A Sureth Version of the East-Syriac Dialogue Poem of Mary and the Gardener

Alessandro Mengozzi[1]

In the present paper, a Sureth version is published of the dialogue poem of *Mary and the Gardener*. As a first attempt to reconstruct the history of this text, the poetic version in the vernacular is compared with five manuscript witnesses of the Classical Syriac original. The poem is presented as part of an intertextual web of Classical Syriac hymns for Easter and Pentecost that are preserved in late liturgical collections and appear to be narrative and rhetorical expansions of John 20:11-17. Formal and thematic parallels to the poem are then found in the broader framework of Christian and Jewish hymnography written in varieties of Late Aramaic.

1. The Character of Women in Syriac Dialogue Poems

In a number of publications, Sebastian Brock has shown that in Syriac literature dispute poems – i.e. poems that display the formal features of the Mesopotamian dispute as recently described by Jiménez (2017) – represent a specific sub-group within a wider corpus of texts, the vast majority of which are poems and in which dialogue is a more or less salient structural feature. Following Grelot (1958) and Murray (1995), Brock (1984: 35-36) thinks that the Mesopotamian dispute was adopted early and adapted by major Syriac authors like Ephrem (c. 306-373 AD) and Jacob of Serugh (c. 451-521) in various forms: simple allusions to disputes or disputes as substantial parts of *madrashē* (stanzaic hymns) and *mēmrē* (metrical homilies). In a second phase, which includes the largest number of texts,

the stanzaic hymn called *soghithā*[2] is the commonest genre and metrical form used for anonymous disputes, dialogues and, in general, poetry containing direct speech.

Most Syriac dialogue poems are not disputations or precedence disputes, but argumentative discussions on specific — biblical or theological — topics. Brock (1983a: 44) suggests that the transition from dispute to argumentative dialogue is an indication of the Christianization of the genre. Dialogue *soghiyāthā* often use narrative details or gaps in the Biblical text to promote the exegetical discourse through the dialectical and dialogical discussion of two characters. The authors exploit the euristic potential of both poetry and rhetoric as tools and expressions of theological reasoning and thinking.[3] Sometimes exegetical and theological contents are introduced in the dialogues in a simple and schematic way and thus the texts appear to have a pedagogical, catechetical function, which makes the festivals of the liturgical calendar for which they are composed occasions for a living and recurring catechesis. In the liturgical performance, hymns become the textual support of both theological reflection and spiritual experience.

Most characters are taken from the Bible and the texts are narrative and rhetorical expansions of dialogues that are just implied, sketched or alluded to in the Biblical text: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and Benjamin, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Job and his wife, Zechariah and the angel, the angel and Mary, Mary and Joseph, Mary and the Magi, John the Baptist and Christ, John the Baptist and the crowd, Christ and the Pharisees, the sinful woman and Satan, the two thieves, the Cherub and the (good) thief, Mary and the gardener. Dialogues between historical characters, saints and personifications are also attested: Nero, the soldiers and Peter, Queen Helena and the Jewish people, King Shapur and the martyrs, Cyril and Nestorius, Saint Behnam and Satan, Elijah of Hirta and an angel, Saint Marina and Satan, the rivers Jordan and Pishon, Grace and Justice, the Church and Sion, Christ and the Synagogue (Brock 2010: 97-104).

Women are generally positive characters in Syriac dialogue poems. For pedagogical and parenetic purposes, women such as Mary, suspected of having committed sin, or the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet stand on the right side and demonstrate intelligence, autonomy of thought, spirit of initiative and freedom of choice and action, sometimes as opposed to men such as Zachariah, Joseph and Satan alias the perfume seller. Men, in contrast, are representative of social norms and conventions, conformism and reductive interpretations of reality and Scripture (Harvey 2001: 124). In

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[2] On the relationship of Syriac dialogue poems as a literary genre with exegesis, see Harvey (2001: 106 and 2005: 82), Upson-Saia (2006), Heal (2007: 87-8).

[3] In a *soghithā* verses usually consist of four seven-syllable lines and an alphabetic acrostic often marks the pairs of verses in which the disputants alternate in direct speech.

Syriac dialogue poems, women often defend perfect faith against the rigidity of rationality (Harvey 2010: 176).

The space and freedom granted to women's voices, taken from the Scriptures or invented in imaginative poetic texts, may have actually been expressed in the female choirs, mostly virginal, whose existence and importance is well documented in Syriac culture from Ephrem's time (Harvey 2005 and 2010). The presence, the originality and the strength of the female characters would be underlined by the choirs of girls and women who have always animated and still animate the Syriac liturgy, in monasteries and parishes. On the other hand, liturgy is a public space traditionally dedicated to cultural communication and education and allows the representation and, within certain limits, the negotiation and redefinition of social roles (Harvey 2001: 129).

Christian Syriac literature is not the only Aramaic literature that preserved, adopted and adapted the format of the Mesopotamian dispute. Rhythmical compositions, sometimes with alphabetic acrostics, that contain a dialogue or a dispute, are interpolated within the Aramaic translation of various Biblical passages in the Palestinian Targums.[4] However, the comparison of disputes and dialogue poems with the same characters that have been preserved in Syriac and Jewish Aramaic (Cain and Abel, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the months of the year[5]) reveals the paradox of the relative uniformity of a supposedly inherited genre and the high degree of cultural idiosyncrasy between literary traditions that share more or less the same language as well as the historical and possibly socio-cultural macro-contexts (Münz-Manor 2010, Mengozzi, forthcoming b).

