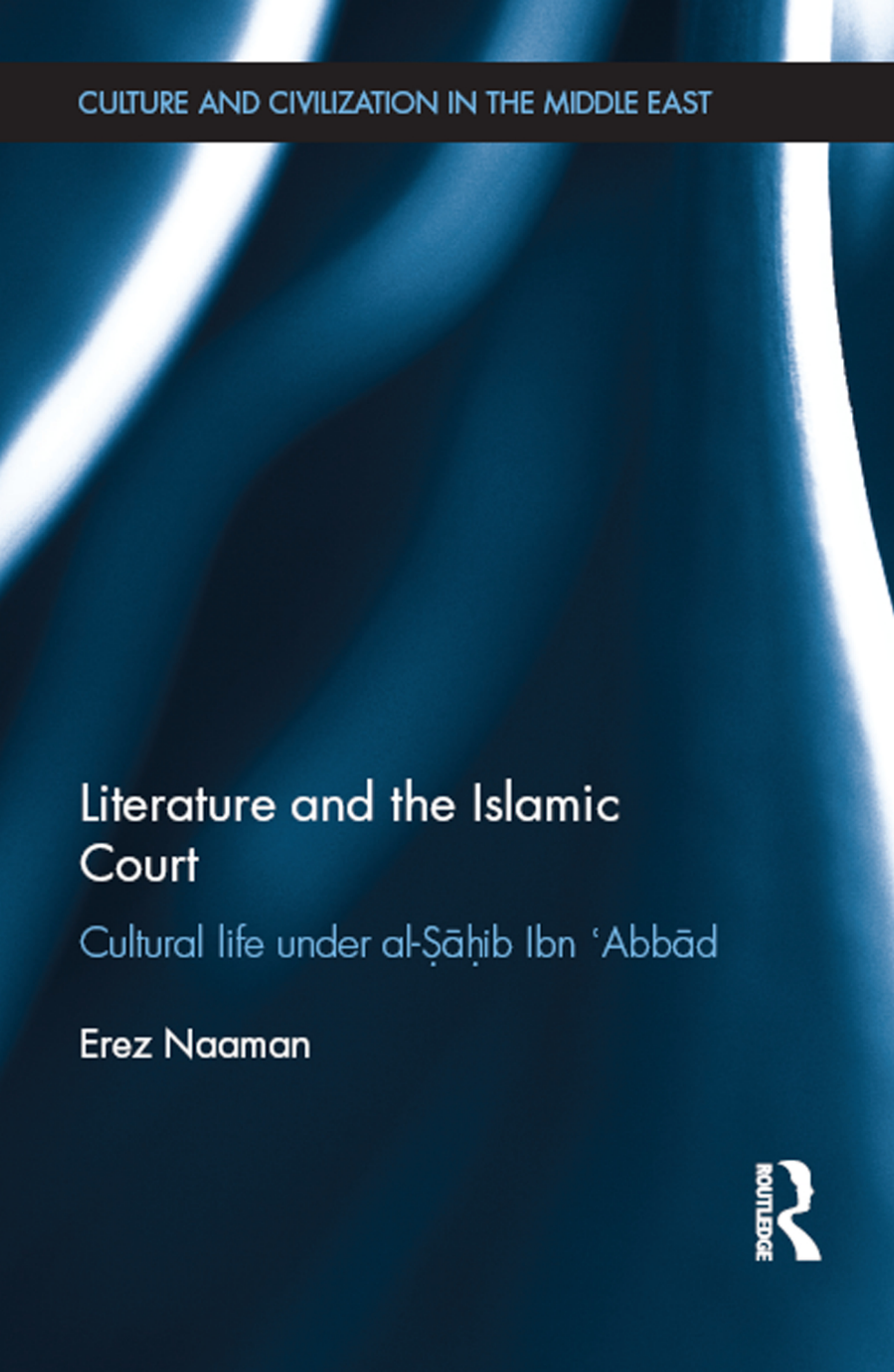

CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Literature and the Islamic Court

Cultural life under al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād

Erez Naaman

ROUTLEDGE

Literature and the Islamic Court

Courts were the most important frameworks for the production, performance, and evaluation of literature in medieval Islamic civilization. Patrons vying for prestige attracted to their courts literary people who sought their financial support. The most successful courts assembled outstanding literary people from across the region.

The court of the vizier and literary person al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād (326–85/938–95) in western Iran is one of the most remarkable examples of a medieval Islamic court, with a sophisticated literary activity in Arabic (and, to a lesser extent, in Persian). *Literature and the Islamic Court* examines the literary activity at the court of al-Ṣāḥib and sheds light on its functional logic. It is an inquiry into the nature of a great medieval court, where various genres of poetry and prose were produced, performed, and evaluated regularly. Major aspects examined in the book are the patterns of patronage, selection, and auditioning; the cultural codes and norms governing performance, production, and criticism; the interaction between the patron and courtiers, and among the courtiers themselves; competition; genres as productive molds; the hegemonic literary taste; and the courtly habitus. This book reveals the significance these courts held as institutions that were at the heart of literary production in Arabic.

Using primary medieval Arabic sources, this book offers a comprehensive analysis of Islamic courts and as such is of key interest to students and scholars of Arabic literature, Islamic history, and medieval studies.

Erez Naaman is Assistant Professor of Arabic at American University in Washington, DC. His research focuses on medieval Arabic literature and culture, and intellectual Islamic history.

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Note on translations, transliteration, and dating

All translations in this book are mine, unless otherwise noted. I follow the Library of Congress Arabic transliteration system with some modifications. Common place names, such as Cairo, Baghdad, and Esfahan are given in their English spellings. Uncommon place names, such as al-Rayy, Arrajān, and Ṭālaqān are transliterated. Dates are given according to both the Islamic (*hijrī*) and the Common Era calendars, for example, 326/938.

Abbreviations

Akhlāq	al-Tawḥīdī, Abū Ḥayyān. *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn*. Ed. Muḥammad al-Ṭanjī. Damascus: Al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī l-ʿArabī, 1965.
b.	Ibn (in genealogies, when not in an initial position).
EAL	Meisami, Julie Scott and Starkey, Paul, eds, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London: Routledge, 1998.
EI2	Gibb, H.A.R., *et al.* eds, *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005.
GAS	Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967–84.
Lane	Lane, E.W. *Arabic–English Lexicon*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–93.
Q	*al-Qurʾān*.
T	al-Thaʿālibī, Abū Manṣūr. *Kitāb tatimmat al-yatīma*. Ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl. Tehran: Maṭbaʿat Fardīn, 1934.
Y	al-Thaʿālibī, Abū Manṣūr. *Yatīmat al-dahr*. Damascus: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥanafiyya, 1886–87.
Y, A	al-Thaʿālibī, Abū Manṣūr. *Yatīmat al-dahr*. Ed. Muḥyī l-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. 2nd ed. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1956.

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Introduction

I The court as an institution

I started this research project with a big question, or rather, problem, in mind: how exactly was literature produced at a great medieval Islamic court? Not infrequently we find in the medieval sources evidence on a cultivated patron, a significant number of literary protégés acting under his (and, very rarely, her) enlightened auspices, and a body of literature created by virtue of this encounter, which makes one wonder about the workings of this enterprise as a whole. It is precisely this Patron–Protégé–Production triangle and the relations between each of these elements that is the crux of the problem. How, for example, was the style of poetry composed for the patron influenced by the latter's aesthetic preferences? To assume it was highly influenced because of the patron's support is, of course, unsatisfactory; we should still study textual and contextual evidence carefully in order to establish this assumption. The extent to which literary production in such circumstances was affected by the power of the patron is indeed a very important question. Like other related questions, it has to do with the court as an institution established on certain social and cultural practices that are taken as the norm and maintained over time with regularity.

The Būyid period of the fourth/tenth century, an age of openness and tolerance characterized by a remarkable cultural and intellectual efflorescence,[1] was a great time for literary patronage and literature. In place of a single imperial court, in this socio-politically decentralized age there were many courts of rulers and potentates. Offering patronage to various types of scholars and literary people, these courts competed for prestige.[2] Among these, the court of the vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (326–85/938–95) stands out as an excellent opportunity for a case study addressing our initial question. In fact, anyone leafing through al-Thaʿālibī's great anthology, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, would easily note that. The entry dedicated to the vizier is very long and includes various poems and prose pieces he composed, in addition to offering abundant information about him supplied by others (many of whom were his courtiers). Noticeably, al-Ṣāḥib's achievements as a great patron of literature and knowledge in the fourth/tenth century, as well as his court enterprise, are highlighted and well documented by the anthologist. Al-Thaʿālibī emphatically ascribes the flourishing of so many great poets and littérateurs to the vizier's enterprise as seen throughout the anthology. The availability of this rich source of material (and others) makes the study of al-Ṣāḥib's court a very promising path to explore.

