper nouns, namely in the Middle-East and in Morocco. This often pertains to the pattern $R_1aR_2R_2\bar{u}R_3$ (cf. 27a and 28a). It is also the case with the suffixes *-ū/ō* (cf. 27b) and *-ūš/ōš* (cf. 28b). The origins of the various suffixes are generally ascribed to the influence of a substrate or adstrate (Aramaic, Berber, or even Latin).[33]

(26) Iraqi Arabic (Masliyah 1997: 72-74)

a.	*yadd* 'hand'	*yadda(h)* 'handle'
b.	*kurra* 'ball'	*kurrāya* 'a small ball'
c.	*kalb* 'dog'	*kalbūn* 'a small dog'

(27) Bahraini Arabic (Holes 2006: 251)

a.	*laṭṭūf*	DIM de *laṭīfa*
b.	*xalīlō*	DIM de *xalīl*

(28) Moroccan Arabic (Colin 1999: 70, 74-5)

a.	*dərrūs*	DIM of *drīs*
a.	*fəṭṭōš*	DIM of *fāṭma*[34]

In contrast, in Kordofanian Baggara Arabic (Manfredi 2010: 89), one finds two formations which owe nothing to language contact: either vowel alternation (central/back > high) affecting all vowels (cf. 29a and b), or suffixation of *-ay* (cf. 29c). This could be a reinterpretation of the two traditional Arabic diminutive markers (the affix *-ay-* and vocalisms in *i/ī*) giving rise to two independent processes but the suffix *-ay*, according to Mandredi (*personal communication* 06/2016), is only a variant of *-āya* seen previously.

(29)

a.	*maṣalēb* 'small calf (about three months)'	DIM of *muṣulāb*
b.	*miḥimmid* 'little Muhammad'	DIM of *muḥammad*
c.	*mūx-ay* 'little brain'	DIM of *mūx*

There is thus a certain variety in Arabic diminutives, but only the root and pattern type with the infix *-ay-* is widespread, both in terms of the number of dialects where it is productive and in terms of the number of syntactic categories affected. Diminutives of nouns and adjectives are quite common. The patterns are more varied in the so-called Bedouin dialects, and it is in this same group that one finds diminutives of verbs on the one hand, and of adjectives of color and physical defects (pattern $aR_1R_2aR_3$), on the other hand. There is no dialect however where derivation

[33] See also the suffixes *-eika* and *-ča* in Uzbekistan Arabic and the suffixes *-īn(a)* and *-ett(a)* of Romance origin in Maltese (Zimmermann 209: 616; Mifsud 2008: 153).

[34] In Moroccan Arabic, it is often the pattern $R_1aR_2R_2\bar{u}R_3$ where *š* replaces R_3 (whence the geminate R_2).

by the infix *-ay-* is a developed as in Ḥassāniyya.

5.2. The polysemy of diminutives

5.2.1. The Jurafsky model

Jurafsky (1996: 542) proposes a representation of the universal semantic structure of the diminutive category in the form of a radial category, where the central line is composed of the ordered notions *child –> small –> female*. The names of the other senses are linked by labeled arcs specifying the « mechanisms of semantic change; inference (I), metaphor (M), generalization (G), and lambda-abstraction (L) ».

The central vertical line divides the structure into two parts. On one side of the line are semantic values: *child –> member* (M); *small –> exactness* (L) + *partitive* (L) + *approximation* (L, M) + *small type–of* (I); *small type–of –> related–to* (G) + *imitation* (G, M). On the other are values linked to pragmatics: *child –> affection* (I) + *pets* (M) + *sympathy* (I) + *intimacy* (I); *small –> contempt* (M) + *hedges*.

Leaving aside the question of the source of the diminutive, which, according to Jurafsky is more likely a word meaning 'child' or 'son' rather than 'small',[35] I will continue my analysis beginning with the semantic values.

