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edited by

Joseph E. Lowry and Shawkat M. Toorawa

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ARABIC BELLES LETTRES

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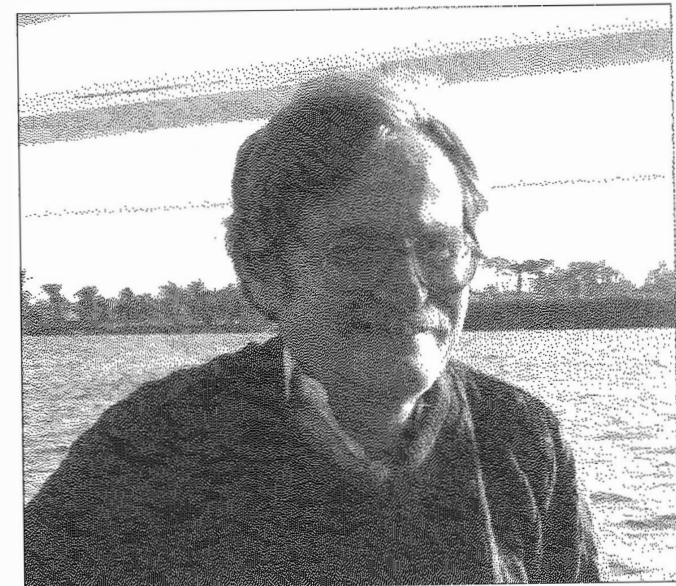
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Cover image: Al-Ḥārith attending the banquet at the chief of the beggars. Maqāmah 30. From *Al-Maqāmāt* (Settings or Sessions); author: Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Uthmān al-Ḥarīrī, Iraq, ca. 1240. (Courtesy Bibliothèque National de France, Ms. ARABE 3929, Folio 120; via Art Resource.)

*For Everett
on His Seventieth Birthday
and on the Occasion of His Retirement*



كلّ شيء إذا كثّر رخص
إلاّ الأدب

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Editors' Preface

In 2017, we presented a Festschrift volume to our Doktorvater, Everett Rowson. *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought*, handsomely produced by Brill, included twenty-five contributions by colleagues and current and former students. As we ourselves were unable to contribute at the time, we resolved to produce a modest follow-up volume. Like its predecessor, this volume features colleagues and former students, ranges widely in recognition of Everett's broad interests and scholarship, and includes a bibliography of that scholarship. We have organized the ten articles into three heuristic rubrics—early narratives, medieval authors, and modern Egypt—and, in a slight departure from convention, included among them one of Everett's own articles, a much-cited 1996 piece on al-Tawhīdī and his predecessors.

We are grateful to the Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften in Frankfurt for permission to reprint the Tawhīdī piece; to Daniel Kaylor for preparing it for this volume; to Rebekah Zwanzig for preparing the index; and to the following for their input: Sean Anthony, Kristen Brustad, Elizabeth Holt, Matthew Keegan, James Montgomery, and Dwight Reynolds. Our thanks go also to our dear friends on the RAIS team: designer Susanne Wilhelm, publisher Billie Jean Collins, and marketer and distributor Ian Stevens.

Joseph E. Lowry
Shawkat M. Toorawa

IBN FĀRIS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MAQĀMAH REVISITED

Maurice A. Pomerantz and Bilal W. Orfali

Literary history knows perhaps no question more difficult than that of change.¹ How do new literary forms emerge and why? Are they products that coalesce slowly over time, borrowing their elements and attributes from preexisting materials? Or are they transmuted and transformed under the intense power of an individual creative intelligence? Why do these moments of innovation matter in literary history? What is at stake in declaring something the first novel, *maqāmah*, or sonnet?²

Among the many genres of Arabic literature, the question of the invention of the *maqāmah* has perhaps attracted the most attention. Unlike the *qaṣīdah*, the *ghazal*, and the *risālah*, the *maqāmah* was a late arrival among the genres of Arabic literature. Because of this fact, scholars felt as if through consulting roughly contemporaneous texts, they could witness the genre in the making. This availability of the evidence made the story of the *maqāmah*'s invention a fertile site of scholarly speculation in the field of premodern Arabic literature.

The *maqāmah* genre thus became an important locus for thinking about issues of creativity and imitation in premodern Arabic literature during the early part of the last century. Zakī Mubārak writing in the journal *al-Muqataṭaf* was interested in demonstrating that al-Hamadhānī was not in fact the originator of the *maqāmah* genre.³ Drawing on a statement of al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022) that al-Hamadhānī had "imitated" (and potentially stolen from) a previous lost work of Ibn Ḍurayd (d. 312/924), known as the *Forty Stories* (*arbaʿūn ḥadīth*) which in turn had many similar tales to those found in the *Sessions* (*Amāli*) of Ibn Ḍurayd's disciple, al-Qālī (d. 356/967), Mubārak seemed poised to dethrone

1. The authors would like to thank Prof. Ramzi Baalbaki and the anonymous reviewer for offering numerous helpful suggestions and corrections.

2. On these questions and others, see D. Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore, 1992).

3. A. F. L. Beeston, "The Genesis of the Maqāmāt Genre," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 2 (1971), 1-12, at 1-2.

Hamadhānī as an innovator. Mubārak was sharply criticized for this assertion by Mustafā Sādiq al-Rāfi‘i in a subsequent issue of the same journal.

While this controversy surrounding al-Hamadhānī’s alleged borrowings from Ibn Durayd “has long since died out,” questions of al-Hamadhānī’s status as an innovator remained of interest to later scholars.⁴ A. F. L. Beeston in 1971 downplayed the fact that the plotlines of many *maqāmahs* seemed to have been borrowed from other types of *majālīs* literature. Nonetheless, he sought to define al-Hamadhānī’s place as an innovator based on his use of rhymed prose (*ṣaj‘*) and his “frank admission that his stories are fictional.”⁵ Through these descriptions of the innovative in al-Hamadhānī’s text, Beeston hoped to discover why al-Ḥarīrī had attributed to al-Hamadhānī such an important role as an originator of the form.⁶ Yet, Beeston did not consider why such a question might have been of interest to al-Ḥarīrī. For what sort of readers might al-Ḥarīrī’s invocation of his indebtedness to al-Hamadhānī matter?

Claims of originality and theft are valuations of authors, but also point to ways that critics of the time understood relationships between texts.⁷ In recent years, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila and Philip Kennedy have looked beyond the simplistic nature of the earlier debate on originality and borrowing to ask the more interesting question of what al-Ḥusrī could have meant by stating that al-Hamadhānī had produced a poetic contrafaction (*mu‘āraḍah*) of the work of Ibn Durayd. What were the similarities that al-Ḥusrī noted between Ibn Durayd’s writing and the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī?