Before more is said about al-Ṣāḥib, we should go back to our initial question. The basic assumption behind it is that a literary piece is not an abstract and detached entity, and that the conditions governing its production do leave their marks on it. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu successfully showed in his writings on culture the validity of this position and its indispensability for the study of literature.[3] He introduced the concept of *field* to describe a given "social universe" with its power relations and laws of functioning. The agents in the field have common stakes, and ceaselessly compete among themselves on the resources available in it.[4] Therefore, any attempt to understand literature created at the court requires us to probe its literary field. That is, the social universe to which certain conventions of literary production, performance, and evaluation are applicable. Bearing in mind the important factor of power relations, and the obvious hierarchic superiority of the patron over his protégés, a crucial question emerging is how dominant he was at shaping these conventions. This question will be explored at different places in this work and in various contexts.

A brief clarification of "court" is in order here. Throughout the present work, this word is used in the sense of an elite social configuration created by a potentate. The potentate patronizes qualified agents specializing in the production and performance of cultural contents, and the ensuing artistic and intellectual activity takes place according to specific codes in a supportive environment enabled by temporary dimming of power relations. The institution of the court, under the auspices of which the majority of artistic and intellectual activity in medieval Islamic civilization developed, matured in the early ʿAbbāsid period.[5] Since the court is first and foremost a social configuration and an institution, its spatial dimension is of lesser importance. The courtiers and rules that make this enterprise possible are the mainstay of the court, and not a certain place. Therefore, we may say that al-Ṣāḥib's court followed him wherever he went. The texts mention it mostly as existing in the western Iranian locations of Esfahan, al-Rayy, and Jurjān, where he resided at different times.[6]

The literary field is not a synonym of the court; the court of al-Ṣāḥib, for example, had a theological field, too. Theology was one of the disciplines that attracted him, and the main stakes and contours of the theological field, and often its personnel, were different from those of the literary field. The court of al-Ṣāḥib, a learned potentate with many scholarly interests, was a hub of patronage of different varieties of scholarship and art. Hence, every literary person with significant activity at the court was a courtier, but not every courtier was a literary person. Despite the primary place occupied by poetry, a literary person was not necessarily a professional poet; this term could also refer to those recognized as having literary knowledge of one or more cultural practices such as artistic prose and literary criticism. Hence, many secretaries who were usually only amateur poets, but had a good command of artistic prose belonged in the literary field of al-Ṣāḥib's court, and were—at least by virtue of that—courtiers.

As any social configuration, interaction at the court was established on certain practices and perceptions deemed normative. Functioning within the literary field of the court required that a literary person master the normative rules applicable to it in order to succeed. These were not only aesthetic standards, but rather rules governing the way one should act in the broadest sense. Most of them were not directly taught or transmitted but nevertheless inculcated and understood as natural and obvious by the courtiers. The set of dispositions enabling social agents—once inculcated and naturalized—to perceive their environment and behave in it "correctly," was their habitus, which was very likely to be highly influenced by the dominant element of power controlling the field. As we shall see, the habitus concept as used here is well known for its development by Bourdieu, although its roots go back to antiquity. This originally Aristotelian concept was familiar to the philosophically-informed of the fourth/tenth century thanks to the translation of major philosophical works into Arabic and the intellectual discourse that it initiated. Indeed, more than a thousand years before Bourdieu, this concept was known and applied in contemporary analyses of real life situations and interactions, including at the court itself. The acquisition of the courtly habitus applicable to the court of al-Ṣāḥib was an indispensable key to successful functioning at it, which to the literary person meant being productive and thus rewarded. We will see examples of success and failure, the latter of which are at least as instructive as the former in understanding the courtly habitus and its indispensability.

To sum up, the cardinal goal of the present book is to shed light on the literary activity at the court of al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād and expose its functional logic. In doing so, I have attempted to pay attention to all three factors that were part of it, namely, the patron, the protégés, and production, and study closely the interrelations between them.

II Al-Ṣāḥib and his court

Al-Ṣāḥib Abū l-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAbbād b. al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbbād b. Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Ṭālaqānī, whose honorific was Kāfī l-Kufāt ("The Competent of Competents"), was born on 16 Dhū l-Qaʿda 326/14 September 938. Already during his lifetime, there were conflicting reports regarding his place of birth: Ṭālaqān (a town near Qazwīn), Ṭālaqān (a village near Esfahan), or Iṣṭakhr (a town in Fārs located 12 farsakh/72 km from Shiraz). The village Ṭālaqān near Esfahan, as reported by al-Thaʿālibī, is the most probable one. Al-Ṣāḥib came from a Persian family of high position; his father—a Muʿtazilī scholar—was a vizier of the Būyid *amīr* Rukn al-Dawla. After his father's death in 334/945 or 335/946, while al-Ṣāḥib was still a young boy, he became a protégé of the great vizier Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, who trained him as a secretary (*kātib*) and admitted him to his session (*majlis*) in al-Rayy. He was sent to Baghdad in 347/958 to accompany the future Būyid *amīr* Muʾayyid al-Dawla (*amīr* Rukn al-Dawla's son) as a secretary, where he seized the opportunity to associate with notable scholars. Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī wrote in *Kitāb al-tājī* that the sobriquet al-Ṣāḥib (“the Friend”) was given to him by Muʾayyid al-Dawla, because he had befriended him since childhood. Others ascribed it to his befriending of Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd. After al-Ṣāḥib, “al-Ṣāḥib” became one of the common sobriquets of viziers and high functionaries.

Following Abū l-Faḍl’s demise in 360/970, his vizier position was transferred to his son Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd. In the very same year, al-Ṣāḥib was appointed Muʾayyid al-Dawla’s vizier in Esfahan. Following the death of Rukn al-Dawla in 366/976, Muʾayyid al-Dawla assumed power in al-Rayy as the *amīr*. In spite of the latter’s will, owing to Abū l-Fatḥ’s great power and control of the military, al-Ṣāḥib had to be reduced to the position of a secretary, while Abū l-Fatḥ became the *amīr*’s vizier. Abū l-Fatḥ was inimical to al-Ṣāḥib, because of his tight relation with Muʾayyid al-Dawla, and al-Ṣāḥib had to leave for Esfahan intimidated by the army. Later that year, Abū l-Fatḥ was arrested, put to death, and al-Ṣāḥib became once again Muʾayyid al-Dawla’s vizier. In 373/983, Muʾayyid al-Dawla died. Through his vast influence, power, and political skill, al-Ṣāḥib was the one who led to the appointment of Fakhr al-Dawla as the *amīr*’s successor. He kept his vizierate also under the *amīr* Fakhr al-Dawla, proving himself to be an efficient statesman and military commander. Al-Ṣāḥib enjoyed an unprecedented level of independence and power for a Būyid vizier until his death (after eighteen years in office as a vizier of *amīr*s). He died in al-Rayy on 24 Ṣafar 385/30 March 995; he was greatly honored in his funeral ceremonies, and was later buried in Esfahan.

Al-Ṣāḥib was an extremely talented, cultivated, and erudite person. He studied the philological disciplines with his father, with Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, and the grammarian Aḥmad b. Fāris (d. 395/1004), and amassed a huge collection of books. He has been widely considered as one of the most prominent prose writers and poets of the fourth/tenth century. In prose especially, al-Ṣāḥib was among the first exponents of the artistic prose style named *inshāʾ*, which was distinguished by the use of rhyme (*sajʿ*), rhythmic balance, and poetic artifice. In addition to a *dīwān* of poetry and another of letters (comprising ten volumes), Ibn al-Nadīm counts twenty-five works composed by al-Ṣāḥib in such various fields as theology and religion, *adab*, literary criticism, prosody, lexicography, grammar, history, and medicine. Al-Ṣāḥib was also a *ḥadīth* transmitter who dictated to big crowds.[7]

Al-Ṣāḥib was a Zaydī Shīʿī who followed the Ḥanafī legal school and adhered ardently to Muʿtazilī theological thought. He propagated the Muʿtazilī doctrine energetically, made al-Rayy a Shīʿī center, wrote intensively on religious and theological topics, and made numerous references to his tenets in poetry, prose, and oral discourse. His outspokenness in respect to his religious belief is illustrated in this verse: “The love of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is the one leading to paradise/ If my giving preference to him is considered a heretical innovation (*bidʿa*), then may God curse the *sunna*!”[8]

Impressive as they were, al-Ṣāḥib’s political, administrative, and military skills have not been the only reasons for his remarkable place among the viziers of Islamic history. In fact, his renown derived even more from his own literary achievements as well as his patronage of numerous poets and scholars who packed his court during his ministerial career centered in Esfahan, al-Rayy, and Jurjān.[9] Driven and supported by his political and economic power, he managed to attract many of the greatest literary talents of the age.[10]

Despite the Persian descent of al-Ṣāḥib, the hegemonic language of interaction and creativity at his court, in addition to the dominant cultural ethos, was Arabic. At that time, the Persian language, having already started its renaissance in the province of Khorasan to the east, played only a subsidiary role in this mostly Arabophone court of western Iran.[11] Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that Persian was not solely a language used occasionally for communication, but also a language used for artistic purposes.[12] Based on the sources, when ethnic and cultural tensions in the spirit of the *shuʿūbiyya* (anti-Arabism) polemics rose at court, al-Ṣāḥib stood up to defend the Arabs and Arab culture from the pro-Persian detractors.[13] At the same time, it seems that he was also censured for Persian partisanship and was sensitive to that.[14] The fact that "Persian–Arab merits" appear commendable to al-Ṣāḥib in his poem about Banū l-Munajjim (added to the artistic use of Persian at his court) hints at a complex cultural vision, which did not find explicit expression in the Arabic sources. This vision is more intricate than the one portrayed by the anecdotes, in which al-Ṣāḥib expressed strong anti-*shuʿūbī* sentiment. While the Arabic heritage had indubitably a prevalent standing in his view, there was still a legitimate place for Persian components in a more balanced cultural picture. It is not accidental that he pointed to Banū l-Munajjim as a model. It was believed that since Sāsānid times this noble Persian family handed down from one generation to another the craft of serving kings as viziers and courtiers. During the Islamic period, many of them properly fused this traditionally Persian knowledge with a command of the Arabic language and literature in addition to Islamic theology. They, therefore, appeared to al-Ṣāḥib to represent the right model of taking the best of the Arabic and Persian heritages, a model to which he himself adhered.