2. Mary and the Gardener: Sources, Exegetical Choices and Intertextual Webs

Among anonymous Classical Syriac hymns that are preserved in late liturgical collections, we find at least three poems that appear to be narrative and rhetorical expansions of John 20:11-17:

[11] Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb [12] and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. [13] They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." [14] At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. [15] He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking

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[4] A list can be found in Smelik (1995: 414-415). Text and translation of a number of Targumic disputes, with an insightful commentary, can be found in Rodrigues Pereira (1997).

[5] On Jewish and Christian disputes of the months and calendars in verses, see Rand (2012) and Mengozzi (forthcoming a), both with bibliography.

he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."[16] Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").[17] Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'[18] Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her (NIV).

The Syriac hymnographers combine John's account with the themes and details of the Synoptics, as if reading a Gospel harmony, and exegetical sources. It is possible that they draw inspiration also from non-canonical narratives that have not yet been identified. As far as the canonical Gospels are concerned, John 20:1 states that it was Mary Magdalene who went to Jesus' tomb early on Sunday, and exegetes tend to identify her, who is also mentioned at the end of the pericope (John 20:18), with the Mary of John 20:11. Matthew 28:28 has that Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" went to Jesus' tomb at dawn on Sunday. Mark says that "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph [probably Joseph of Arimathea, mentioned in 15:43] saw where he was laid" (15:47) and, in the immediately following verse, "when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb" (16:1-2). Mark 16:9 says that "when Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons".

A *madrāshā* of the Syriac Catholic Breviary, intended for the time after Pentecost,[6] elaborates on the theme of Mary thinking that Jesus was a gardener (John 20: 15):

1. The Lord of Paradise is risen from the tomb
   and Mary saw him and likened him to the gardener.
   He is the Gardener who planted Paradise
   and encircled it with the sword and the cherub (Genesis 3:24)[7].
   You did well, Mary, to call him 'Gardener' (transl. by Brock 1983b).

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[6] Mosul *Fenqitho* (1884), Mosul: Imprimerie des Pères dominicains, vol. I, 434-5. An English translation of this *madrāshā* can be found in Brock (1983: 230-231).

[7] The Cherub who protects Paradise with a flaming sword is one of the two disputants in another, perhaps the most famous dialogue poem for Easter, namely the *Dispute of the Cherub and the Thief* (Mengozzi-Ricossa 2013b, with bibliography).

It is not clear if the author implies the Mary in question is Mary Magdalene or the mother of Jesus (Brock 1983b: 232). In the following verses 2-4, she asks the Gardener where is "the fruit of salvation" that should be in a tomb in the garden. The gardener does not answer and the *madrāshā* cannot be described as a dialogue poem. The opening lines of v. 3 ("O gardener, how nice is your garden! In it is a tomb where, like the sovereign of the trees, is the fruit of true salvation…") partly overlaps with the beginning of a very popular Easter hymn of the Church of the East, entitled *O gannānā!* 'O gardener!'.[8] The two hymns are clearly linked to each other:

1. "O gardener, how nice is your garden!
   In it there is a tomb and the bride-chamber inside it.
   The guards are sitting at the tomb
   and the chamber, cherubim surround it."
   "How nice of you, Mary, that you have called me 'gardener'!"

Jesus alias the gardener speaks to Mary in the line that closes v. 1 in a ring composition: "O gardener, how nice is your garden … how nice of you, Mary…" From v. 3 it would seem that Mary is the mother of Jesus: "Weeping, Mary said: 'They stole my son!'", but from v. 5 it is clear that Mary Magdalene is speaking: "That one who drove seven demons out of me, I am burning with love for him!" Other characters speak to Mary in this text (Joseph of Arimathea in v. 3 and an angel in v. vv. 14-5), which, however, does not have the structure of a dialogue poem.

A third hymn, that expands on John 20, does have the structure of a dialogue poem. It is the East-Syriac *soghithā* of *Mary and the Gardener*. Mary repeatedly asks a reluctant gardener where is the fruit she is looking for. It is a fruit, hardly visible to human eye, that will give her life.[9] The gardener

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[8] The text of *O gannānā!* has been published by Benyamin (1968: 178-182). Pastore (2013-2014) gives an Italian translation of the hymn and analyzes it as performed by the Assyrian singer Linda George. The audio of her performance is used as a sound track for a video posted on YouTube in 2013 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJtD27Jy1o4): a transliteration in Arabic script of the Syriac text appears in the video, in combination with images drawn from the film *The Passion of the Christ* (2005), directed by Mel Gibson. In another video, published in 2015 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YaQ6LHcPFs), the text is tentatively attributed to the East-Syriac hymnographer Narsai (5th century) and the slides combine the East-Syriac text of each stanza as printed by Benyamin (1968) with an Arabic and an English translation of the text sung by Linda George. In this second video, images are drawn from Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) and books of European popular devotion.

[9] The idea of a woman seeking a fruit in the garden alludes to the contrast between Mary and Eve, which is a theme dear to the Syriac tradition (see, e.g., in Ephrem's *Hymns on the Church* 37; Brock 2010: 34-35). Mary has a fruit that gives life in the garden, her son Jesus, whereas Eve stole, as it were, a prohibited fruit from Eden. Times were not yet ripe for her and Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of life and here Jesus alias the gardener suggests that it is not the right season to look for fruits in the garden (7), so as to open the theological discussion of the dialogue.

dares her to explain what kind of fruit she is looking for and finally reveals to her the mystery of resurrection.

In some Eastern Christian traditions, probably inspired by a text of John 20:1 and 18 in which the word 'Magdalene' is omitted,[10] the Mary who "stood outside the tomb crying" is identified with the mother of Jesus.[11] This is the exegetical choice of the author of the East-Syriac *soghithā* of *Mary and the Gardener.* In line with the role often played by women in Syriac dialogue poems, "Mary spars unwittingly with her resurrected son whom she does not recognize. While the Gardener (Christ) attempts to fend off her queries, Mary remains determined in her faith and continues to badger as the Gardener exclaims, "How you weary me with your talk / how you vex me with what you say!"[12] (Harvey 2010: 184, quoting Brock's translation).