Hämeen-Anttila explored this possibility by examining the surviving work of Ibn Durayd, known as “The Description of Rain” (*Waṣfal maṭar wa-l-ṣaḥāb*). He concludes that the two works share numerous similarities and shows the importance of Ibn Durayd’s work in its own right.⁸ Philip Kennedy, in his investigation of an anecdote related by Ibn Durayd involving Abū Nuwās’s finding love on the pilgrimage, found similar cause to revisit the debate from a new vantage point. Kennedy writes that this “long-drawn-out narrative of a largely jocular tone that holds us in suspense” possesses “formal and stylistic aspects” that are “redolent of the *Maqāma*.”⁹ For both scholars, the question is not so much undermining al-Hamadhānī’s authorship of the *Maqāmāt*, but rather as seeing the

4. J. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, 68 (Wiesbaden, 2002).

5. Beeston, “Genesis,” 8–9.

6. Cf. al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 11 (Beirut, 1980): *dhikr al-maqāmāt allatī abda’ahā Badī‘ al-Zamān*.

7. Heinrichs’s work on the concept of *sariqah* shows well how this term encompasses a whole range of ideas which we might be more inclined to call intertextuality: W. Heinrichs, “An Evaluation of *Sariqa*,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5/6 (1987), 357–68.

8. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 72. He identifies the following lines of similarity: (1) rhymed prose, (2) *isnād*, (3) some kind of story, (4) philological interest, (5) ragged but eloquent hero, (6) first-person narration, (7) travel theme, (8) encounters are standing ones as opposed to sitting learned sessions.

9. P. F. Kennedy, “Love in the Time of Pilgrimage or A Lost *Maqāma* of Ibn Durayd?,” in *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose*, ed. L. Behzadi and V. Behmardi (Beirut, 2009), 77–99, at 88 and 93.

work as part of a larger development within the circles of *adab* and grammar from which al-Hamadhānī’s work seems to have sprung.

Ibn Fāris, al-Hamadhānī, and the *Maqāmāt*

In this article, which further broadens this field of inquiry, we explore an older claim about the *maqāmah*, namely, that the form was first created by the teacher of al-Hamadhānī, Abū l-Ḥusayn Ahmad Ibn Fāris ibn Zakariyyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Rāzī (d. 395/1005). We do so by considering a rare fragment of Ibn Fāris’s lost work, *Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl*. As we will argue, this work appears to share much with the *maqāma* genre. It is not to be confused with Ibn Fāris’s *al-Layl wa-l-nahār*.¹⁰

The hypothesis of Ibn Fāris’s role in the origins of the *maqāmah* predates the debate surrounding Ibn Durayd. Jurjī Zaydān (d. 1914) posited a prominent role for Ibn Fāris, imagining that al-Hamadhānī had borrowed his prose style from his teacher.¹¹ More recently, Hādī Ḥasan Ḥammūdī’s book, *al-Maqāmāt min Ibn Fāris ilā Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, revived this theory, arguing for Ibn Fāris’s influence and supposed precedence in the authorship of the *Maqāmāt*.¹²

The importance of Ibn Fāris in the career of his student was already underscored by his closest contemporaries. Al-Tha‘ālībī (d. 429/1037) states that Ibn Fāris had been the teacher of al-Hamadhānī prior to the latter’s departure from the city in 380/990.¹³ Al-Tha‘ālībī emphasizes the close relationship between the teacher and his student,

10. Ibn Fāris, *al-Layl wa-l-nahār*, ed. Ḥāmid Khaffāf (Beirut, 1993).

11. See H. Ḥ. Ḥammūdī, *Al-Maqāmāt min Ibn Fāris ilā Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* (Beirut, 1982), 26.

12. Ḥammūdī, 26. Ḥammūdī bases his claims for Ibn Fāris’s influence on Hamadhānī on seven main pieces of evidence:

(1) The four hundred *Maqāmāt* that al-Hamadhānī boasts to have authored must have been begun at the *majlis* of Ibn Fāris.

(2) Al-Hamadhānī praised Ibn Fāris in his letters.

(3) Al-Hamadhānī was proud of his knowledge of Ibn Fāris’s works, such as the *Mujmal al-lughah* his memory of which became a topic in his debate with Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī. He also imitated Ibn Fāris’s other books such as the *Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* and his *Amālī*.

(4) Al-Hamadhānī followed Ibn Fāris’s style in his poetry, and adopted several of Ibn Fāris’s critical ideas in his *maqāmahs*. Moreover, al-Hamadhānī would gloss his *maqāmāt* sometimes, which indicates his reliance on the same lexicographical methods as Ibn Fāris, such as the use of poetry to elucidate the meaning of rare words.

(5) Ibn Fāris had become famous as a teller of tales (*qaṣaṣ*, *ḥikāyāt*, *raqā‘iq*).

(6) Al-Tha‘ālībī describes Ibn Fāris as combining the mastery of a scholar with the *ẓarf* of poets and epistolographers, comparing him with notable literary figures.

(7) He argues that the character of ‘Isā ibn Hishām is a representation of al-Hamadhānī’s teacher, Ahmad ibn Fāris, in name, experiences, and qualities.

13. Al-Tha‘ālībī, *Yatimat al-dahr fī maḥāsini ahl al-‘aṣr*, ed. M. M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1956), iv, 257.

stating that he “took all that he [viz. Aḥmad Ibn Fāris] possessed—he exhausted his knowledge and dried up his ocean.”¹⁴

The two men also wrote letters to one another over the course of their lives.¹⁵ Moreover, there were even some premodern readers who did believe Ibn Fāris to have played a role in the creation of the *maqāmāh*. As Orfali and Pomerantz note, MS Aya Sofya 4283 (692/1225) contains the following introduction:

These *maqāmāt* were dictated by the teacher Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī in Nishāpūr and he mentioned that he had composed them to be uttered in the voice of Abū l-Faḥ al-Iskandarī and to have been related by ʿIsā ibn Hishām, whereas others have mentioned that they were composed by Abū l-Ḥusayn Ibn Fāris and the report concerning this has become widely known. (*hādhihi al-maqāmāt amlāhā al-ustādh Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī bi-Nisābūr wa-dhakara annahu ansha’ahā ‘alā lisān Abī l-Faḥ al-Iskandarī wa-rawāhā ‘an ʿIsā ibn Hishām wa-dhakara ghayruhu annahā min inshā’ Abī l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad Ibn Fāris wa-tawātara al-khabar bi-dhālik*).¹⁶

This introduction suggests that the claim that Ibn Fāris was in fact the author of the *Maqāmāt* appears to have been entertained by some scholars in the centuries immediately following its circulation and revived in the early twentieth century.