5.2.2. The semantics of Arabic diminutives

While defining diminutives as « [t]he quantity-founded deviations from the default value » is useful as a starting point, it does not cover all possible meanings. Indeed, in Arabic one finds diminutive forms where the meaning (or one of the meanings) corresponds not to the primary sense 'small(ness)' but to one of the derived senses observed by Jurafsky, namely imitation, approximation, partitive, exactness.

a) The meaning of imitation is found in certain dialects having diminutive verb forms.

(30) West Algeria: among the Ulâd Bṛâhim of Saïda (Marçais 1908: 108)

a.	*tbêiles*	'to play the devil'
b.	*tmêilöḥ*	'to play the saint'

(31) Southern Algeria: among the ʾArbâˁ nomads (Dhina 1938: 331)

a.	*tˁeⁱraf*	'to play the expert'
b.	*tmeⁱlas*	'to play the sweetish'
c.	*ᵉššeⁱṭar* (< *tšeⁱṭar*)	'to swank'
d.	*tneⁱfax*	'to play the little conceited'

(32) Arabic dialects of eastern Arabia (Holes 2004: 109)

a.	*tṣēmax*	'to pretend to be deaf'
b.	*thēbal*	'to act as if stupid'

[35] I can say however that in the case of Zenaga Berber, the prefixal diminutive morpheme (M *ag-*) does in fact stem from the meaning 'son' (see Vycichl 1961, Taine-Cheikh 2002).

(33) Ṣanʿānī Arabic (Watson 2006: 192)
tjaymal 'to make oneself (o.s.) appear beautiful'

b) The meaning of approximation or attenuation appears the most widespread. Very common in the diminutives of adjectives, it is also to be found in some verbal diminutives such as in (34) and in participial diminutives as in (35) which indicate an incomplete change in color.

(34) West Algeria: among the Ulâd Bṛâhim of Saïda (Marçais 1908: 107)
tfêiqqöh 'to have a poor knowledge of the law'

(35) Southern Tunisia: among the Marāzîg (Boris 1958)
a. *məṭḥêmər* 'reddish'
b. *məššêheb* 'greyish'

With plural diminutives, attenuation can bear on the number. Denizeau (1957: 68) notes that in this same Southern Tunisian dialect, « *tmērāt* means 'a few dates, rare dates', 'less numerous' and not 'smaller or worse' which would be the case of the affirmative plural *tämṛât* ».
Lastly, to finish with cases of attenuation, let us further note in Iraqi Arabic: « a number of wild animals, reptiles, and harmful plants occur in *fʿēl* pattern probably to demean or lessen the fear that such creatures may cause to children. Examples: *xmayyis* 'lion', *abu glēgil* 'wolf' [...] » (Masliyah (1997: 77).[36]
c) We saw above that the sense of partition or portion is generally expressed by suffixes such as the so called 'feminine' suffix. Thus *laḥmä* has the meaning 'piece of meat' in contrast to *lḥam* 'meat' in Ḥassāniyya. Furthermore, diminutives can serve as singulatives, not only in narratives (as in 2.4.) but also in lexical derivation. Thus Denizeau observes that in ethnonyms such as *ḥwêwi* 'of the fraction of the Ḥawâya' or *msêʿîdi* 'of the tribe of the Masāʿîd', « the function of the diminutive form, doubling that of the suffix *-i*, appears to be strictly singulative » (1957: 68). This is akin to the meaning of *member* noted by Jurafsky.
d) The last meaning is that of exactness. A few examples are to be found in the temporal domain:

(36) Ḥassāniyya
a. *gbaḷ* 'before' DIM *gbäyḷ* 'a moment ago'
b. *ḍaṛk* 'now' DIM *ḍṛäyk* 'just now'

(37) Southern Tunisia, in Gabès (Marçais & Farès 1932: 250, 1933: 1)
a. *ṣʷbâḥ* 'morning' DIM *ṣbiᵃḥ* 'daybreak'
b. *məɣrəb* 'sunset' DIM *mɣêrəb* 'immediate approach of sunset'

[36] $C_1C_2\bar{e}C_3$ (or $f^{\varsigma}\bar{e}l$) < $C_1C_2ayC_3$.

In the end, we will have found in Arabic almost all of the meanings established by Jurafsky. However these meanings are not very frequent whereas connotations have been noted by all authors studying Arabic diminutives.