In the *madrāshā* of the Syriac Catholic Breviary and in the East Syriac hymn *O gannānā!*, the authors praise and approve as theologically sound that fact that Mary — Jesus' mother or the Magdalene — thought Jesus was a gardener, the defender of Paradise and the one who opens up Paradise for Adam redeemed (actually the good thief, the first man who was granted access to Paradise on the cross). In *O gannānā!* Jesus himself approves Mary's non-recognition: "How nice of you, Mary, that you have called me 'gardener'!" On the other hand, in the *soghithā*, Jesus plays the role of a gardener, as if intending to test his mother's understanding and faith. In the dialogue, he actually acts as a man annoyed by the woman's insistent questioning. The anonymous author would seem to play with a stereotype of man-woman interaction so as to explain the fact that a mother does not recognize her son and build up the discussion that converges to the climax of the final revelation, expressed in the rhetorical form of an antimetabole: "His resurrection bears witness to His mother and His mother bears witness to His resurrection" (v. 21).

Precisely the identification of the Mary of John 20 with Mary the mother of Jesus suggests to Brock (1983b: 226) that the East-Syriac dialogue poem "may be of considerable antiquity: since it does not seem likely that a composition of the Arab period would any longer make such an identification, the text might hesitantly be attributed to about the sixth century". However, the sophisticated

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[10] E.g., the text of the *Vetus Syra* (Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century) and the Arabic *Diatessaron* do not have Mary Magdalene, but just Mary in John 18: 1 and 18 (Brock 1983: 226).

[11] Brock (1983: 226) mentions works such as Ephrem the Syrian's *Commentary on the Diatessaron* (fourth century), the Greek *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos*, probably by Theodoret of Cyrrhys (first half of the fifth century), references to this identification in works by Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) and other West-Syriac anonymous liturgical texts (Brock 1983: 232). Brock refers to Giannelli (1953) on Greek texts that speak of Jesus' appearance to His mother after resurrection.

[12] Harvey (2010: 184) quotes Brock's (1983) translation. See here, below, on the problematic attribution of this v. 13 to Mary or the gardener.

rhyme pattern of the hymn as preserved in manuscripts of the Ottoman period point to a much later date. Rhyme is generally believed to be characteristic of poetry in the Mongol and Ottoman periods, when Syriac hymnographers imitate or compete with Arabo-Persian models.

3. A Mother Searching Her Son

Mary is a mother who looks for her son, albeit described in highly imaginative and theological terms as a fruit that gives life, coherent with Jesus' appearance as a gardener. The author inserts into the account of the Gospel according to John a variant of the question that the two men in glistening clothes[13] ask "the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee" (Luke 23:55), when they bring spices and perfumes early on Sunday: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). The gardener's wording is somewhat stronger: "Why, lady, do you seek the living in Sheol the devourer?"[14]

The idea of someone looking for Jesus after resurrection is probably a rather common rhetorical features in many Christian hymns for Easter. For instance, in a possibly late East-Syriac *soghithā* for Easter, each couplet opens with the formula *ezzēṯ d-eḥzē* 'I went to look [for Jesus in a given place]' and the second hemistiches create, with the formula 'they told me to go [somewhere else]', a climax path of wandering in the geography of Jesus' passion and resurrection: from Golgotha to Jerusalem, the Upper-Chamber of the Last Supper, Sion and finally Heaven. Christ is not to be found anywhere, but in Heaven on the right hand of the Father, where he nevertheless appears as 'a perfect human being' (text and translation in Mengozzi and Ricossa 2013a: 164-165).

The verse opening formula and the geographic wandering of the East-Syriac Christologic *soghithā* has a formal parallel in a Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poem on *Jochebed's Search* of the body of his son Moses.[15] In the Jewish poem each verse is opened by the formula *ezlaṯ yokhevedh mpisā*[16]

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[13] In John 20:12 they are two angels in white; in Matthew 28 an angel — "³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow" — comes down from heaven accompanied by a violent earthquake; in Mark 16:15 there is a young man dressed in a white robe.

[14] Brock (1983: 233) observes that 'the devourer' is a standard epithet of Sheol in liturgical poetry, possibly deriving from Proverbs 1:12 ("let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit", NIV) and already used by Ephrem the Syrian.

[15] Lieber (2018: 150-151) translates the text as published by Yahalom-Sokoloff (1999: 244-7). Lieber (2018) is an English translation of the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poems that Yahalom and Sokoloff published in 1999 with Hebrew translation. At least to my sensitivity of non-native reader, Lieber's English is sometimes difficult and odd, unnecessarily formal and pompous. Remarkable is her attempt, in this and other publications (e.g., Lieber 2014, 2015, 2016a and 2016b), to stress the oral and vocal dimensions of the texts and to reconstruct their performative arenas: not only and not primarily liturgy in the

'Jochebed went to entreat [a given place so that he may say whether it has perhaps seen Moses]' and the various places — Egypt, the Nile, the (Red) Sea, the desert, the Sinai, and the rock (i.e., the rock struck twice by Moses in Numbers 20:11) — answer they have not seen him since he performed one of his miracles and wonderful deeds. As is very common in this kind of Targumic poetry, verses are connected by structuring formulas and alphabetic acrostics[17] and have a clear pedagogical function in that they arrange Bible quotations or references to Biblical events in a rhythmical text, easy to understand, memorize and sing chorally.