Ibn Fāris as an *Adīb* in the Fourth/Tenth Century

The reason for modern scholars’ reluctance to attend to Ibn Fāris’s importance in the genesis of the *maqāmāh* may relate to the survival of his work. Ibn Fāris has been known predominantly as the author of major works on the Arabic language, such as *Maqāyīs al-lughah* and *al-Mujmal fi l-lughah*¹⁷ and his *al-Ṣāhibī fi fiqh al-lughah*, dedicated to the Buyid vizier al-Ṣāhib ibn ʿAbbād and a major contribution to Arabic philology.¹⁸

Ibn Fāris’s interests went beyond the realm of language into *adab*. Al-Thaʿālibī describes him as if he were not only a lexicographer, but rather a major *adīb*.¹⁹ He also pre-

14. Al-Thaʿālibī, iv, 257; Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 21, notes the connection between the teacher and student stating “if we believe al-Thaʿālibī, the polymath Ibn Fāris taught everything he knew to al-Hamadhānī. Knowing the eminence of Ibn Fāris, though, this statement falls into the category of hyperbolic praise, not hard fact.”

15. Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, 21, who is rightly cautious about what one can deduce from the surviving evidence.

16. B. Orfali and M. Pomerantz, “Assembling an Author: On the Making of Al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt*,” in *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts*, 107–27, ed. L. Behzadi and J. Hämeen-Anttila (Bamberg, 2016), 120.

17. Ibn Fāris, *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lughah*, ed. ʿA. M. Hārūn (Cairo, 1972); Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal al-lughah*, ed. H. Ḥ. Hammūdī (Kuwait, 1985).

18. Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāhibī fi fiqh al-lughah wa-sunan al-ʿArab fi kalāmihā* (Cairo, 1977).

19. Ibn Fāris is compared to Ibn Lankak (d. ca. 360/970) in Baghdad; Ibn Khālawayh (d. 370/980) in

serves in his *Yātimat al-dahr* the text of a *risālah* of Ibn Fāris in which he defends the literary production of the poets’ of his own time.²⁰ The occasion for the authorship of the letter is the defense of a certain Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿIjlī who was attacked for attempting to assemble a *Ḥamāsah* of contemporary poets. Writing directly to his critic, Ibn Fāris first assails the logic of the attack—why should imitation (*muʿāraḍah*) be possible in fields like *fiqh* and *naḥw* and in many of the other technical disciplines (*ṣināʿāt*) but not in poetry? Ibn Fāris then supplies numerous examples demonstrating the excellence of contemporary poets, which well illustrate his capacious knowledge of the poetic works of the age. Al-Thaʿālibī includes this letter in the entry on Ibn Fāris, likely because it accords well with al-Thaʿālibī’s central aim of compiling an anthology of contemporary poets.

In addition to his forays into poetic criticism, Ibn Fāris also authored independent works of *adab*. His *Kitāb al-Layl wa-l-nahār* is a debate (*mufaḥkharah*), which Ibn Fāris allegedly composed extemporaneously (*irtijāl*) at the request of a young man from the province of Jibāl in Western Iran. The debate relies upon the use of logical proofs, poetry, anecdotes of the Arabs, and quotations from the Qurʾān, following roughly the pattern established by al-Jāhīz for such works.²¹

Ibn Fāris’s *Kitāb Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl*

Given the great speculation on Ibn Fāris’s possible relationship to the origins of al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt*, an important piece of evidence regarding this relationship has not yet been discussed in modern scholarship: Ibn Fāris’s composition of literary stories which he termed *qaṣaṣ* and *samar*.

An excerpt that is identified as part of Ibn Fāris’s *Kitāb Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* is preserved in Leipzig, Vollers 870. The manuscript is part of the Rifāʿiyya collection 354 f. 89v.²² This passage has long been known to Western scholars, having been first mentioned in an article by H. Thorbecke in 1875.²³ The manuscript is a *majmūʿah* that contains various works, among which are:

1. An index of the *masmūʿāt* of Abū Ḥusayn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn Ayyūb ibn al-Bazzāz (d. 492/1098)
2. A letter of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṣaqr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 498/1104)

al-Shām; Ibn ʿAllāf (d. 318/930) in Fārs; and Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī (d. 383/993) in Khurāsān. Only Ibn Khālawayh stands out as a grammarian and lexicographer. Whereas Ibn Lankak, Ibn ʿAllāf and al-Khwārazmī were known as either poets, or prose writers.

20. Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yātimat al-dahr*, iv, 401–5.

21. Ibn Fāris, *al-Layl wa-l-nahār*.

22. On this collection, see B. Liebrecht, *Die Rifāʿiyya aus Damaskus: Eine Privatbibliothek im Osmanischen Syrien und ihr kulturelles Umfeld* (Leiden, 2016).

23. H. Thorbecke, “Al-ʿAṣā’s Lobgedicht auf Muḥammad,” *Morgenländische Forschungen* 8 (1975), 233–60, at 242.

3. A poem of ‘Urwah ibn al-Ward al-‘Absī, compiled and related by ‘Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq al-Sikkīt (d. 243/857)
4. An *urjūzah* of Bashshār ibn Burd (d. 167/783)
5. *Kitāb al-Muqtadaḥ* by Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002)
6. Text of the *Burdah* by al-Būṣīrī (d. ca. 694/1294)
7. *Qaṣīdat Bānat Su‘ād* of Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr (d. first/seventh c.).
8. *Kitāb al-Muqni‘ fi al-naḥw* by Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih possibly composed ca. 240/854.²⁴
9. *Kitāb Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* composed by Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004)
10. Poems and stories relating to ‘Abū Dahbal al-Jumāhī (d. ca. 125/743)
11. ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Baghdādī’s (d. 390/999–1000) Commentary on the *Khuṭbah* of Ibn Qutaybah’s (d. 276/889) *Adab al-kātib*.

The *Kitāb Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* contains the poem of al-A‘shā Maymūn ibn Qays (d. after 629?) which is entitled *al-qaṣīdah al-nabawīyyah*.