At al-Ṣāḥib's court the dominant, although not exclusive, cultural activity was based on language. The literary field, encompassing poetry, artistic prose, literary criticism, and subsidiary disciplines like grammar and lexicography, was the most prominent at the court. Within this framework, his religious and theological beliefs and commitments were at times interconnected with the literary activity, and found expression in his literary output and in that of others'. At the regularly held sessions (*majālis*), poetry in its manifold genres, as well as artistic prose, were recited and criticized, and learned debates on various topics took place. Moreover, poetry and scholarly works were constantly commissioned from noted poets and scholars by al-Ṣāḥib, or sent by the former in the hope of valuable reward (and sometimes with expectations of being admitted to his prestigious milieu). The multitude of literary people competed for the much sought-after goal, namely, high standing in the literary field. The symbolic capital (knowledge and competences in the literary disciplines) of the successful among them was converted into economic capital in the form of rewards bestowed by al-Ṣāḥib. As a seal of prestige, his rewards were a major springboard in the career of many poets. This is due to his reputed discerning eye and attested talent as a literary person, and not least, for his great political eminence. In this demanding arena, the standing of a certain poet could always change; it could improve for a good performance, deteriorate for a failure to impress, or crash due to criticism of competitive rivals in the field in their struggles to improve their own positioning.

Al-Ṣāḥib was able to establish a court, wherein literary activity flourished to the point that it had more poets than those assembled at the court of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. Furthermore, al-Ṣāḥib's poets did not fall short of al-Rashīd's. Al-Thaʿālibī, who made this observation, emphasized that no caliph or king has assembled master poets (*fuḥūlat al-shuʿarāʾ*) to the extent done by al-Rashīd.[15] There is no doubt that al-Ṣāḥib's success in establishing the greatest court of his day was owed in part to his being a very powerful vizier who enjoyed a high level of autonomy. His political and economical status made this enterprise possible, and contributed greatly in attracting literary people to the court.

Roy Mottahedeh notes that al-Ṣāḥib was an "unusually powerful" vizier. This is shown by the fact that he exchanged oaths with the *amīr* Fakhr al-Dawla, despite the latter's hierarchical superiority, when he brought him to the throne.[16] The evidence at our disposal suggests that the vizier's unusual power should be attributed to: (1) his skills as an administrator, military commander, and politician; (2) the decentralized character of the Būyid ruling system; and (3) his family's administrative heritage.

(1) Al-Ṣāḥib's strong administrative abilities made the *amīr*s depend on him. This dependency helped him to gain power wisely through his sharp political sense. Claude Cahen and Charles Pellat write that:

> Ibn ʿAbbād himself is remembered as one of the great viziers of Muslim history, even by those who were his adversaries in doctrine (see, e.g., Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsāt-nāma*, xl, 33 and xli, 21–6). Like the latter, he belongs to the category of ministers who, in the service of princes who were either not suited to or were indifferent to the tasks of administration, who were able to acquire an almost autonomous personal power and to become temporarily the true masters of the State.[17]

According to the historian al-Dhahabī, during al-Ṣāḥib's tenure he occupied fifty fortresses and handed them over to Fakhr al-Dawla, whose father (Rukn al-Dawla) had less than ten of them.[18] This accomplishment and others led to a far-reaching trust and deference to the vizier coming from the *amīr*s Muʾayyid al-Dawla, Fakhr al-Dawla, and their overlord brother ʿAḍud al-Dawla.[19] The dependency of the *amīr*s on al-Ṣāḥib is well attested in the following story: In 373/983, having brought Fakhr al-Dawla to the throne, al-Ṣāḥib requested to retire from the vizierate. Al-Ṣāḥib took this shrewd step in order to see whether the *amīr* still resented his role in making him run away as a refugee to Nīshāpūr during Muʾayyid al-Dawla's reign. Fakhr al-Dawla went out of his way to satisfy him saying: "O al-Ṣāḥib! Do not say that. I only wish power (*al-mulk*) to be yours, and only through you, my rule can be established. If you dislike engaging in my affairs, I would dislike it, [too], because of your dislike, and quit." Al-Ṣāḥib thankfully obeyed the wish of the *amīr*, and following that, Fakhr al-Dawla "bestowed upon him the vizierate's robes of honor, and honored him in an unprecedented way in what concerned [the vizierate]."[20]

(2) The Būyid government adopted a decentralized system of rule. To a certain extent it was the outcome of the Būyids' military and financial weakness. Local leaders and functionaries took advantage of the governmental decentralization to expand their power, and the state became less able to take away acquired status from men who acquired it.[21]

(3) Hand in hand with decentralization, hereditary claim to posts and offices became more and more accepted and legitimate throughout the Būyid period.[22] The case of al-Ṣāḥib, whose father was a vizier of Rukn al-Dawla, illustrates that well: Fakhr al-Dawla told al-Ṣāḥib when he asked to resign from the vizierate following the former's ascendance to power: "You have in this State, in respect to the heritage of vizierate, what we have in it, in respect to the heritage of emirate. The proper way for each of us is to uphold his right."[23] This remark explains the verse recited to the vizier by one of his favorite poets, Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī [*al-kāmil*]:

Waritha l-wizārata kābiran ʿan kābirin
Mawṣūlata l-isnādi bi-l-isnādī

Yarwī ʿani l-ʿAbbāsi ʿAbbādun wizā
Ratahū wa-ismāʿīlu ʿan ʿAbbādī

He inherited the vizierate, handed down from father to son,
With its chain of transmission bound with another [= that of the Būyid *amīr*s]

ʿAbbād passes on his vizierate on the authority of al-ʿAbbās
And Ismāʿīl on that of ʿAbbād[24]

According to this verse, al-Ṣāḥib was a third generation vizier, inheriting the office from his father ʿAbbād, who inherited it in his turn from his father al-ʿAbbās. The phrasing and terminology used is that of *ḥadīth* transmission, evoking the authority attained by each transmitter by virtue of hearing it from a qualified and legitimate source.

III The sources and the current state of research

The evidence for the present inquiry is rich, even if scattered in medieval Arabic sources of various types. These are mainly literary anthologies, biographical dictionaries, works of literary criticism, *adab* works, chronicles, *dīwān*s of poetry, and collections of letters. Of all the works, *Yatīmat al-dahr* deserves a special mention. The anthologist, al-Thaʿālibī (350–429/961–1038), was a contemporary of al-Ṣāḥib to whom we owe much of what we know about literary people of the fourth/tenth century and their output.[25] The literary pieces and information presented by him in *Yatīmat al-dahr* are, for the purpose of this inquiry, peerless. Many of his informants were notable courtiers of al-Ṣāḥib, from whom he collected first-hand materials related to his court (poems, prose pieces, accounts, and anecdotes), when he met them in eastern Iranian cities like Nīshāpūr and Bukhara. Among these are figures we will come across throughout this book, such as Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī, Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Karkhī, and Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī l-Jawharī.[26] Unfortunately, no critical edition of *Yatīmat al-dahr* exists.[27] In this book, I decided to use the 1886–87 Damascus edition, which is the *editio princeps*, since none of the subsequent editions offers a substantial improvement of the text. Moreover, being in the public domain, it is accessible for free on the internet. Unfortunately, al-Thaʿālibī did not preserve Persian materials from the court of al-Ṣāḥib. The little evidence gleaned from two Persian works (ʿAwfī's *Lubāb al-Albāb*, the earliest extant Persian literary anthology; and Dawlatshāh Samarqandī's *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarāʾ*, the earliest systematic biographical dictionary of Persian poets) is apparently the only reliable surviving information about poets composing in Persian at al-Ṣāḥib's court and their output.