As far as the content is concerned, the Jewish poem on *Jochebed's Search* parallels the East-Syriac *soghithā* on *Mary and the Gardener*, both depicting a mother's reaction to the real or imagined death of her son. Jewish and Christian hymnography (in Hebrew, Greek and various forms of Late Aramaic: Jewish Palestinian, Samaritan and Syriac), especially of late antiquity, is nowadays seen as the literary expression of a common culture, sharing the historical context of the early Byzantine Middle East as well as aesthetics and motifs that easily circulated across confessional and linguistic borders.[18] It is not surprising to find parallels in form and content of Aramaic hymns belonging to quite different epochs, but dealing with similar themes and functioning with a traditional set of formal tools in analogous performative arenas. *Mary and the Gardener*, *I went to look for Jesus* and the Jewish poem on *Jochebed's Search* do not necessarily depend on each other or derive from a common model, but they

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synagogue (some texts are interpolated in Targum "lectionaries", for instance to mark the ends of biblical units such as the Tora or the Psalms, or preserved in prayer books, possibly hymnaries), but also life-cycle rituals such as marriages, funerals, possibly bar-mitzvahs. Less convincing is the idea that these texts may have been performed in "civic spaces (such as theaters)" (Lieber 2018: 8). As far as contents are concerned, Lieber's approach is often brilliant and successful in showing the performative force and the semiotic efficacy of the texts as performed poems and their function in the construction of a communal identity. Nevertheless, she probably asks too much of these texts when she "mines the poems for clues about the lived reality out of which the JPA [Jewish Palestinian Aramaic] poems emerged" (Lieber 2018: 9). The texts speak of the every-day life of Aramaic-speaking Jews of late antiquity no more than the *Salve Regina* tells about European Christians of various epochs. Hymns say a lot about communal identity and belonging, about hope and despair, but they give almost no clues on "lived reality", which may be irrelevant in the (para-) liturgical discourse.

[16] Or perhaps *mpayysā* (*pa''el* participle), since the word is written with double *y* and this usually indicates a consonant *y* rather than a vowel *i* in the orthography of Jewish texts. In vv. 2-3 and 5-6 the scribe writes this verb form with a final -*t*, that gives a feminine participle in the construct state, barely understandable in the context. He possibly copied onto the participle the regular final -*t* of the 3rd feminine singular perfect of the beginning of the lines (*azlaṯ* "she went"). The verb derives from Greek *peisai* 'to persuade' and is generally used in Jewish Aramaic in the basis form *p''al* with the meaning 'to persuade, reconcile'. Curiously, Lieber (2018: 150 n. 14) follows Kister (2008: 177) and translates the participle with the meaning that it has in Classical Syriac in the *af''el* causative form 'to persuade, beseech, plea'.

[17] In this poem the opening formulas that divide each verse in two couplets begin with the two first letters of the alphabet *alef* and *beth*.

[18] Rodrigues Pereira (1997) has been a pioneer in the formal comparative study of Late Aramaic poetry. See, more recently, Münz-Manor (2010 and 2013), and Lieber (2016a), widening the scope of the comparison to Christian Greek texts.

show typical rhetorical devices — such as ethopoea, the question and answer pattern, anaphora and structuring formulas — and the pedagogical function of (para-)liturgical hymns in Late Aramaic literatures.

Lieber (2016a) compares the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poem on *Jochebed's Search* with other Jewish (Hebrew) and Christian (Syriac and Greek) texts on maternal grief and the sons' preoccupation for the mothers: Jochebed, mother of Moses, Sarah, mother of Isaac, and Mary mother of Jesus. As is the case in Syriac dialogue poems, a close comparative reading of the texts — especially the two anonymous Hebrew poems on Moses and the Aramaic *Jochebed's Search* — reveals that implicit and explicit dialogues are instrumental in putting gender confrontation on stage. "These poems suggest male expectations of extreme maternal mourning, but they then counter those assumptions with depictions of women displaying stubbornness and resilient control" (Lieber 2016a: 277).

4. The Texts

Brock (1983b) published the East-Syriac version of the dialogue poem of *Mary and the Gardener* on the basis of the ms. Cambridge Add. 2820 (C). In the present paper, a Sureth version is published of the same text, as preserved in a miscellaneous multilingual manuscript of the Berlin Sachau collection: Berlin 134 (Sachau 336), ff. 89v-90v (henceforth S).[19] For comparative purposes, the Classical Syriac text is published here, in the right column below, on the basis of the collation of five manuscript witnesses:

> A = Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh 13 (Alqosh, Iraq, 1679), ff. 37r-37v[20]
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> B = Baghdad Archibishopric of the Church of the East 6 (1719?), pp. 63-64[21]
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> C = Cambridge Add. 2820 (Telkepe 1881), ff. 52v-53v
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> M = Mangeš (Iraq), Mar Gīwargīs Church 7 (20th century), f. 75r[22]

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[19] Sureth is the autoglottonym used for spoken and written Christian varieties of the language group that dialectologists label as North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic. The content of the ms. Berlin 134 (Sachau 336) is described in Mengozzi (2018: 77-78). A digital copy of the manuscript is available in the website of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Germany): Sammlung von Gedichten, Hochzeitsliedern und Geschichten, 1883.

[20] DCA 13 in HMML data-base. A digital copy of the manuscript can be seen in the virtual Reading Room of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota).

[21] The ms. was photographed in the context of a 2005 project for the preservation and documentation of Syriac manuscripts (Kaufhold 2006). Since the folios of this manuscript are not numbered, I refer to page numbers as given in the jpeg file names.

[22] MGCCM 7 in HMML data-base. A digital copy of the manuscript can be seen in the virtual Reading Room of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota).