Translation

Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān ibn Thābit said:

[al-]A‘shā of Qays came after the Prophet had made the *hijrah* and he praised the Prophet with the following ode:

1. Was it not pain that made your eyes shut at night, while you were sleepless like a man bitten by a snake?
2. But that was not because you were in love with women, for you had forgotten the friendship of Mahdad.²⁵
3. Rather, I see fate coming like a traitor who corrupts whatever my hands set straight.
4. Youth and old age, poverty and wealth! My God, how fickle is fate!

24. Possibly this person is identical with Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih al-Naṭṭāḥ al-Baṣrī. See F. Omar, “Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ,” *EI2*.

25. Al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo, 1970), ix, 125, states that Mahdad is the name of al-A‘shā’s beloved.

5. I spent my life gathering possessions as a child, youth and man; both when my hair turned white and as a beardless boy.
6. I tired out the swift she-camels that raced from Najīr (in the Ḥaḍramawt) to Ṣarkhad (in ‘Irāq).
7. Don’t ask after me. How many a questioner tries to find out about al-A‘shā by praising him.
8. O you who wish to know where my camel is headed, know that it has an appointment among the people of Yathrib.
9. She has two guardians, the North Star that does not set, and the Calf-star, when she travels by night.
10. In the heat of the day, she is like the chameleon whose neck is fixed facing the sun, yet she remains light of foot.
11. She moved her two hind legs striving for speed. She draws out her fore legs with flexibility, without stiffness.
12. You will hear no complaint from me of exhaustion, and you will not rest until you reach Muḥammad.
13. Whenever you set down your camel at the door of the sons of Ḥāshim, you find relief, and encounter the generosity from their many excellent qualities.
14. There is a Prophet who sees that which you do not. His fame, by my life, spreads throughout the lands high and low.
15. His giving of gifts never ceases. He is a generous man whose gift to-day does not prevent another tomorrow.
16. Is it true that you did not hear the admonitions of Muḥammad the Prophet of God when he delivered his message to the people and they bore witness to his prophethood?
17. Should you pass away without piety’s provision you will meet after your death one who had stored up good works.
18. And you will regret that you were not like him, and that you did not prepare the way that he had prepared.
19. So stay away from the corpses, and do not go near them. Don’t take an iron arrow shaft and spill animal blood to drink it.
20. Do not set up idols, and do not revere seeking a benefit. Worship God who is your Lord.

21. Do not ridicule a poor man who has tasted misfortune. Do not imagine that a man lives forever.

22. Pray in the evenings and in the mornings. Do not praise Satan, but God.

23. Do not approach your neighbor for she is not licit for you. Either marry her or keep far away.

He reported:

Al-A'shā approached Mecca, and he said, "Where is this young man from the sons of Hāshim who accompanies the wind?"²⁶

They said, "What do you want with him, Abū Baṣīr?"

He said, "I want to praise him, gain the benefit of his truth, and enter into his religion."

The people said, "By God, if the curses of Ḥassān [ibn Thābit] and al-A'shā are united with one another our reputations will be completely destroyed!"

Abū Jahl said, "I will deal with this fellow."

So he went to him and said, "O Abū Baṣīr, this man declares adultery and wine-drinking unlawful, and yet you can't do without these two things.

Do you wish us to give you some reward, so that your trip will not have been in vain, and so that you return this year, that you might see what happens and act accordingly?

His [Abū Jahl's] aim in [saying] that was for him to return where he might die [before the year was over], because he was elderly.

He said, "Yes."

So he was generous and gave him several youthful she-camels and he rode back on them. When he reached the region of the valley of Manfūḥah [the poet's home] his mount tread on him. His bones were broken, and he died. God then revealed concerning Abū Jahl [Q Furqān 25:55] "The disbeliever is ever a disbeliever against his Lord."

26. This seems to be a reference to the increasing fame of prophet.

Different Recensions of the Poem and Tale

Text of the Poem

This poem of al-A'shā Maymūn ibn Qays was first discussed by Thorbecke on the basis of MS Leiden 287 ff. 5v-8r.²⁷ The poem was included in the the *Dīwān sh'ir al-A'shā Maymūn ibn Qays ibn Jandal* compiled by Abū l-'Abbās Tha'lab (d. 291/904) upon which Rudolf Geyer's edition is based, and was thus included in the poet's *dīwān* edited by Geyer in the main on the basis of an Escorial MS. copied in 661/1262.²⁸ Geyer stated that his predecessors Casiri and Derenbourg believed the commentary belonged to the famed Tha'lab himself. Geyer, however, after further study, concluded that the commentary did not belong to the time of Tha'lab and instead proposed that the author of the commentary in the manuscript was an Andalusī scholar active at the end of the third/ninth-beginning of the fourth/tenth centuries.²⁹

As for the authenticity of this poem in praise of the Prophet, W. Caskel in the *EI2* makes no mention of al-'Ashā's panegyric, presumably counting it among the "verse which is not authentic" in the first part of the poet's *dīwān*. By contrast, Régis Blachère, while not fully committing to the reality of al-A'shā's visit to Mecca, nonetheless cites it as a possibility.³⁰

Did You Not Shut Your Eyes?

All of the different versions of this tale agree that al-A'shā went to Medina with the intention of visiting the Prophet. The *qaṣīdah* opens in verses 1-2 with a *nasīb* in which the famed lover recounts his despair at the loss of his beloved. He then turns in vv. 3-5 to decry fate, which has determined the course of his life. The travels and exploits of the poet mentioned in vv. 5-6 become the prehistory of his visit to Yathrib.

The arrival of al-A'shā is similar to that of a *Jāhili* poet at the court of an earthly king. After a short *raḥīl* section in which al-A'shā praises his mount for its travel through the heat of day and its carrying on through the night, the poet describes his arrival at the Banū Hāshim. Verses 13 and 15 frame the Prophet's excellence in terms of his worldly gifts and generosity, emphasizing that al-A'shā has come seeking to gain a reward for his ode of praise.

The poet however acknowledges the difference between the Prophet and an earthly king, for the poet announces that the Prophet's fame has been spreading beyond Medina,

27. Thorbecke, "Al-A'shā's Lobgedicht," 242.

28. Al-A'shā, *Gedichte von Abū Baṣīr Maimūn ibn Qais al-A'shā, nebst Sammlungen von Stücken anderer Dichter des gleichen Beinamens*, ed. R. Geyer (London, 1928), xvii. In our edition, we relied on al-A'shā, *Dīwān al-A'shā al-Kabīr*, ed. M. M. Ḥusayn (Beirut, 1972).

29. al-A'shā, *Gedichte*, xix.