The rich evidence collected from the medieval sources makes the present inquiry possible, although it obviously cannot answer all the questions we may have. Regarding those which it can answer, I have found at times that the application of analytic tools from other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities have proved to be very helpful. Hence, I applied in a critical fashion relevant concepts from other disciplines (mostly sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism), whenever I considered them necessary to shed more light on the findings or useful in placing them in a wider context for better understanding. Indeed, my study emphasizes the importance of bridging the gap between the textual approach to early sources and the pertinent work done in the social sciences and humanities. Based on a careful examination of the medieval sources and a critical use of analytic tools, my research presents the first serious account of al-Ṣāḥib's court and contributes to the understanding of pre-modern Islamic courts in general.

Turning to modern scholarly literature, one may find many monographs and articles written on al-Ṣāḥib. As a whole, even the better studies among them have concentrated on al-Ṣāḥib and his works as a discrete entity without offering an analytic framework to examine the complex and vibrant literary activity organized by him. Among the monographs, Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn's *Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: ḥayātuhu wa-adabuhu* is the most satisfactory one in Arabic, attempting to offer an analytic portrayal of the man and his works without falling into a descriptive and unselective display of the medieval sources. Notwithstanding a worthwhile survey of his life, works (extant and lost), and religious and theological stances, it falls short in discussing his literary style in somewhat too sketchy a manner. Badawī Ṭabāna's *Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: al-wazīr al-adīb al-ʿālim* dedicates more space and thought than Āl Yāsīn to al-Ṣāḥib's style in prose and poetry and to further questions of literary criticism. It is only in that respect, however, that Ṭabāna's monograph constitutes an improvement over Āl Yāsīn's. Maurice Pomerantz's more recent dissertation, "Licit Magic and Divine Grace: The Life and Letters of Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995),"[28] studies the vizier's training and career, his contributions to diverse fields of knowledge, his patronage, and the various types of letters he wrote. Pomerantz's primary object of study is al-Ṣāḥib, and he is successful at portraying a detailed picture of this eminent person. However, it is not a study of a milieu, of the *group* of people that surrounded al-Ṣāḥib and engaged in massive cultural production based on certain rules and conventions. It is not a study focusing on the court, nor is it examining closely the literary enterprise, so successful and resplendent, that al-Ṣāḥib was able to establish at his court. Considering shorter treatments, Joel Kraemer dedicated an individual profile to al-Ṣāḥib in *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*.[29] Kraemer's account is succinct and informative, referring to al-Ṣāḥib's political career, beliefs, cultural capacities, patronage, and personality. Nevertheless, having stressed throughout the book individuality as one of the characteristics of the renaissance of Islam,[30] he treats al-Ṣāḥib as an individual personality without analyzing adequately his role as a leading political and literary figure *amidst* an exceptional literary milieu. Charles Pellat's chapter on al-Ṣāḥib, included in *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*, adds an annotated list of his works to the account of al-Ṣāḥib's political and literary career.[31] This chapter is more elaborate and up-to-date than his *EI2* article (co-authored with Claude Cahen).[32]

Some important works addressing various facets of courtly culture in the medieval Islamic world have not set out to study thoroughly the interrelations between the literary output and the literary field of the court in which it materialized. J.E. Bencheikh's attempt to portray the group of cultural producers (literary people and entertainers) selected as courtiers by the caliph al-Mutawakkil ("The Poetic Coterie of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 247 H): A Contribution to the Analysis of Authorities of Socio-Literary Legitimation") is too skeletal. It may have to do with the space limitations of the article format, but the study does not go beyond biographic details and general historical background to discuss performances and the rules that underlie this cultural scene.[33] Jean-Claude Vadet's *L'Esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de* l'Hégire[34] sees "courtly spirit" through love and observes its different theories and manifestations among various groups and individuals starting with Arabia's pre-Islamic *nasīb*. Vadet's approach of connecting the advancement of cultural (including behavioral) repertoires with social groups and interests is valuable;[35] yet a broad study of the place of literature at court is not among his aims. In *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*,[36] Julie Scott Meisami views (quite similarly to Vadet) love as the major theme in the poetry produced in the Arab-Persian court tradition reflecting an essential courtly ethic ideal.[37] In tandem with Meisami's perception of courtly poetry,[38] her discussion throughout the work is mainly limited to the various literary representations of love and its meanings in Persian court poetry. As she acknowledges in her conclusion (pp. 311–14), there are still great scholarly gaps in the understanding of socio-literary aspects of the court like patronage, the nature and role of the audience, tastes, etc. Beyond literary motifs or abstract ideas, in Algazi and Drory's inspiring article, love at the ʿAbbāsid court (focusing on the period 157–217/774–833) is seen as a key code meant to induce a positive transformation in male elite members by making them adopt the courtly repertoire and hence to become cultured. Thus, love at the ʿAbbāsid court replaced poetry in prior periods (the pre-Islamic and Umayyad periods) as the inculcator of elite social values.[39] Of all the above works addressing love, Algazi and Drory's is the best attempt to decipher its meaning and function for the courtly milieu, integrating well literary manifestations in the social framework. Nevertheless, I believe that by observing the court through the prism of love, this work to some extent, and—even more so—the others, overstated its importance (the common explicit or implicit equation "love is courtliness," made by some scholars, is telling enough). This overstatement was done at the expense of another key code in medieval Islamic courts: the mastery of language or eloquence. Advanced linguistic competence was indispensable for any courtier, and love was after all learned, expressed, and inculcated by words.[40] At least at the court of al-Ṣāḥib, the most highlighted code, indispensable for proper functioning, was the command of language.

I would like to mention here several works that probe, in various ways, the relations between medieval Arabic literary output and broader social and cultural contexts. These works offer significant insights based on close textual reading and the application of analytic tools from the humanities and social sciences. Although without a close focus on the court, in *Poétique arabe*, Jamel Eddine Bencheikh attends thoughtfully to the social and cultural forces that molded and affected the literature and literary life of the first half of the third/eighth century.[41] Beatrice Gruendler's *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption* is an in-depth study of Ibn al-Rūmī's (221–83/836–96) praise poetry pointing to the intricate ways in which the poet used the genre to interact with his patron.[42] The poet–patron relationship in the classical Arabic literary tradition is scrutinized by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych in *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, with a focus on the poem-prize ritual exchange.[43] In *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad*,[44] Shawkat Toorawa sets out to portray writerly culture in the third/ninth century, its development and traits, as different from the model of patronized culture. Samer Ali's *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* sheds light on the *mujālasāt*, "collegial salons" of the third/ninth century, and their contribution to the process of canon creation.[45] Ali's book, as well as Toorawa's, contribute in delineating social frameworks and conditions of literary production which were emerging alternatives to the court model.

Recently, a collection of papers edited by Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung, *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, was published. The contributors dealt with various periods and aspects of the court, often stressing the lack of sufficient research on the topic. In each of their contributions, Nadia Maria El Cheikh and Syrinx von Hees even question whether the terms and concepts of "court" and "courtier" are applicable to the ʿAbbāsids and Ayyūbids they have studied.[46] In fact, the present book shows that we can certainly speak of a court institution in the pre-modern Islamic world. It also includes an elaborate discussion of the indigenous Arabic terminology in the texts. As already stated, my main goal will be to shed light on the intensive literary activity at the court of al-Ṣāḥib, and hence to elucidate the key role played by linguistic mastery in that elite milieu.

IV Description of the chapters

Chapter 1 addresses patronage in the literary field of al-Ṣāḥib's court. I examine al-Ṣāḥib's model of patronage, the duties and rights of the patron and protégés, and the way in which the economy of literary production was understood by those active in the field. The terminology used in the contemporary sources to describe literary patronage and production is discussed, and the illocutionary acts confirming the benefit-based relations in the literary field are analyzed.

Chapter 2 focuses on the courtiers: their function and use for the patron; the interaction modes between them and the patron; the social definition and subjective construal of the formal versus informal parts of al-Ṣāḥib's schedule; familiarity with and application of the Aristotelian concept of habitus; and the screening and auditioning by al-Ṣāḥib and intermediaries acting on his behalf. Then, we look into the frameworks and structures of literary activity at the court, where the courtiers played a major role. Events were governed by certain unscripted rules according to their type, and the courtiers were expected to perform successfully—guided by their courtly habitus—in varying situations providing different opportunities and risks. Their performance and response to challenges are evaluated alongside the strategies they adopted to affect the audience. A discussion of competition among the courtiers ends the chapter.

Chapter 3 concentrates on representative genres of the literary field as molds for the agents to cast their literary products and compete for standing in the field and the patron's benefits. This process necessitates that we conceive of genres as an interface between the composer and the audience, whose specific configurations and variety are determined by tradition in addition to the specific conditions of the field. The genres described in this chapter come with examples demonstrating their usage in the field.

