

(Continued.)

No.	Meter	Meter II	Rhyme	Rhyme II	Genre	Length (lines)	Source
58	ramal	dimeter	l	Xāli	‘Udhri	5	IDI
59	ṭawīl	tetrameter catalectic	l	X3×2li	‘Udhri	5	IDI
60	sarī	trimeter	l	Xāli	‘Udhri	4	IDI
61	ṭawīl	tetrameter acatalectic	l	X3Xli	‘Udhri	6	IDI
62	mutaqārib	tetrameter acatalectic	m	X3Xāmā	‘Udhri	4	IDI
63	basīl	tetrameter acatalectic	m	X3X3mū	‘Udhri	5	IDI
64	khafif	trimeter acatalectic	m	XaXāmū	‘Udhri	4	IDI
65	sarī	trimeter	m	Xmihī	‘Udhri	5	IDI
66	khafif	dimeter acatalectic	m	Xtumū	‘Udhri	5	IDI
67	khafif	trimeter acatalectic	n	X3nhū	‘Udhri	5	IDI
68	khafif	trimeter acatalectic	n	Xaynī	‘Udhri	5	IDI
69	ṭawīl	tetrameter acatalectic	w	X3xwā	‘Udhri	5	IDI

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ARTICLE

Becoming the Mu‘allim: how tradition and innovation made a Nahḍa icon

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Abstract

One cannot speak of the nineteenth-century Beirut *Nahḍa* and not mention Mu‘allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–83). This article examines how al-Bustānī utilized the Arabic oratorical tradition and the innovative medium of print to create the Mu‘allim brand. The first section analyses his *Khuṭba fi Ādāb al-‘Arab* (An Oration on the Culture of the Arabs, 1859) to illustrate how he operationalized the Arabic rhetorical style to position himself as an eloquent public intellectual. This article next discusses how he built parts of this lecture on *sariqāt* (literary thefts/legitimate borrowings) from his contemporaries and participated in the collective practice of knowledge production. Lastly, al-Bustānī’s advertising tactics in print to promote his public persona are explored. This article demonstrates that al-Bustānī successfully established himself as the Mu‘allim by coupling the enduring cultural power of Arabic oration with the modern might of print.

Keywords: Arabic; The Beirut *Nahḍa*; Buṭrus al-Bustānī; Oration; Print; Rhetoric

Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–83) is synonymous with the nineteenth-century Beirut *Nahḍa*. He opened the first transconfessional school, established several periodicals, actively participated in learned societies, argued for a civil society based on a shared cultural heritage, authored a modern Arabic dictionary, and compiled the first Arabic encyclopaedia. For his contributions to education, journalism, language, and society, historians label him “A man ahead of his time” and “The spirit of the age”.¹ The man himself, however, elected Mu‘allim (Teacher/Master) – an epithet that now appears inseparable from his name. This article examines how al-Bustānī created the Mu‘allim brand by utilizing the Arabic oratorical tradition and the innovative medium of print.

The *Nahḍa* is “a loose construct with a range of meanings”, as Ayalon pithily stated.² There is no scholarly consensus on how to translate the term which broadly “implies an awareness of the dynamic process of social, cultural and political change that the

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¹ Adel Beshara (ed.), *Butrus al-Bustani: Spirit of the Age* (Melbourne: Phoenix Publishing, 2014) and Yūsuf Quzmā Khūrī, *Rajul Sābiq li-‘Ashrih: al-Mu‘allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī, 1819–1883* (Beirut: Bisān, 1995).

² Ami Ayalon, *The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 18.