30. R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe: des Origines à la fin du XV^e siècle de J.-C.* (Paris, 1964), 322.

whereas verse 16 chastises the polytheists from Quraysh for not heeding the Prophet's admonitions.

Rather than praise or boasting, the concluding verses of the poem (vv. 18–23) contain a list that loosely echoes certain prohibitions found in the Qur'an. The poet warns others to follow the Prophet's new religious strictures. He explicitly outlaws idolatry and pagan religious practices (vv. 19, 20) and encourages prayer in the evenings and mornings (v. 22).

The themes present in this poem are recognizable within the broader paradigms of the early Islamic *qaṣīdah* poem as identified by Suzanne Stetkevych in numerous works, such as the "lyric-elegiac prelude," the "self-abasement of the journey," and the sections of "praise."³¹ What is of particular interest in the poem is the poet's insistence, in vv. 7–8, on answering the questioners who wonder about his destination. The poem is in a sense a message to them to stop asking him about his purposes and instead acknowledge the supremacy of the Prophet's message, over even his own poetry.

Akhbār concerning al-A'shā's Visit to Medina

The *akhbār* surrounding al-A'shā's visit to Medina, while they echo themes found in this poem, also occasionally subvert them. In the following section we will discuss the relationship of the poem to the *akhbār* and attempt to place the particular *khbar* of Ibn Fāris within this larger tradition of storytelling.

Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828 or 218/833)

The account of al-A'shā's visit, as found in the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām, frames the poet's encounter with the polytheists as the central drama of the poem.³² The polytheists from Quraysh are the presumed targets of the poet's religious commands and prohibitions found in v. 19 and thereafter. The account in the main turns on the fact that the al-A'shā, while an exemplar of piety in his promotion of prohibitions against gambling and fornication, says nothing about wine in the poem. This proves his undoing, as the poet returns to his home (the location of which is unnamed) in order to drink and dies prior to conversion.

The implicit claim is that the polytheists of Quraysh play upon the well-known weakness of the poet al-A'shā for drink. It is al-A'shā's own desire for wine that proves to be his undoing. He effectively trades the earthly pleasure of a year of wine-drinking, for his eternal salvation. Unable to shake off his own habits and desires, al-A'shā makes a very poor wager (discussed below) and passes away without the provisions of piety.

31. S. P. Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad* (Bloomington, 2010), 12.

32. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah*, vol. 2, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1860), ii, 255–56 (= *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume [Karachi, 1955 [2001]], 725).

Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889)

Ibn Qutaybah in his *Kitāb al-Sh'ir wa-l-shu'arā'* relates a version of al-A'shā's visit that, while similar to that found in the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām, examines several new themes. First, the time of the visit for this version is definitively the "truce of al-Ḥudaybiyyah," which happened in Dhū al-Qa'dah 6/March 628.³³ Rather than a member of the tribe of Quraysh, he meets Abū Sufyān.

Although the story turns on the Prophet's prohibition of wine-drinking, fornication, and gambling, the poet's desire for wine is not what undermines his visit to the Prophet as it was in Ibn Hishām's account. For each of these former pagan habits, al-A'shā describes in this story how he no longer desires them. In the case of fornication, the implication is that he has become older—as the text of the poem suggests. Similarly, in the case of gambling and wine-drinking he will find substitutes in the new religion.

Al-A'shā's wager, and his eventual downfall, are not the products of his own desires and habits, as much as they are a result of deliberate scheming on the part of the Quraysh to silence him. In this account, Abū Sufyān is the voice of the powerful Meccans who are cognizant that if a fine poet were to turn against their cause, it would lead to their eventual downfall. He therefore offers the poet a wager, stating that "There is a truce right now between us and him [the Prophet]. Why don't you go back this year and take back with you 100 reddish camels. If he proves victorious after the truce, then you can go to him. If we win, you have received a reward to offset the difficulty of your trip." Once again, this is a bad choice by the poet al-A'shā who is thrown to the ground by his mount the moment he returns to his home in al-Yamāmah.

Al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967)

The version of the tale found in *Kitāb al-Aghānī* is related on the authority of 'Umar ibn Shabbah (d. 262/878), who was well known for his *akhbār* on poets and the history of Medina,³⁴ and Hishām ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghanawī (d. ?) who is described by al-Iṣfahānī as an expert on al-A'shā.³⁵

In contrast to the previous two accounts, al-Iṣfahānī's account underscores al-A'shā's role as a praise poet. The story begins with the arrival of the poet al-A'shā in Mecca. The poem, "Did you not shut your eyes?" is referenced, and then Quraysh mention the fact that al-A'shā was famous as the "Singer of the Arabs."

33. See the excerpt from Ibn Kathīr below which explains the logic of this dating with respect to the prohibition on wine.

34. See "'Umar b. Shabbah," *EI2*.

35. The latter is mentioned in R. Blachère, "Un problème d'histoire littéraire: A'sā Maymūn et son œuvre," *Arabica* 10 (1963), 23–55, 27, n. 4, without any further information.

This version attempts to harmonize the two stories summarized above. His debate with Abū Sufyān is similar to the version portrayed by Ibn Qutaybah, with the addition of the Qur'anic prohibition of usury. Wine, however, is not dropped altogether. Rather, it seems that al-A'shā's fame as a poet of wine is revived, and he is portrayed as wanting to return home to drink some wine that he has hidden away.³⁶

The story ends in al-Iṣfahānī with reference to poet's death at the famed location of Qā' al-Manfūḥah which was the poet's home.

Ibn Fāris

Ibn Fāris's version in the *Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* relates the account on the authority of Sa'īd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān ibn Thābit, the grandson of the Prophet's poet, Ḥassān ibn Thābit (d. ca 54/673). It includes the text of the poem, "Did you not shut your eyes?" The text differs in several marked ways from the texts we have mentioned above. For instance, the opening statement of al-A'shā "Where is that young man from the Banū Ḥāshim who has accompanied the wind?" seems to mimic the mode of address that a poet like al-A'shā might use. His next clause then contains a parallel in rhyme (*ma'rūfīhi; dīnihi*). In his version, like that of al-Iṣfahānī, the Meccan polytheists, as a group, are worried about the possible influence of al-A'shā's blame poetry, especially if it is conjoined with that of Ḥassān ibn Thābit. They are worried in particular about their own personal honor (*arādānā*). Abū Jahl comes to the rescue of the threatened polytheists by acting in the role of the leader of the Quraysh as Abū Sufyān does in Ibn Qutaybah's version. Unlike the situation in that story, Ibn Fāris portrays the Meccans as being alarmed at the possibility of being cursed by the poet al-A'shā.