Chapter 4 probes the hegemonic, or dominant, literary taste in the field. The underlying question is to what degree, if at all, al-Ṣāḥib's literary taste affected that of the poets who were his protégés. One should not take for granted that it was highly influenced, or even determined, by the patron without appropriate analysis.[47] Apart from other poetic evidence, I probe poetry recited on the occasion of al-Ṣāḥib's move to his new mansion in Esfahan (The Mansion Odes), in order to assess its stylistic features. I compare the findings with the stylistic preferences of the vizier to understand how and to what extent the poets responded to them.

Chapter 5 focuses on the well documented case of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, a philosophically informed littérateur of great talent who nevertheless failed in his attempt to achieve a lucrative and stable position at al-Ṣāḥib's court. Al-Tawḥīdī's interactions and performance at the court reveal a mirror image of the competent courtier. Nonetheless, inasmuch as his failure tells about the incompetent courtier, it tells about the competent one. This chapter illustrates how crucial the acquisition of the courtly habitus was for success at the court.

The Appendix presents the text of al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode with my translation and annotations where necessary.

Notes

1 On different aspects of the fourth/tenth century's cultural prosperity, see Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, tr. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac, 1937); and Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, 2nd rev. ed. (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1992).

2 Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, rev. ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 28–31.

3 See the articles collected in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

4 I will discuss Bourdieu's field concept in more detail at the beginning of Chapter 3.

5 I follow here Gadi Algazi and Rina Drory's employment of the term, which does not apply necessarily to every "court" in common usage. I do not refer here to highly hierarchical court systems limited to formalized ceremonies, but rather to social configurations in which power relations are dimmed at times to allow models of interactions and creativity based on cultural competences: Gadi Algazi and Rina Drory, "L'amour à la cour des Abbasides. Un code de compétence social," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 55e année-no 6 (Novembre–Décembre 2000): 1255–6.

6 See, for example, Y, III, 32.

7 Y, III, 30–3, 75, 124–5; *Akhlāq*, 127, 532–46; Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. Abū l-Qāsim Imāmī (Tehran: Dār Surūsh, 2002), VI, 207, 425; VII, *passim* (in this edition, Vol. VII covering the years 369–93/979–1002 is Abū Shujāʿ al-Rūdhrāwarī's *Dhayl*, i.e., continuation of Miskawayh's history); Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Dhikr akhbār Iṣbahān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), I, 214; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī l-Rūmī, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), II, 662–721; IV, 1892–5, 1897–1902; ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr (555–630/1160–1232), *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, ed. ʿUmar Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1997), VII, 301, 469–71; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, [1970]), I, 228–33; Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Josef van Ess (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1974), IX, 125–41; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), *al-Muntaẓam fī tawārīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), IX, 30–2; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (700–49/1301–49), *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1988 [facs. ed.]), XI, 120–3, and XXVI, 162, 190–1; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), *Taʾrīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1988), XXVII, 92–8; Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh al-Yāfiʿī (d. 768/1366), *Mirʾāt al-zamān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān* (Haidarabad: Maṭbaʿat Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1919), II, 421–4; ʿAlī b. Ẓāfir al-Azdī (567–613/1171–1216), *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣriyya, 1970), 177–8; Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Muḥammad al-Shuwaymī (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1985),

591–3; Ismāʿīl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn: asmāʾ al-muʾallifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn min kashf al-ẓunūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), V, 209; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1943), 136–7 and Sup. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), 198–9; *GAS*, II, 636–7; VIII, 206–8; Charles Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," in Julia Ashtiani *et al.* (eds), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 96–111; Claude Cahen and Charles Pellat, "Ibn ʿAbbād, Abū al-Ḳāsim Ismāʿīl," *EI2*; Claude Cahen, "Ibn al-ʿAmīd," *EI2*; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 259–72; Wilferd Madelung, "The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids and 'The Reign of the Daylam' (*Dawlat al-Daylam*)," [1969], repr. in *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Gower House: Variorum, 1992), VIII: 108, 169–71, 173; al-Ṣāḥib's *dīwān* survived only in a much truncated version. It was edited and supplemented by his poems collected from other sources (to the exclusion of obscene poetry): *Dīwān al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, ed. Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1974); a selection of al-Ṣāḥib's letters survived and was edited: *Rasāʾil al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām and Shawqī Ḍayf (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1946).

8 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʾānasa*, eds Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1966), I, 54–5; *Akhlāq*, 143–4, 296, 465–7 and *passim*; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṣadūq b. Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 381/991), *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Aʿlamī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlā, 1984), I, 12–16; Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad al-Bahlūlī l-Yamānī l-Muʿtazilī (d. 573/1177 or 1178), *Sharḥ qaṣīdat al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn (Baghdad: al-Maktaba al-Ahliyya, 1967), 36 and *passim*; al-Ṣāḥib, *Nuṣrat madhāhib al-zaydiyya*, ed. Nājī Ḥasan (Beirut: al-Dār al-Muttaḥida li-l-Nashr, 1981); Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2002), II, 137–41; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 95; Y, III, 106 (the poem quoted above); Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 102–4; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 270–1; on al-Rayy under al-Ṣāḥib as a center of Muʿtazilism and Muʿtazilī propaganda, see Wilferd Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," [1968], repr. in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), II: 114; Madelung argues in the context of al-Ṣāḥib's "great and lasting influence on Shiism in al-Rayy," that "he was not an Imamite himself [...rather] a Muʿtazilite who ranked Ali in excellence above the first caliphs but rejected the Imamite claim that Ali had been appointed by the Prophet as his successor": "Imāmism and Muʿtazilite Theology," [1979], repr. in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), VII: 20; Pellat ("Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 102–3) is justified in rejecting Madelung's argument, considering al-Ṣāḥib's denial of ʿAlī's appointment as based on a youthful work, while later evidence shows him as a Zaydī Muʿtazilī.

9 Y, III, 31–3; Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 109; Cahen and Pellat, "Ibn ʿAbbād."

10 Y, III, 31–3; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 706; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*. I, 229.

11 On the overshadowing of New Persian culture and production by Arabic in western Iran under the Būyids and the possible reasons for that, see Richard N. Frye, "The New Persian Renaissance in Western Iran," in George Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 225–31; Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, "The Idea of Iran in the Buyid Dominions," in Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart (eds), *Early Islamic Iran: The Idea of Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 153–60.

12 Al-Tawḥīdī mentions al-Ṣāḥib's debating theological issues with commoners in Persian at his court: *Akhlāq*, 144; al-Ṣāḥib was teaching a propagandist the Muʿtazilī tenets in Persian: ibid., 466; during their first meeting, al-Tawḥīdī relates that al-Ṣāḥib became angry with him. He turned to someone beside him and cursed al-Tawḥīdī in

Persian, "as it was interpreted to me": ibid., 306. Elsewhere, al-Tawḥīdī cites him using the Persian *zih* for bravo: *al-imtāʿ*, I, 56; on Persian poetry at the court of al-Ṣāḥib, see Chapters 2 and 3.

13

> [Al-Ṣāḥib] said about someone, who sided fanatically with the Persians against the Arabs, disgracing the latter for eating snakes: O he who out of ignorance finds fault with the Bedouins' having snakes as food!/The Persians' snakes crawl throughout the night to [their] sisters and mothers.
>
> Y, III, 102; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ (Abū Ẓaby: Hayʾat Abū Ẓaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-l-Turāth, 2009)

II, 919; on incest among Persians as an Arabic invective motif in the *ʿarabiyya* versus *shuʿūbiyya* polemics, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *Close Relationships: Incest and Inbreeding in Classical Arabic Literature* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005), 36–77; for historical background and various analyses of the *shuʿūbiyya*, see S. Enderwitz, "Shuʿūbiyya," *EI2*; according to another account, al-Ṣāḥib ordered Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī to extemporize a verse response in defense of the Arabs after a *shuʿūbī* poem was recited at his session. Following the (successful) response, the vizier let the *shuʿūbī* poet leave, warning him that he would be killed if he were ever seen again: Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 55–7; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-ʿAbbāsī (d. 963/1555), *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ ʿalā shawāhid al-talkhīṣ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1947), IV, 118–19; see also Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn, *Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: ḥayātuhu wa-adabuhu* (Baghdad: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957), 65–6 and Badawī Ṭabāna, *Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: al-wazīr, al-adīb, al-ʿālim* (Cairo: al-Muʾassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma, [1964]), 116–21. Āl Yāsīn sees in such manifestations the enmity of al-Ṣāḥib to anti-Arabism and Persian partiality (*shuʿūbiyya*) despite being a Persian himself. Yet, Ṭabāna, more at pains to prove the vizier's Arab descent, leans toward seeing him ethnically as an Arab and adds: "But the truth that defies the hesitation [about his descent] is that al-Ṣāḥib was an Arab in his senses and feelings … in his mind and thought … in his art and literature (*adab*) … and in his religion and creed."