5.2.3. The pragmatics of Arabic diminutives

Distinguishing between morphosemantics (denotation and connotation) and morphopragmatics, Merlini Barbaresi (2015: 35) asserts: « word connotations, intended as stable meanings picked up from contextual uses over time, are not seen to be relevant for a pragmatic account; they are part of the complex semantics of the word ».

The stability of the semantic connotations is striking in some languages such as Polish where the diminutive of each first name (especially of women: *-enka*, *-ulka*, *-uchna*, *-usia*, *-ątko*) has « a slightly different semantic value » (Wierzbicka 1984: 124).

There are examples of this sort in Arabic, particularly in diminutives used, as in Polish, to address someone, whether they be kinship term diminutives in *ay-* or *-u* (Yassin 1978: 300; Henkin 2010: 179; Blanc 1964: 74) or diminutives of first names with a suffix *-ī* or *-ūš* (Watson 2006: 191; Colin 1999: 76). With the exception of *-ūš*, all of these diminutives are ordinarily caritative. Inversely, diminutives of collective nouns and verbs usually have pejorative or ironic meaning in some dialects (see, on one hand, Denizeau 1957: 68; Taine-Cheikh 1988: 90, and, on the other, Marçais 1908: 455; Dhina 1938: 331; Watson 2006: 192).

The situation in sedentary dialects (namely in the Maghreb) is quite similar. In these dialects, infix derivation provides a high number of frequently used diminutive forms, but their use is restricted to specific contexts. For the main part this concerns the affectionate use women make of diminutives, especially when addressing children.[37] In Djerba, in Tunisia, a woman would never use a diminutive when addressing a man (Saada 1970: 323).

The use of diminutives is very different in the Bedouin dialects (or at least in several). It is not reserved for women, nor for addressing children. Moreover, the meanings can be either caritative or pejorative, even though the latter are sometimes more frequent than the former in the speech of men.[38]

The Bedouin dialects are characterized both by the high productivity of diminutives and the variety of their meanings. There is probably a link between the two, the fact that diminutives can be used pejoratively certainly multiplies the contexts where they are used. I have restricted myself here to analyzing only two corpora, but they already well illustrate the diminutive's vast morphopragmatic possibilities as described by Merlini Barbaresi (2015: 41). Further investigation of the importance of

[37] In a dialect such as that of Dellys in Algeria, diminutives are practically mandatory when addressing young children (Souag, *pers. comm.* 03/2016).

[38] In Negev Arabic, empathetic diminutives are mostly used by women and older men whereas « [t]he pejorative function of diminutives is less gender-based » (Henkin (2010: 179).

the opposition « self-oriented vs. other oriented, empathetic vs. neutral non empathetic » (Ponsonnet 2014: 35) could be useful as Arabic diminutives rarely appear to be self-oriented, although the Moor tales do provide a few examples.
In any case, in Ḥassāniyya – the dialect which has clearly developed diminutives the most –, the uses of the diminutive often correspond to situations where the distance between the protagonists (or participants in a dialog) appears reduced.[39] This increase in proximity can stem from a variety of motives and pertains both to positive emotions (affection, love, commiseration, empathy...) and negative emotions or stances (derision, mockery, disdain, aggressiveness...). It is because the pragmatic dimension becomes essential that connotations may detach from lexemes in the diminutive form to transmit a more global assessment, either positive or negative depending on the context. In contrast, diminutives lacking any emotional connotation, such as those which serve to singularize elements important to a narrative, denote values pertaining to the *denotatum*.

Abbreviations
AG=agent/agentive
DEF=definite (article)
DIM=diminutive
F=feminine
IMPER=imperative
IMPFV=imperfective
M=masculine
N=nom(inal)
NEG=negation
PEJ=pejorative
PFV=perfective
PL=plural
PR=pronom
PTCP=participle
R=radical
SG=singular

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[39] On « enunciative distance », see Kerbrat-Orecchioni,1980: 32; Taine-Cheikh 1988: 99-100.

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