V = Vatican Syr. 188 (sine data, perhaps 18th century), ff. 54r-54v

All witnesses preserve the first eighteen verses, with a low degree of textual variation. B has ten other verses, whereas C and the Sureth version (S) have eight additional verses quite different from those preserved in B. The discovery of other versions and copies will probably shed more light on the history of this text. Since B and C preserve more or less the same text of vv. 20-22, it may be that vv. 19-26 in C and S and vv. 19-28 in B are variants of an archetypal text that contained more than eighteen verses, i.e., the full alphabetic acrostic and perhaps a couple of closing verses.

For the present edition, B has been used as a base text of vv. 1-18, whereas a synoptic text of C (in the middle column) and B is given for vv. 19-26/28. Variants are recorded in the footnotes. When the reading of all other manuscripts is preferable, the variant of B is put in the footnote. I opt for the numbering of the couplets adopted by Brock (1983b) for the edition of C. In the Classical text, the alphabetic acrostic marks the couplets 3-24. However, the rhyme pattern (A A -li -nā) suggests pairing the couplets in quatrains of seven syllable lines, which is the typical stanzaic structure of the *soghithā* meter.

None of the collated texts is the Classical Syriac Vorlage that the author of S translated into the vernacular. In 6b and 11a the Sureth translator appears to render the text as preserved by all manuscripts except B. On the contrary, in 8b, 9b, 14b, 18b the Sureth version reflects a text similar to B in contrast with all the other manuscripts. S translates a text of v. 19 that corresponds to B, whereas C has a completely different version of this verse.[23] In 20a C and S have 'woman', where B had 'Mary'. For no apparent reason 20b is completely different in B, C and S. In vv. 23-26 S clearly follows a text similar to C. The line 27a of B is the text of line 23a in C and S.

The Sureth version is generally quite faithful. Nevertheless, eight syllable lines — possibly compatible with the melody according to which the hymn is supposed to be sung — occur from time to time and the rhyme pattern of the original (A A -li -nā) tends to become *A A A -nā* in the poetic translation. The alphabetic acrostic of the Classical Syriac *soghithā* is preserved only in vv. 4, 6, 8, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, where the vernacular uses the same word or root of the original in the classical language. In 1d, probably for metrical reasons, the author of S omitted 'my son', that identifies Mary

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[23] In line 19b of C we find the adjective *bthulāyā* 'virginal', that Brock (1983, 233) has not "noticed in any text that can be dated definitely before the sixth century". Its occurrence led Brock (1983, 226 n. 8) to deem an earlier date of the text unlikely. It now appears, from B and S, that a sub-archetype of the poem existed in which this relatively late form does not occur at all.

as the mother of Jesus from the very beginning of the text.[24] Metrical reasons probably led the translator to introduce a dubious enjambment in 3b-4a ("He said to her / in the garden"), that displaces the adverbial of place ("in the garden") out of the question that the Lord asks Mary: "What are you looking for today in the garden?".

Possibly confused by the ungenerous, somewhat rude comment that Jesus alias the gardener addresses to his mother ("How you weary me with your voice(s), how you vex me with your words!"), all scribes of the collated Syriac witnesses and the author of S or its Vorlage would seem to attribute v. 13 to Mary, who is expected to speak to the gardener using masculine pronominal forms. In fact, in Classical Syriac feminine and masculine enclitic pronouns and suffix pronouns attached to plural nouns are homophones in the second person singular (… -at … -ayk 'you… your…') and can be distinguished only at the level of orthography, that requires the feminine forms be marked with a silent -y at the end. The scribe of B has a regular feminine form only for m'iqat(y) 'you (f.) vex'. Brock (1983b, 228) restores the feminine spelling of all pronominal endings in his reconstructed text of v. 13. The verbal forms and suffix pronouns in Sureth (… -et … -ukh) are unequivocally masculine, at the levels of both phonology and orthography, which compels listeners and readers of S to attribute this verse to Mary and not to the gardener.

The author of S or its Vorlage is probably wrong in a couple of other passages, especially in the last verses. In 8a I propose inserting kemrat 'you (f.) say' to complete the translation of the Syriac text and the seven syllable meter of the line. I am inclined to think that ettēh 'his church' in 21a is a scribal mistake rather than a textual variant of yemmēh 'his mother', which makes much better sense in the context and correctly translates the Classical Syriac text as preserved by B and C. In 22b the translator (mis)read as ܘܠܐ ܡܚܒܠ 'uninjured' a text similar to ܠܥܠ ܡܢ ܟܝܢܐ 'transcending nature', a standard theological formula that occurs in 22b in both B and C, in B also in 20a. In 23a S reads as šem'ēṯ "I heard" a form like šem'aṯ "she heard" of C.

The scribe of S occasionally uses a classicizing spelling, with final silent y, for the 2nd singular subject endings — 7a-b d-yad'at(y), k-khazyat(y) — which is unusual in Sureth manuscripts of northern Iraq. They parallel the 1st singular dative endings in the preceding and following verses and restore, albeit only at the graphical level, a kind of visual rhyme: lā ẓalmet-ti, lā ṭardet-ti, et-ti (5a-6a), ṭleb-li (ergative construction), bed ya(h)ḇel-li (8).

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[24] However, the same expression ("my son") is used in the East-Syriac hymn O gannānā, where Mary Magdalene is speaking.

ܕܘܡܪܐ ܚܕܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܘܡܕܒܚ | ܐܣܕܪܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܘܡܣܢܚܡܐ[25]

(S)   (C)   (B)

ܕܡܘܬܒܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܦܕܐ.	ܬܡܘܬܒܬܐ ܕܝܕܐ ܝܦܕܐ.
ܕܒܡܠܟܐ ܡܕܒܚ ܠܟܝܕ ܒܚܕܐ.	ܝܗܘ ܡܕܒܚ ܝܕ ܒܚܕܐ.