14 The Banū l-Munajjim were a family of notable Persian descent. Many of its members were scholars and courtiers from the middle of the second/eighth century to the late fourth/tenth century (M. Fleischhammer, "Munadjdjim, Banū ʾl-," *EI2*). Al-Thaʿālibī pointed to their ancient heritage as courtiers of kings and leaders, and to their strong relationship with al-Ṣāḥib. He proceeded to cite a couplet by the vizier that read: "Banū Munajjim possess blazing sagacity and Persian-Arab merits (*maḥāsin ʿajamiyya ʿarabiyya*)/I have kept on praising them and spreading their excellence to the point of being blamed for vehement partiality (*shiddat al-ʿaṣabiyya*)": Y, III, 207–8.

15 Y, III, 31–3. For the sake of comparison, al-Thaʿālibī presents the names of poets serving al-Rashīd and those assembled by al-Ṣāḥib. It is important to remark that al-Thaʿālibī was not among the literary people patronized by al-Ṣāḥib and hence obviously biased. As said above, the anthologist's appreciation and admiration of the vizier and his court enterprise are visible throughout *Yatīmat al-dahr*, and therefore his observation should be taken as a candid opinion of a judicious and knowledgeable contemporary.

16 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, 57, 53; Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 117–19.

17 Cahen and Pellat, "Ibn ʿAbbād," *EI2*; on his success and efficiency as an administrator and military commander, see also Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 109.

18 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 94.

19 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, IV, 1895; II, 664; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VII, 497; Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 18–19 (see also ibid., 27).

20 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 119 (source of citations); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VII, 395; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 664.

21 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, 169, 181–2.
22 Ibid., 170, 182.
23 Y, III, 33; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 664.
24 Y, III, 33; for the expression *kābiran ʿan kābirin*, see Manfred Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), I, 28.
25 Bilal Orfali devoted an elaborate study to al-Thaʿālibī's oeuvre, in which he dated the beginning of the anthologist's work on *Yatīmat al-dahr* to 384/984: "The Works of Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (350–429/961–1039)," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 40, 3 (2009): 295.
26 Al-Thaʿālibī mentions his direct contact with these courtiers of al-Ṣāḥib in Y, I, 8; Y, III, 33 (Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī); Y, IV, 94 (al-Maʾmūnī); Y, III, 36, 40, 176 (Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī); Y, II, 28 (Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Karkhī); Y, III, 259–60 (Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī l-Jawharī).
27 On the printed editions of *Yatīmat al-dahr*, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature. Part Two: The Arabic Jargon Texts. The* Qaṣīda Sāsāniyyas of *Abū Dulaf and Ṣafī d-Dīn*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 190–1; Everett Rowson and Seeger Bonebakker, *A Computerized Listing of Biographical Data from the* Yatīmat al-Dahr *by al-Thaʿālibī* (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1980), 12–13; Bilal Orfali, "The Art of Anthology: Al-Thaʿālibī and His Yatīmat al-Dahr" (PhD Diss., Yale University, 2009), 63–4, 127–30.
28 Maurice Pomerantz, "Licit Magic and Divine Grace: The Life and Letters of Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995)" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2010).
29 Joel Kraemer, "The Ṣāḥib Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād: The Supremely Competent," in *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 259–72.
30 Ibid., 11–12.
31 Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād."
32 Cahen and Pellat, "Ibn ʿAbbād."
33 Jamel E. Bencheikh, "The Poetic Coterie of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 247 H): A Contribution to the Analysis of Authorities of Socio-Literary Legitimation," in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (ed.), *Early Islamic Poetry and Poetics: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*. Tr. Philip Simpson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009 [article first publ. 1977 in French]), 95–120.
34 Jean-Claude Vadet, *L'Esprit courtois en Orient dans les cinq premiers siècles de* l'Hégire (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1968).
35 It is remarkably the case in his discussion of al-Washshāʾ's elaboration of the ethics of love in *al-Ẓarf wa-l-ẓurafāʾ* as part of a social project emanating from the needs of the Persian secretarial group (Vadet, *L'Esprit courtois*, 317–51) and in his understanding of *adab*: "L'*adab* est le principe social par excellence, discipline, politesse et ideal, par lequel l'individu s'affirme comme membre d'un groupe" (ibid., 327).
36 Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
37 Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 20. See also pp. 14–19.
38 Ibid., x: "I prefer the view of scholars who regard *courtly love* as an essentially literary phenomenon expressive of a mode of thought that has close ties with courtly values."
39 Algazi and Drory, "L'amour à la cour des Abbasides."
40 In fact, Algazi and Drory noted the indispensable role literature (hence language) played in the inculcation of the love code, prior to "practical training": ibid., 1275–6; another difficulty regarding the code of love, noted by these scholars in their conclusion, is that it might have conflicted with other competing codes. In addition, they raise the possibility that the code of love *functioning as described* was limited to the life phase of young men, who were yet to assume power, while it might have had other functions for adult males: ibid., 1280–1.

41 Jamel E. Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe: précédée de essai sur un discours critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

42 Beatrice Gruendler, *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

43 Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

44 Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

45 Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

46 Nadia Maria El Cheikh, "Court and Courtiers: A Preliminary Investigation of Abbasid Terminology," in Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (eds), *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 80–90; Syrinx von Hees, "*The Guidance for Kingdoms*: Function of a 'Mirror for Princes' at Court and its Representation of a Court," in Fuess and Hartung (eds), *Court Cultures*, 370–82.

47 Bencheikh, for example, averred without furnishing any evidence (*Poétique arabe*, 27) that the poetry composed for the ruling elite was closely determined by it, given the dependency of the poets.

1 Al-Ṣāḥib

A potentate and patron

I The patron and his political power

Al-Ṣāḥib was a very powerful vizier and enjoyed a high level of autonomy. We saw in the introduction how this power was established on his administrative and military skills, the decentralized character of the Būyid ruling system, and his family heritage in administration. This is a significant fact, for the court he established was reflective of this power, and through the prestige accrued to the court, his power became legitimized to a higher degree. In this chapter, we will see how literary production took place in a concrete context of power relations, shaping specific patterns of patronage.

The commonly used terminology for literary patronage is the one also found in the realms of Būyid administration and the military. As already indicated by Roy Mottahedeh in connection to administrative and military patronage, the words "patronage," "patron," and "protégé" originate in the root *ṣ.n.ʿ.*, whose basic meaning (Form I) is "to make," and in addition "to tend," "to rear," "to nourish," and "to treat well." The Form VIII verb has the similar meaning of "to rear" and "to choose" with the reflexive idea of "for oneself."[1] In the sources, we commonly find *iṣṭināʿ*, the Form VIII *maṣdar*, used for "patronage," while the active participle *muṣṭaniʿ* denotes "patron," and the noun *ṣanīʿ* or *ṣanīʿa* (pl. *ṣanāʾiʿ*) "protégé." A good example that combines all these terms is given by al-Tawḥīdī, who quotes the poet al-Zaʿfarānī:

> Ibn ʿAbbād governs his protégés badly (*sayyiʾ al-siyāsa li-ṣanāʾiʿihi*). This is because he gives a person some present, and then afflicts him with such harshness that makes him wish for a bunch of date-stones from the rows of palm-trees [instead of the vizier's present]. The noble patron (*muṣṭaniʿ*) is he whose patronage of tongue is above his patronage of hand (*iṣṭināʿuhu bi-lisānihi fawqa iṣṭināʿihi bi-yadihi*).[2]

The Form VIII verb *iṣṭanaʿa* meaning "to patronize" occurs, for example, in al-Thaʿālibī's praise of al-Ṣāḥib, when he itemizes the objectives of his ambition. Among these, he refers generically to "a learned man he would patronize" (*fāḍil yaṣṭaniʿuhu*).[3]

Yet, the patron–protégé relationship between al-Ṣāḥib and his literary people is not always explicitly expressed by words derived from the root *ṣ.n.ʿ.*, which have an evident sense of hierarchy. Often, other terms are used which (i) are suggestive of hierarchy in a more subtle way, or (ii) apparently have no such sense at all: (i) *nadīm* (pl. *nudamāʾ* or *nudmān*; "a boon companion") and *jalīs* (pl. *julasāʾ*; "a companion with whom one sits") frequently occur, regularly in the context of entertainment sessions (*majālis al-uns*);[4] and (ii) *ṣadīq* (pl. *aṣdiqāʾ*), *ṣāḥib* (pl. *aṣḥāb*) and *akh* (pl. *ikhwān*) all in the sense of "a friend."[5] All these words suggest an intimate relationship with the vizier, and so more than one of them may be applied to the same person who has this type of connection with him. Yet, they may appear together with *ṣanīʿ*, as in the case of Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin, who was both described as a famous protégé of al-Ṣāḥib (*wa-min … mashāhīr ṣanāʾiʿihi*) and a *nadīm*.[6] This is indeed a telling juxtaposition to be heeded; while *ṣanīʿ* evokes the more formal aspect of patronage, the other expressions (type [i]) and [ii] alike) call to mind its informal aspect. Linked together, both are well representative of the ever-shifting double face of the court patronage bond.[7] It is important to remember that while it is justified and convenient to apply the English word "courtiers" for the agents active in the literary field,[8] there exists no single paralleling term in Arabic. By means of the more analytic separation to *ṣanīʿ* on the one hand, and *nadīm*, *jalīs*, *ṣadīq*, *ṣāḥib*, or *akh* on the other, the indigenous Arabic terminology is more focused on the formal versus informal aspects that make up court patronage.