Abū Jahl is here more manipulative than Abū Sufyān. For he tells al-A'shā about the Prophet's prohibitions of fornication and wine drinking and then states on al-A'shā's behalf that he "cannot do without these two things" (*lā ṣabra laka 'anhumā*). In some ways, this emphasizes the scheming of Abū Jahl, and minimizes the sense produced in previous versions, that al-A'shā had made a strategic choice to forgo meeting the Prophet.

The Qur'anic quotation ending this section (*iqtibās*) is Q Furqān 25:55 "The disbeliever is ever a helper against his Lord" (*kāna al-kāfir 'alā rabbīhi zahīran*). Commentators have often understood this verse to refer explicitly to Abū Jahl, as an assistant to Satan.³⁷ Its invocation here works to underscore the fact that the agency in this account largely belongs to Abū Jahl. He is carrying out a plan to which the poet al-A'shā unwittingly falls victim; al-A'shā accepts the reward that is offered to him and returns unquestioningly. In Ibn Fāris's account, the powerful voice of the poet is silenced by the even more powerful forces of belief and unbelief which he had yet to personally experience.

36. See P. F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford, 2001), 245–61.

37. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh, 2003), xiv, 478.

Conclusion

Like his predecessor Ibn Durayd, Ibn Fāris had interests that went beyond the fields of lexicography and grammar and seem to have included a real engagement with *adab*. As the title *Qaṣaṣ al-nahār wa-samar al-layl* suggests, Ibn Fāris was interested in the telling of amusing stories in versions that were, like the *maqāmah*, interesting both for their content and for their exemplarity in the art of storytelling.

Ibn Fāris, as al-Hamadhānī would later do, makes use of a commonly known story. Outwardly the tale offers some resemblances to *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī. The theme of the *maqāmah* is travel, the main protagonist is a poet. The plot of this story seems, moreover, to turn on wit and deception, and the power of words. Both of these themes are prominent in the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī.

On the level of style, too, we can see some affinities to the Hamadhānian *maqāmah*. Ibn Fāris's *qīṣṣah* or *samar*, is prosimetric, mixing poetry and prose. Furthermore, it makes a measured use of *saḥj*, a feature that is typical of Ibn Fāris's writing and similar to the later usage of al-Hamadhānī. Finally, dialogue is an important feature of this tale.

While it would be a great stretch to say that Ibn Fāris was influential in the formation of the *maqāmah*, the little that survives from his work would indicate his imparting a rich education in *adab* to his student al-Hamadhānī. Such influence from Ibn Fāris compels us to ask an important and surprisingly often overlooked question about the very literariness of the *maqāmah*. Do we presuppose that the *maqāmah*, because of its status in later accounts of literary history, was at the time of its origination a form associated more with the *adīb* rather than the *ahl al-lughah*? Moreover, what did premodern claims about the authorship of the *maqāmāt* by such figures as Ibn Durayd and Ibn Fāris lend to the text? Were these claims about authorship and origin attempts to lend authority to the linguistic knowledge found therein?

While we are no closer to answering these questions than the earlier twentieth-century preoccupations with authorship, changing the focus on what authorship and originality meant for the fourth/tenth century is perhaps long overdue. How did readers estimate the value of the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī? Did they value originality in literary history as much as we do? It is our hope that researching the fragments that remain may awaken us not only to the power of literary history to shape writers, but bring us closer to the way that writers viewed the works of others as well as their own.

Appendix: Translations of the Different Versions of the Tale

Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828 or 218/833)

The story is told on the authority of Khallād ibn Qurrah ibn Khālid al-Sadūsī and other *shaykhs* of the tribe of Bakr ibn Wā'il who are among the *ahl al-'ilm*. He reports that A'shā Banī Qays ibn Tha'labah ibn Ṣa'b ibn 'Alī ibn Bakr ibn Wā'il went out to see the Prophet, and he recited the following poem in praise of him.

["Did You Not Shut Your Eyes?"]

When he arrived in Mecca, or in its vicinity, one of the polytheists from Quraysh went out to meet him, and he asked him why he was there. So he told him that he had come in order to see the Prophet of God, and to convert to Islam.

He said to him, "O Abū Baṣīr, he prohibits fornication!"

He said, "That's something I really do not want."

He said to him, "O Abū Baṣīr, he has declared wine unlawful!"

He said to him, "Now that is something I still yearn for! I will go away and drink for an entire year, then I will come back and convert." So he left, but he died that year, and did not reach the Prophet of God.³⁸

Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889)

They say that he [viz. al-A'shā] went out seeking the Prophet during the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah.

So Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb asked him where he was going and he said, "I am seeking Muḥammad."

Abū Sufyān said, "He is the one who makes wine-drinking, fornication, and gambling illicit."

He said, "As for fornication, it left me, I didn't leave it. As for wine, I have had as much of it as I desire, and gambling, well perhaps I'll find some substitute for it."

He said, "May I propose a better alternative for you?"

He said, "What is it?"

He said, "There is a truce right now between us and him [the Prophet], why don't you go back this year and take back with you 100 reddish camels. If he proves victorious after the truce, then you go to him. If we win, you have received a reward to offset the difficulty of your trip."

He said, "It is fine with me."

38. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyah*, ii, 255–56 (trans. Guillaume, 725).

So Abū Sufyān went with him to his home and gathered around his family members, saying, "Oh people of Quraysh! This is A'shā Qays. You know about his poetry; if he were to go to the Prophet, he would turn all the Arabs against us by his verse. So they gathered one hundred reddish she-camels, and he left. When he arrived near al-Yamāmah, his mount cast him down to the ground and killed him.³⁹

Al-Isfahānī (d. 356/967)

We cite Ḥabīb ibn Naṣr al-Muhallabī and Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jawharī, who cite 'Umar ibn Shabbah, who cites Hishām ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghanawī (who was an expert concerning al-A'shā), who says that [al-A'shā] came to the Prophet and he praised him with the poem which begins "Did you not shut your eyes?" And news of his approach came to the Quraysh who watched him on his path.

They said, "He is the 'Singer of the Arabs!' Anyone he praises immediately is raised in esteem."

So when he came to them, they said to him, "What do you wish Abū l-Baṣīr?"

He said [p. 126] "I wish to visit this friend of yours so that I might convert to Islam."

They said, "He prohibits the orifices and makes them illicit, and all the other things that you do and suppose to be right."

He said, "What are they?"

Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb said, "Fornication."

Al-A'shā said, "Fornication left me, and I didn't leave it. Then what?"

He said, "Gambling."

He said, "Perhaps if I meet him, I will obtain a substitute for gambling. Then what?"

They said, "Usury."

He said, "I didn't seek loans or offer them. Then what?"

He said, "Wine."

He said, "Alas! I will return to a small stash in a hollowed-out rock, so that I can drink it."

Abū Sufyān said to him: "Shouldn't there be something good out of what you strived for?"

He said, "What is it?"

Abū Sufyān said, "Between us and him [the Prophet] there is a truce. So you take 100 camels, and return to your land and your former ways. And

39. Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'* (Beirut, 1964), i, 178

you should see how our affair works itself out. If we are victorious over him, you have taken a substitute, and if he is victorious, you can come to him.”

He said, “I don’t dislike that.”

So Abū Sufyān said, “Oh people of Quraysh, this is al-A‘shā! By God, were he to have come to Muḥammad and followed him, he would have stirred up the flames of the Arabs against you with his verse. So gather up 100 camels for him.” And they did it.

So he took them and set off for his land. When he reached the valley of al-Manfūḥah [al-A‘shā’s home], his mount cast him to the ground and killed him.⁴⁰

Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176)

The *Tarikh Madīnat Dimashq* quotes the version from the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, citing ‘Umar ibn Shabbah, with lines added from the subsequent *khābar* in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.⁴¹

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)

Ibn Kathīr reproduces the text of Ibn Hishām and the entirety of the poem. He adds the following: This is how Ibn Hishām has related the story here [in the *sīra* of the Prophet], but he took many exceptions to Muḥammad ibn Ishāq and this was one of the occasions that Ibn Hishām took exception. Wine was prohibited in Medina after the battle with the Banū al-Naḍīr as will be seen below. So it seems evident that the intention of al-A‘shā to come over to the religion of Islām was after the Hijra.

In his poetry, the verse:

Oh you who wish to know where my camel is headed, know that it has an appointment among the people of Yathrib.

indicates this. It would have been more appropriate and fitting for Ibn Hishām to delay the mention of this story until after the Hijra and not mention it here. God knows best. Al-Suhaylī said: This is a mistake committed by Ibn Hishām and those who follow him. For the people are in agreement that the prohibition on wine was not revealed after the battle of Uhūd in Medina. He [viz. al-Suhaylī] had said that it was Abū Jahl ibn Hishām in the house of ‘Utbaḥ ibn Rabī‘ah who spoke to al-A‘shā. But Abū ‘Ubaydah said that it was rather ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl in the *bilād al-Qays*, when he was approaching to the Prophet.

40. Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ix, 125–26.

41. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* (Beirut, 1995), lxi, 328–29; and al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ix, 126.

[Al-Suhaylī] said: And his statement [viz. al-A‘shā’s] “Then I will come to him and convert” would not have removed him from his unbelief (*kufrihi*).⁴²

Al-Baḡhdādī (d. 1093/1682)

[He begins by repeating the report of Ibn Qutaybah]

Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, the commentator on the *dīwān* of al-A‘shā, states that: Upon the appearance of the Prophet, al-A‘shā set out, until he reached Mecca. He heard scriptures recited, so he decided to stay with ‘Utbaḥ ibn Rabī‘ah. Abū Jahl heard of this, so he came to him with a group of young men from Quraysh. He gave him a gift and then asked why he had come.

He said, “I have come to see Muḥammad. For I have heard his mission predicted in books, and in order that I might see what he says and to what he calls people.”

So Abū Jahl said, “He has outlawed adultery.”

Al-A‘shā said, “I’ve gotten old, so I have no more need for adultery.”

Abū Jahl said, “He has prohibited you from drinking wine.”

He said, “What does he declare lawful?”

So they started to tell him the worst things they could about the Prophet. And they said, “Can you recite to us some of your poetry about him?”

So he recited, “Did You Not Shut Your Eyes.” It is an excellent poem consisting of 24 verses.⁴³

When he recited it to them, they said, “When this man praises someone, he certainly elevates his stature, and when this man curses someone, he really lowers it. Who among us can turn him away from doing this?”

Abū Jahl said to al-A‘shā, “As for you, were you to recite to him this [*qaṣīdah*] he wouldn’t accept it.”

They remained with him for a long time on account of his distress, until they had turned him away and he left suddenly⁴⁴ until he reached al-Yamāmah. He remained there for a while until he died.

Ibn Da‘īb and others report that al-A‘shā went out desiring to meet the Prophet, and recited poetry, until such a time that he was on the road, and his mount threw him, and killed him. When the verses of his poem were recited:

42. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, ed. ‘A. ibn ‘A. Turkī (Giza, 1997), iv, 250–54.

43. The version cited by Ibn Fāris only contains 23 verses.

44. Reading *min fawrihi* “suddenly,” instead of *min fawratihī* “out of his anger.”

I pledged that I would not inherit from a distant relative⁴⁵
Whenever you set down your camel at the door of the Banū Hāshim,
you find relief, and encounter generosity from their many excellent
qualities.⁴⁶

the Prophet said, "He was almost saved."⁴⁷

45. The meaning of the word *kalālah* relates to Q Nisā' 4:176 and Q Nisā' 4:12b. On the long history of exegesis of this term, see D. S. Powers, *Muhammad is not the Father of any of Your Men* (Philadelphia, 2008), xi ff.

46. Reading *fawāḍil* for *fawāṣil*.

47. Al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab wa-lubb lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, ed. 'A. M. Hārūn, i, 177–78.