1

ܕܗܝ ܚܡܘܠܕ ܢܒܚܕܐ.	ܘܗܡܕܐ ܐܘܗ ܕܗܡ ܡܣܘܐ ܠܒ.[26]
ܠܩܘܕ ܕܝܠܗ ܚܠܝܠܟܬܐ ✠	ܠܟܝܕ ܘܠܩܘܕ ܕܝܠܗ ܬܚܢܐ ܐܢܕ.

2

ܗܝ ܬܗܡܠܝܒ ܬܡܡܘܓܘܟܗ.	ܐܒܗ ܟܬܢܐ ܝܗܡܣܘܒ ܟܗ.[27]
ܠܢܬܗ ܗܕܝ ܘܡܕܒܢܟܗ.	ܗܕܝ ܘܟܬܢܐ ܘܝܗܝܕ ܟܗ.

3   ܐ

ܬܝܗ ܠܚܒܐ ܘܚܡܬܝܕܐ.	ܬܝܗ ܠܚܒܐ ܐܢܡܗܐ ܠܟܠܕ ܠܒ.
ܗܒܝ ܚܒܬܐ ܬܙܘ ܝܙܝܕܐ ✠	ܗܬܢܐ ܬܟܒܗܡܕ[28] ܢܘܗܬܢܐ.

4   ܒ

ܬܗܡܠܝܒ ܟܐ ܬܟܠܥܝܗܒ.	ܟܬܢܐ ܟܐ ܗܝܠܟ ܘܒܢܝܕ.
ܘܡܝܚܗܬܢܘܘ ܟܐ ܝܬܘܕܗܒ.	ܘܗܡ ܟܒܗܝܗ ܟܐ ܗܝܕܘܒܢܝܕ.

5   ܓ

ܕܝܢܕ ܦܝܕܐ ܐܝܢܐ ܝܗܒ.	ܕܝܢܕ ܦܝܕܐ ܬܝܟܗܬ[29] ܢܒܝܗ ܠܒ.
ܠܟܒܕ ܗܝܗ ܟܐ ܚܝܠܠܟܬܐ ✠	ܠܟܒܕ ܗܝܗ ܟܐ ܬܚܢܐ ܐܢܕ.[30]

6   ܕ

ܬܐܘ ܘܬܢܐ ܗܐܠܟܕ ܕܝܢܘܕܝܗܕ.	ܗܝ ܘܬܢܐ ܗܐܠܟܐ ܕܗܝܕܒܝܢ.
ܘܩܝܕܐ ܬܟܒܗܐ ܟܐ ܚܕܘܡܗܕ.	ܘܩܝܕܐ ܬܟܒܬܐ ܟܐ ܥܝܣܒܝܢ.

7   ܗ

ܘܐܝܕܝܘ ܐܢܢܐ <ܝܝܗܕܕܘܗܒ>.	ܘܐܝܣܟܢܐ[31] ܐܗܕܐ ܐܝܥܗܕ ܠܒ.
ܘܩܝܕܐ ܬܟܒܗܘܘ ܚܠܝܠܟܬܐ ✠	ܘܩܝܕܐ ܬܟܒܗܡܕ ܢܘܗܬܢܐ.[32]

8   ܘ

ܗܐܠܟܕ ܕܝܕܝܗ ܗܕ ܕܝܒ.	ܘܘܗ ܕܝܗܝܕ ܟܬܢܐ.
ܘܩܝܕܐ ܐܗܝ ܕܝܟܠܝܬܟܠܝܒ.	ܘܩܝܕܐ ܕܗܟܠܘܗܒ ܗܝܡܒܬܐ ܐܢܕ.[33]

9   ܙ

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[25] A, C: ܐܣܕܪܐ ܕܡܣܢܚܡܐ; V: ܐܣܕܪܐ.

[26] V: ܘܗܡܕܐ ܐܘܗ ܕܗܡ ܡܣܘܐ ܠܒ.

[27] C: ܠܒ; Brock (1983: 227) corrected ܟܗ as attested in the other mss.

[28] V: ܬܟܢܗܡܕ.

[29] V: ܬܟܒܗܘ.

[30] B: ܢܝܘܟܢܕ.

[31] A: ܘܐܝܣܟܢ ܐܢܒ.

[32] B: ܘܩܝܕܐ ܬܟܒܗܘܗ ܬܚܢܬ.

[33] B: ܘܩܝܕܐ ܐܘܗ ܕܝܠܗ ܬܚܢܬ.