A fact that had an important bearing on the patronage patterns at the court of al-Ṣāḥib was that, albeit a vizier of two Būyid *amīr*s, he was often referred to in the sources as a king (*malik* or *shāh*). That he was addressed or otherwise depicted as a king points to his significant power as a quasi-autonomic ruler, and it tells a lot about the expectations the protégés had of him. We see that in many odes recited to al-Ṣāḥib, as in the following line from the Mansion Ode of al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan, the superintendent of the post and intelligence (*Ṣāḥib al-Barīd*) [*al-basīṭ*]:

> *Wa-hādhihī wuzarāʾu l-mulki qāṭibatan*
> *Bayādiqun lam tazal mā baynanā shāhā*
>
> And these viziers of kingship—all without exception—
> Are pawns; you are still—as long as you live among us—a king[9]

Ismāʿīl al-ʿĀmirī connects in a eulogy al-Ṣāḥib's supposed kingship with his liberality, and finishes it with two lines elevating him above kings [*al-basīṭ*]:

> *Lākinnahū malikun hāmat ʿazāʾimuhū*
> *Bi-l-jūdi fa-hwa yarūmu l-badhla bi-l-ḥiyalī*
>
> …

Yā man daʿathu mulūku l-arḍi rāʿiyahā
Ḥāshā li-mā anta rāʿīhī mina l-khalalī

Innā l-mulūka ʿalā ayyāminā muqalun
Fa-khluq bi-raʾyika ajfānan ʿalā l-muqalī

But he is a king whose resolution is in love with
Liberality, and he desires giving bountifully by [employing] stratagems

…

O he whom the kings of the land summoned as its guardian,
Far be all that you guard from harm!

The kings are indeed eyeballs over our fates,
So create with your discretion eyelids over the eyeballs![10]

One may make the argument that addressing high-ranking political figures, manifesting great success and power, as kings was a legitimate panegyric hyperbole. In fact, al-Buḥturī did the same in an ode composed in 229/845 in praise of the general Muḥammad al-Thaghrī celebrating his campaigns against the Bābak insurrection.[11] Still, we find al-Thaʿālibī, who was not—by any way—a protégé of al-Ṣāḥib's, subsuming the vizier more than once under the category of kings in his *Fürstenspiegel*. He cites two lines from a Mansion Ode recited to al-Ṣāḥib by "a stranger" in the section on grandiose building projects of kings as a way to leave "traces on the face of time." Apart from the reference to al-Ṣāḥib, the section discusses the construction activity of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs al-Mutawakkil and al-Manṣūr, in addition to that of the Būyid *amīr* Bahāʾ al-Dawla (d. 403/1012). In a "Section on Kings' Courtiers," al-Ṣāḥib is quoted as speaking in favor of one of Banū l-Munajjim. Some of the members of this notable family were counted, as we know, among the vizier's courtiers. Another powerful vizier of the Būyids that speaks highly of a courtier of his in this section is al-Muhallabī.[12]

In 347/958, the young al-Ṣāḥib traveled to Baghdad as a secretary with the future Būyid *amīr*, Muʾayyid al-Dawla, to ask for the hand of Muʿizz al-Dawla's daughter.[13] From there he sent his travelogue (*al-rūzanāmaja*) to Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd informing him about his social and intellectual interactions. Al-Ṣāḥib met with al-Muhallabī and took part in his sessions where he encountered his noteworthy courtiers, enjoyed great music and in general was impressed by the cultural refinement of his court.[14] In one of the lines sung by a slave-girl behind the screen to al-Muhallabī and to those present in his session, al-Muhallabī was addressed as a king (*malik*).[15] In light of al-Ṣāḥib's strong impression from his meeting with al-Muhallabī, it is likely that he considered him (aside from his patron Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd) to be a model of a powerful vizier with some privileges of a ruler reflected in a sumptuous court.

One of the indications of al-Ṣāḥib's quasi-ruler status was his bestowal of robes of honor (*khilaʿ*) and holding *nithār* ("scattering") ceremonies. The vizier had a repository of robes (*khizānat al-khilaʿ*), and one winter, we are told, the number of silk turbans included with the robe outfits given to servants and retinue reached 820. The vizier, we learn, was much fond of silk and dressed his servants and retinue with superb silken garments. One day, the poet Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī entered the mansion of al-Ṣāḥib and saw "sovereign robes of honor and gifts carried by the order of al-Ṣāḥib while the people were organizing the ceremony of scattering for them" (*al-khilaʿ wa-l-aḥbiya al-sulṭāniyya al-maḥmūla bi-rasm al-Ṣāḥib wa-l-nās yuqimūna rasm al-nithār la-hā*).[16] At some point in his turbulent career at al-Ṣāḥib's court, the poet Ibn Bābak was granted a *khilʿa*, which he mentioned in an ode lauding the generosity of the vizier.[17] On yet another occasion, the vizier bestowed a robe of honor on the arch-criminal al-Aqṭaʿ, as recounted by the shocked al-Tawḥīdī.[18]

Despite al-Ṣāḥib's quasi-ruler privileges and governmental style, he was after all not quite a ruler. In our context, it is important to bear that in mind, given the limitations it placed on his ability to co-opt a first-rank littérateur like Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābī (313–84/925–94). A descendant of two distinguished related Ṣābian families of physicians, philosophers, and scientists (and a physician and astronomer himself), Abū Isḥāq was appointed chief secretary by Muʿizz al-Dawla in 349/960. Yet, ever since the death of al-Muhallabī in 352/963, his administrative career fluctuated between high and low points, reaching its lowest between 367–71/978–81. Caught up in the rivalry between ʿIzz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār and his cousin ʿAḍud al-Dawla, Abū Isḥāq was held under arrest by ʿAḍud al-Dawla during this period and his life was at risk. Shortly before ʿAḍud al-Dawla's death he was released—according to al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī's version, thanks to al-Ṣāḥib's involvement—but was never again employed until his death.[19] Al-Ṣābī was considered to be one of the greatest littérateurs of his age, and the long entries dedicated to him in literary anthologies, like *Yatīmat al-dahr* and Yāqūt's *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, which are full of his prose and poetry, attest to that.[20]

Al-Ṣāḥib had an extremely favorable view of al-Ṣābī's talent. Al-Thaʿālibī comments:

> Trustworthy people such as Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Karkhī, who was very close to al-Ṣāḥib, informed me that he often used to say: "The secretaries of the world and the eloquent prose stylists (*bulaghāʾ*) of the age are four: al-ustādh [Abū l-Faḍl] b. al-ʿAmīd, Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Yūsuf, Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī, and if I were to wish so, I would mention the fourth"—meaning himself.[21]

This view about the four great prose stylists of the time was probably an accepted one during that period, for we find the vizier Ibn Saʿdān asking al-Tawḥīdī about al-Ṣāḥib's eloquence (*balāgha*) and "manner" (*ṭarīqa*) vis à vis Ibn al-ʿAmīd, Ibn Yūsuf, and al-Ṣābī.[22] A keen admirer of al-Ṣābī, al-Ṣāḥib wished following his release, "either out of desire or superiority," that he join his court guaranteeing him an attractive reward. Nevertheless, al-Ṣābī declined, despite his poverty and unemployment, "and did not abase himself to join the entourage (*jumla*) of al-Ṣāḥib, after [the latter] had been among his peers and adorned himself with leadership (*riyāsa*) during his days [in office]."[23] It is evident, then, that even though al-Ṣāḥib obtained the leadership position of a vizier, to someone like al-Ṣābī, who had already been his peer as a secretary and a high-ranking civil servant of *amīr*s, the formal gap between the leadership position of an *amīr* and that of a vizier did matter. Nonetheless, al-Ṣāḥib and al-Ṣābī still maintained a long-distance patronage relationship: "Al-Ṣāḥib loved him ardently, sided with him, and took good care of him—despite the distance—by presents, and Abū Isḥāq would serve his court by praise poetry."[24]

Al-Ṣāḥib's status as a quasi-ruler, falling short of being considered a full-fledged one, may also be viewed through the prism of praise poetry. While *Yatīmat al-dahr* comprises numerous praise poems (mostly selections but also complete poems, both in his entry and all over the anthology) in which the vizier is extolled, one comes across very few poems in which he extols others. The latter, seven in number (four selections from odes and three monothematic poems), are located in a section dubbed *mulaḥ min madāʾiḥihi* within his long entry. These were, naturally, addressed to his superiors in various points of his career and arranged in this order: ʿAḍud al-Dawla (three), Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (one), Muʾayyid al-Dawla (one), and Fakhr al-Dawla (two).[25] This balance reflects well his rank as a powerful vizier with a significant span of autonomy, but not quite a ruler. Being positioned just below the very top did not only facilitate the founding of a flourishing court—rather, *the* court of his time; it also had significant implications on al-Ṣāḥib's literary style, and this fact should be highlighted. When al-Thaʿālibī takes up the much discussed question of the best prose writer (*al-tarjīḥ … fī l-kitāba*) among al-Ṣāḥib and Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī, he makes the following observation: "Al-Ṣāḥib would write as he pleased, while Abū Isḥāq would write as he was ordered, and between the two conditions there exists a great difference."[26]