من كتاب قصص النهار وسمر الليل

لابن فارس

روى سعيد بن عبد الرحمن بن حستان بن ثابت قال: أقبل أعشى بن قيس بعدما هاجر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وقد امتدح رسول الله صلى الله عليه بقصيدته هذه [من الطويل]:

وعدت كما عاد المليم ممتدا	ألم تغمض عينك ليلة أزمدا
تناسبت قبل اليوم خلة مهندا	وما ذلك من عشق النساء وإنما
إذا أصلحت كفاي عاد فافندا	ولكن أرى الدهر الذي هو خائن ²
فله هذا الدهر كيف تزددا	شباب وشيب وافتقار وثورة
ولبدأ وكهلا حين شئت وأمردا	وما زلت أبغي المال مذ أنا يافع
مسافة ما بين التجير فصرخدا	وإتعابي العيس المرافيك تغملي
خفي عن الأعشى به حيث أصغدا	فإن تسالي عني فإ رب سائل
فإن لها في أهل يثرب مؤيدا	ألا أيهذا السائل أين أصعدته
رفيبين جذبا لا يوب وفردا	فأما إذا ما أدلجت فترى لها
إذا خلت جزباء الطهيرة أصيدا	وفيها إذا ما حجرت عجر فية
بداها خنافا لينا غير أحردا	أجدت برجليها النجاء ونار عت ⁴
ولا راحة حتى ألاق ⁵ محمدا	فما لك عندي مشنكي ⁷ من كلال ⁶
تراحي ⁸ وتلقي من فواصله ندا ⁹	متى ما نتاخي عند باب ابن هاشم
أغار لغمري في البلاد وأنجدا	نبي يرى ما لا ترون، وذكرة ¹⁰
وليس عطاء اليوم ما بقدا	له صدقات ما نجب ونائل
رسول ¹¹ الإله، حين أوصى وأشهدا	أجذك لم تسمع وصاة محمد
ولا قيت بعد اليوم من قد تزددا	إذا أنت لم ترخل بزاد من التقي

1. الديوان: وعادك ما.
2. الديوان: خاتر.
3. الديوان: وأبتدل.
4. الديوان: يمت.
5. الديوان: نجاة وراجعت.
6. الديوان: ولا من حتى حتى تزور.
7. الديوان: فآليت لا أرتي.
8. الديوان: تريحي.
9. الديوان: بدا.
10. الديوان: نبي.

وَأَنْكَ لَمْ تُرْصِدْ لِمَا كَانَ أَرْصَدَا	تَدِمْتَ عَلَى أَنْ لَا تُكُونَ كَمِثْلِهِ
وَلَا تَأْخُذُنْ سَهْمًا خَدِيدًا لِنُقُصْبَا	فَاتِيَاكَ وَالْمَيْتَاتِ، لَا تُقْرِبَنَّهَا ¹¹
لِعَاقِبَةِ وَاللَّهِ رَبِّكَ ¹² قَاعِبْنَا	وَلَا النَّصَبَ الْمَنْصُوبَ لَا تَسْكَتَهُ
وَلَا تُحَسِّنِ الْمَرْءَ يَوْمًا مَخْلُدَا	وَلَا تُسَخِّرُنْ مِنْ بَابِيسٍ ذِي مَتْرَارَةٍ
وَلَا تَحْمَدِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَاللَّهِ فَاحْمَدَا	وَصَلِّ عَلَى حَبِيبِ الْعَشِيَّاتِ وَالصَّحَى
ظَلِيكَ حَرَامٌ فَانْكَحْنِ أَوْ تَأْبَدَا	وَلَا تُقْرَبِينَ جَارَةً إِنْ سَبَرَهَا

قال فقدم مكة وقال أين هذا الفتى من بني هاشم الذي يجاور الريح؟ قالوا: ما تصنع به يا أبا بصير؟ قال: أريد أن أمتدحه فأصيب من معروفه وأدخل في دينه. فقال القوم: والله لنن اجتمع علينا هجاء حسنان وهجاء الأعشى لتفسدن أعراسنا. فقال أبو جهل: أنا أكفيكم الرجل. فأتاه فقال: يا أبا بصير، إن هذا الرجل يجرم الزنا وشرب الخمر ولا صبر لك عنهما، فهل لك أن نعطيك ولا نختبب سفرتك وترجع عامك هذا حتى ترى من رأيك، وإنما أراد بذلك أن يرجع لعله يموت فإنه كان كبير السن. قال: نعم. فأعطاه وأكرمه ويقال أنه أعطاه فيما أعطاه قلايص فركب واحدة منها فلما بلغ قاع منفوحة وقصت به فاندق فمات فانزل الله تعالى في أبي جهل: وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَى رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا

THE PHILOSOPHER AS LITTÉRATEUR: AL-TAWHĪDĪ AND HIS PREDECESSORS

Everett K. Rowson

Among the many and varied epithets bestowed on Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 414/1023) by his biographers, perhaps the most apposite is that describing him as “the philosopher of the littérateurs and the littérateur of the philosophers.”¹ To be sure, he was also, according to Yāqūt, “a shaykh among the Ṣūfīs,” as well as “the investigator (*muḥaqqiq*) of the *kalām* and the *mutakallim* of the investigators, the leader of the eloquent, and a pillar of the Banū Sāsān.” Such listings of multiple areas of competence and activity are a cliché in biographical dictionaries, and were intended to emphasize the versatility and polymathy of their subjects.² But it is clear from al-Tawhīdī’s works themselves that he was not only a writer proficient in the distinct fields of *falsafah* and *adab* (and Ṣūfism and *kalām*), but also someone whose *adab* struck the *udabā’* as *falsafah*, and whose *falsafah* struck the *falāsifah* as *adab*. In such works as the *al-Imtā’ wa-l-mu’ānasah*, which describes his evening conversations with the *wazīr* Ibn Sa’dān, and especially the *Muqābasāt*, which records philosophical discussions and opinions in the circle of his mentor Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, he presented basic philosophical ideas in a form familiar and congenial to the *udabā’*, thus straddling two realms of discourse and potentially appealing to two distin-

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1. “*Faylasūf al-udabā’ wa-adib al-falāsifah*,” according to Yāqūt (*Irshād al-arīb [Mu’jam al-udabā’]*, ed. A. F. Rifā’ī [Cairo, 1936–38], xv, 5), who apparently borrowed the phrase from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥabbāriyyah (d. 504/1110); see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān* (Beirut, 1971), vii, 40 ff., and J. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden, 1986), 220 and n. 31.

2. For example, Abū Bakr al-Tamīmī is called “*al-muqri’ al-adib al-faqih al-muḥaddith al-dayyin al-zāhid al-wari’ al-thiqah al-imām bil-ḥaqīqah*” by ‘Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (*al-Siyāq li-Ta’rikh Naysābūr*, facsimile ed. in R. Frye, *The Histories of Nisāhpur* [Cambridge, Mass., 1965], second MS, fol. 24b–25a); and Abū l-‘Abbās al-Jarraqī was a “*kātib faylasūf muhandis shā’ir*” according to al-Tha’ālibī (*Yatimat al-dahr*, ed. M. M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd [Cairo, 1956], iv, 341). Note also Yāqūt’s description of Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) as “*ash’ar al-‘ulamā’ wa-‘alam al-shu‘arā’*” (*Irshād*, xviii, 129).

11. الديوان: تاكلتها.

12. الديوان: ولا تعبد الأوثان والله.