10	ܣ	ܡܿܛܝܼܬ ܗܝܼܕܹܝܢ ܒܢܹܘܙܼܠܒ.[34]	ܢܝܼܒ ܒܚܼܪ ܝܼܕ ܢܲܩܝܼܠܒ.
		ܝܼ܆[35] ܒܣܼܘܘܿܗ ܦܝܼܟܢܼܬ.[36]	ܝܼ܆ ܢܝܲܘܣܝܿܗ ܚܿܦܣ ܢܼܬܖ ܀
11	ܝܕ	ܗܝܼܠܒܼܖ ܐܼܢ[37] ܘܿܝ ܦܼܪܕܼܪ.	ܒܓܼܗܼܪ ܢܕ ܦܼܪܕܿܖ ܐܕܡܒܼܕ.
		ܕܢܼܐܼܘܿܖ ܚܟܼܘܗܣ ܩܝܼܠܘܗ ܕܘܡܿܕܖ.	ܕܢܼܝܼܕܿܝ ܝܝܼܗ ܠܟܠܒܠܝܼܕ.
12	ܝܒ	ܢܘܿܟܢܼܬ[38] ܘܓܕܒܝܼܙܿܖ ܟܼܒ.	ܚܝܼܘܕܝܼ ܕܢܼܘܗ ܒܢܡܒܝܼܕ.
		ܒܿܕܿܖ[39] ܣܼܘܘܿܗ ܗܒ ܒܼܢܼܕ.	ܥܠܒܿܖ ܐܟܕ ܒܘܒܿܗ ܗܒ ܒܼܢܼܕ ܀
13	ܨ	ܚܦܿܖ ܗܟܠܝܼܗ[40] ܟܼܒ ܒܼܒܼܕ ܒܠܟܿܬܝ.[41]	ܗܿܢܖ ܚܗܒܼܒܼܘܗܿܒ ܒܠܣܼܘܘܿ.
		ܘܒܼܓܿܖ ܗܕܒܒܼܗ[42] ܟܼܒ ܒܣܼܟܠܒܝܼ.[43]	ܘܚܗܒܒܼܝܼܖܿܒ ܒܘܿܝܟܼܠܘܼܘܿ.
14	ܝܕ	ܟܼܢܖܖ ܒܥܼܒܼܗܣܼܘܗ ܗܠܟܼܒ ܟܼܒ.	ܗܓܘܒܒܼܠܒ ܒܼܢܼܖ ܗܗܘܒܥܼܠܘܿ.
		ܒܝܼܢܼܬ ܣܼܓܘܿܗ[44] ܢܘܟܼܖ ܐܿܢܼܪ.	ܒܒܼܘܿܒܿܖ ܝܼܕ ܘܟܼܒ ܒܥܼܪ ܀
15	ܝܗ	ܗܿܢܼܪ ܒܟܼܒܼܣܼܗܕ ܕܗ ܒܼܥܼܣܼܗܿܖ.	ܗܼܢܼܒ ܚܒܼܢܼܗܿܡ ܢܼܪ ܒܓܼܗܿܖ.
		ܒܼܢܼܪ ܒܥܼܣܼܘܿܕ ܒܠܟܼܣܼܗܿܖ.	ܒܼܢܼܬ ܗܒ ܒܼܥܼܘܿܕ ܒܠܟܼܢܿܗܖ.
16	ܞ	ܒܘܿܝܒ ܗܗ ܒܼܢܟܠܘܗܣ ܗܓܼܢܟܗܣ[45] ܟܼܒ.	ܕܝܼܝܼܗ ܚܼܢܼܘܿܒܿܖ ܒܼܢܼܬܼܗܿܖ.
		ܗܣܼܒ ܒܼܓܼܕܿܖ ܚܝܟܼܢܼܪ ܗܿܢܼܪ.	ܗܣܼܒ ܚܝܟܠܒܼܣܼܗܿܖ ܐܿܢܼܪ ܀
17	ܗ	ܗܿܬܩܼܪ ܥܣܒܼܠܒܼܝ ܢܼܗܣܼܘܿܖ.	ܗܿܬܩܼܖ ܟܝܼܒܼܕ ܢܼܗܣܼܘܿܖ.
		ܘܗܿܘܿܖ ܒܼܗܒܣ ܠܟܼܠܟܼܪ ܦܼܣܼܘܿܖ.[46]	ܘܚܿܘܿܒܼܕ ܠܟܼܠܟܼܪ ܦܼܣܼܘܿܖ.
18	ܝܚ	ܒܠܕ ܗܢܡܘܗ ܗܠܟܼܒ ܘܦܼܢܥܗ[47] ܟܼܒ.	ܠܝܣܢܼܗܘܗ ܒܗܒܒܼܣܼܒܼ ܢܼܗܣܼܘܿܖ.
		ܕܝܼܢܒܼܝ ܢܼܒܼ ܘܗܕܘܿܒܢܼܖ ܐܿܢܼܪ.[48][49]	ܕܝܼ ܒܒܗܟܝܖ ܒܼܗܕܘܿܒܢܝ ܐܿܢܼܪ ܀

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[34] V: ܒܝܼܢܘܿܒ ܟܼܒ ܗܒܝܼܠܒܼ ܒܝܼܢܘܿܒ ; A: ܒܢܼܘܿܒ ܟܼܒ.

[35] B: ܝܣܘ.

[36] A, M: ܦܝܼܟܢܼ ܐܿܢܼܪ.

[37] B: ܗܒܝܼܘ ; M: ܗܼܢܼܪ.

[38] A, C, M: ܢܘܟܼܢܼ ܐܿܢܼܪ.

[39] V: ܒܿܒܼܪ.

[40] B: ܗܟܠܝܼܗܣ ; M: ܗܟܠܝܼܗܣ.

[41] B: ܒܠܟܼܝ.

[42] M: ܗܕܒܼܗ.

[43] B: ܘܒܼܓܿܖ ܗܕܒܼܒܼܗܣ ܟܼܒ ܒܣܼܟܠܬܝ.

[44] A, C, M, V: ܒܼܓܿܒܿܖ ܣܼܓܘܿܗ.

[45] V: ܗܓܼܢܟܠܕ ܐܿܢܼܪ.

[46] B: ܗܣܒܼܓܝ ܢܼܗܣܼܘܿܖ ܘܿܢܗܒ. / ܗܟܼܬܝܼܖ ܣܗܒܒܝ ܗܼܗܟܼܒܝ.

[47] A, C, M, V: ܘܦܼܢܥ ܐܿܢܼܪ.

[48] V: ܗܕܘܿܒܢܼܖ ܐܿܢܼܪ.

[49] B: ܒܝܼܗܘܗܖ ܟܼܒ ܒܼܗ ܗܕܘܿܒܢܝܖ.

19	ܩ
20	ܝ
21	ܟ
22	ܠ
23	ܡ
24	ܢ
25	
26	
27	
28	

.. ܥܠܡ ..

5. Translation of the Sureth version (S)

Another hymn on Our Lord and Mary[51]

1   On Sunday in the morning
     Mary came to the grave
2   and said: "Who will show me
     my Lord,[52] whom I am looking for?"

3   Our Lord revealed himself to her[53]
     like a gardener. He spoke to her[54]
4   in the garden and asked her:
     "Whom are you looking for at this time?"[55]
5   "Gardener, do not treat me unjustly
     and do not chase me out of your garden,
6   since I have a fruit here[56]
     and I do not ask[57] for anything else but it."
7   "You should know that in this season
     there are no fruits in the gardens
8   and you, <you say> to me today:[58]
     that you want a fruit today[59]?"
9   "You should know my secret:
     I thought that fruit that I asked for
10   will give me life,[60]

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[51] Cl. Syr. rubrics have: Another [hymn] for (the feast of) resurrection.

[52] Cl. Syr.: my son and my Lord.

[53] Cl. Syr.: appeared to her.

[54] Cl. Syr.: He answered and said to her.

[55] Cl. Syr.: Woman, reveal to me / what are you looking for today in the garden!

[56] Cl. Syr.: in it; V: in your garden.

[57] Cl. Syr.: I seek; B: I do not know.

[58] Cl. Syr.: and you say to me though.

[59] B: 'I want a fruit in your garden'.

if I happen to see it.”

11   “Woman,[61] what[62] is this fruit

about which you spoke? Reveal it to me!”[63]

12   “I know that it is real.

It is higher than eye can see.”[64]

13   “How you weary[65] me with your voice

and how you annoy me with your flattering[66]!

14   Reveal to me where you removed it,

since I will go after it!”

15   “Whom[67] are you looking for, oh woman?

Life[68] in the Sheol that devours everything?

16   Me? To me are you asking

Him whom you are seeking?[69]

17   The guards took the swords

and they resemble rabid dogs![70]”

18   “About His resurrection reveal and explain to me

how he resurrected so that I will believe![71]”

19   “Desist from this thought

and renounce this search![72]

---

[60] Cl. Syr.: You should know, gardener, / that I hoped that the fruit / that I am trying to find (B: that I want) may give me life; V: You should know, gardener, / that the fruit that I am trying to find / may give me sure life.

[61] Cl. Syr.: girl.

[62] B: who.

[63] Cl. Syr.: about which you are saying wonderful things.

[64] Cl. Syr.: I know and it is clear to me / that it is higher than eye can see. V: bigger than eye can see.

[65] S: *kmağhetti < *ke-mağh(d)-et-li* (from Arabic جهد, fourth form, 'to weary out, *tourmenter*')? Maclean (1901: 155) gives *mğahed* 'to quarrel, dispute' from Arabic جهد in the third form.

[66] Cl. Syr.: with your words (B: voice).

[67] Cl. Syr.: what.

[68] Cl. Syr.: the living.

[69] Cl. Syr.: He about whom you are questioning me went out / from the grave this night.

[70] Cl. Syr.: The guards took the swords / and, look, they resemble rabid dogs! B: The guards were lying down and stood up. / They set seals and kept guard. See Matthew 28:4 for the guards lying down "as dead men" and Matthew 27:66 for the seal. Neither swords nor rabid dogs occur in the Gospels in this context.

[71] B: so that I will become a believer in Him!

20   Listen to me, oh woman[73],

        since there is nobody who knows where I am!"[74]

21   His resurrection bears witness to His mother[75]

        and His mother bears witness to His resurrection.

22   Height and depth bear witness to her[76].

        He was born and has risen uninjured. [77]

23   I heard His voice and doctrine

        "Mary, Mary" [was] his word.

24   "Come to my side, my Master!

        I carry my anguish in you.

25   Come to my side, son of Mary,

        as you came to Mary's side,

26   and with her show me the light

        of your resurrection at the end of time!"[78]

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[72] Here S translates a text similar to B, whereas C reads: He flew down from highest heavens / and dwelt in a virginal womb.

[73] B: Mary.

[74] B: Hearken my voice, Mary, and listen to me! / He was born and has risen transcending nature. C: Give ear to my voice, woman, and listen / so that I may disclose to you concerning Him!

[75] The ms. of S has "his church". Cl. Syr.: to her who gave birth to Him.

[76] Cl. Syr.: to me.

[77] B and C: He was born and has risen from death transcending nature.

[78] C (Brock's translation):

        23   She heard his voice and recognized him

                for he repeated the words 'Mary, Mary'

        24   [Mary] "Come to me, my Lord and my Master,

                for I now forget my anguish."

        25   Come in your compassion, o Son of Mary,

                just as you came to Mary;

        26   and with you, at your resurrection, let your light shine forth

                on me and on him who composed this.

B:

        23   Glory be to Him who has risen from the grave,

                as he had truthfully said.

        24   What he professed is still right for me,

                every time and at all times."

        25   Resurrection, life and renewal

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	may be to the composer of the hymn,
26	those who listen to me
	and those who profess this word.
27	She heard His voice, recognized Him
	and hastened to touch Him,
28	but He replied: "Do not touch me,
	since I am hastening to go to the side of my Father!"

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Alessandro Mengozzi is Professor of Semitics at the University of Turin, where he teaches Semitic Philology and Classical Syriac. His main research interests are Modern Aramaic languages and literatures and late East-Syriac poetry.

He can be reached at: alessandro.mengozzi@unito.it.