II The court: terminology and usage

Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin was a talented Esfahani poet and prose writer, whom al-Ṣāḥib had patronized and made his librarian. When he was admitted again to the vizier's court in Jurjān after leaving his service disrespectfully ten years earlier, he sent a letter to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī[27] starting thus:

> My letter … is from the court (*ḥaḍra*) which we leave voluntarily and return to out of necessity. We go away from its shade when benefit (*al-niʿma*) makes us insolent and unthankful, and then we come back to its sides when exile teaches us a lesson.[28]

The word *ḥaḍra*, "court," stems from the verb *ḥ.ḍ.r.* whose basic sense (Form I) is "to be, or become, present." Originally an infinitive noun (*maṣdar*), the meaning of *ḥaḍra* is “presence,” and then “a place of presence.” Applied as a title to a great man with whom people are wont to be present, it means “an object of resort.” The other two related meanings are spatial: “the vicinity of a thing” and “court, or yard, in front, or extending from the sides, of a house.”[29] *Ḥaḍra* is commonly used in the texts when referring to al-Ṣāḥib, and it is often difficult to differentiate between the two fundamental strands of meanings having to do with the idea of presence in/with or the location where it takes place. In fact, the word “court” in English has these strands of meanings as well; in the senses relevant to us, “the place where a sovereign (or other high dignitary) resides and holds state, attended by his retinue,” “the establishment and surroundings of a sovereign with his councillors and retinue,” and “the body of courtiers collectively; the retinue … of a sovereign or high dignitary.”[30] Therefore, *ḥaḍra* should be translated as “court” without attempting to distinguish between these strands of meanings, something which is often difficult to do, let alone artificial.[31] An exception to that is the unequivocal expression *al-ḥaḍra al-ʿāliya*, a deferential circumlocution referring to great men that should be translated as “the exalted object of resort.”[32]

A synonym of *ḥaḍra* is *fināʾ* signifying lexically “a yard or an exterior court in front, or extending from the sides of a house.”[33] When it is applied to al-Ṣāḥib in the sources, however, it is impossible to conceive of it only in the spatial sense, and it is necessary to add the institutional and relational (i.e., presence with the patron) senses of the word “court,” too.[34] It is likewise with the words *sāḥa*, “the court, or open area, of a house,” and *ṣaḥn*, “the court of the middle of a house.”[35] Slightly different from the four terms discussed so far and more ambiguous is *dharan*; despite sharing with them the sense of “court, or yard of a house,” it has the lexical senses of “shelter” and “protection” too, which often convey the idea of financial support (to a protégé).[36] Therefore, *dharan*, appearing commonly enough in respect to al-Ṣāḥib, frequently does not mean “court,” but “shelter” or “protection” mostly in the context of financial support extended to the vizier’s protégés. Indeed, the latter two senses are more explicitly and narrowly focused on patronage itself. This difference that sets *dharan* apart from *ḥaḍra*, *fināʾ*, *sāḥa*, and *ṣaḥn* is made visible through the instances that follow. A line from an ode recited by Ibn Bābak to al-Ṣāḥib in Jurjān, in which “he spoke boldly against his generosity trusting his affection,” reads [*al-wāfir*]:

> *A-asḥabu fī* ***dharāka*** *fuḍūla dhaylī*
> *Wa-yasḥabu dhayla niʿmatika l-ḍuyūfū*
>
> Should I drag along at your **court** the redundant part of my skirt
> While the guests draw the skirt of your favor?![37]

Dragging along (the redundant part of) one’s skirt means strutting proudly, and hence *dharan* here should have a spatial and concrete primary sense of “a court.”[38] In contrast, the following selection from an ode recited by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī to al-Ṣāḥib features *dharan* in its more prevalent sense of protection/shelter [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Wa-innī wa-ilzāmīka bi-l-shiʿri baʿdamā
*Taʿallamtuhū min-ka l-**dharā** wa-l-fawāḍilā*

Ka-mulzimi rabbi l-dāri ujrata dārihī
Wa-mithluka aʿṭā min ṭarīqayni nāʾilā

Indeed, I—imposing on you by means of poetry,
Having learned it from you, [to grant me] **shelter** and gifts—

Am like one imposing on the landlord [to pay] the rent of his residence,
And someone like you granted a favor in two ways[39]

Since al-Khwārazmī thanks al-Ṣāḥib for granting him *dharan* in addition to gifts, the meaning here cannot be "court" (as something *awarded*). Between "protection" and "shelter," it is more likely that he aimed at the latter, given the comparison to the landlord who pays the rent, and for being one of the two constituents of the favor awarded to him ("and someone like you granted a favor in two ways," that is, free accommodation and gifts). In the last instance—a line from an ode by Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī recited to the vizier—the meaning of *dharan* is ambiguous, and may be understood as either "court," or "shelter," or "protection" [*al-basīṭ*]:

*Innī la-ʾahwā maqāmī fī **dharāka** ka-mā*
Tahwā yamīnuka fī l-ʿāfīna an tahabā

Indeed, I like my position at your **court** (or **shelter** or **protection**)
As your right hand likes to award the seekers of favors[40]

A lexical synonym of *dharan* as "shelter" and "protection," but *not* "court," is *ẓill*.[41] The secretary and poet Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid says in a poem to al-Ṣāḥib [*al-ṭawīl*]:

*Fa-in ẓallati l-āmālu tashkuru **ẓillahū***
Fa-inna lisāna l-māli qad ẓalla shākiyā

Ka-anna ilāha l-khalqi qāla li-jūdihī
Afiḍ kulla mā taḥwīhi wa-rzuq ʿibādiyā

Thus, if the hopes [of favor seekers] keep thanking his **protection**
The tongue of money keeps complaining

As if the deity of creation told his liberality:
"Pour forth whatever you possess and provide [it] to my servants!"[42]

By the same token, Ibn Bābak, when asking al-Ṣāḥib for his compassion in a poem, says [*al-khafīf*]:

> *Ana mudh ḥarraqat samūmuka* ***ẓillī***
> *Jamratun fī shuwāẓika l-wahhājī*
>
> Since your hot sandstorm burned my **shelter**,
> I am an ember in your blazing flame[43]

To conclude, in practice—even if not always lexically—*ḥaḍra*, *finā*ʾ, *sāḥa*, and *ṣaḥn*, terms frequently found in texts dealing with al-Ṣāḥib's literary patronage enterprise, share a broad meaning of "court"; to wit, in both the social (presence in a place/with another or others) and the spatial (the location where gathering takes place) senses. *Dharan*—the more "tricky" one—may at times share these with them, but would more often have a more specific sense (synonymous with *ẓill*) of protection/shelter, which is a cardinal constituent of patronage. While this last sense may be directly expressed by *dharan*, it is connoted even when the word is used in the broad sense of "court." Likewise, protection/shelter is implied whenever *ḥaḍra*, *finā*ʾ, *sāḥa*, and *ṣaḥn* are used. Therefore, the broad sense of "court" includes in practical usage a non-lexical institutional sense in which patronage is a crucial element.

III Benefit for gratitude

It is the bond of patronage—the cornerstone of the court institution—that should be now discussed in greater detail. This bond between the patron and the protégé was a type of acquired loyalty between individuals based on benefit (*niʿma*) in exchange for gratitude. Roy Mottahedeh defined and discussed this type of acquired loyalty, alongside others, in relation to the Būyid military and civil administration.[44] The ties created by benefit were not contracted ceremoniously like oaths, but could nonetheless be formal and were often considered binding.

> *Niʿma* differed from the oath and the vow in that benefaction and gratitude were less definable commitments, and commitments that could be retracted; in contrast, an oath or vow was a clear commitment that could be retracted only in extraordinary circumstances.[45]

According to the commercial analogy frequently and self-consciously used, this type of loyalty was an open-ended barter in benefits and gratitude; "for all the calculus of benefit, neither seller nor customer wanted a final 'reckoning' of accounts between them, since such a reckoning would sever the bonds of loyalty that the exchange had created."[46]

Al-Ṣāḥib used to praise al-Buḥturī's emblematic words, "gratitude is the breeze of benefits" (*al-shukr nasīm al-niʿam*).[47] The benefits conferred by the vizier on his courtiers were material and abstract. Material benefits were commonly gifts of money, often combined with garments. We should bear in mind that the vizier spent very generously on philanthropy and patronage: more than 100,000 dinars per year, "seeking worldly prestige and heavenly reward," according to the historian Abū Saʿd al-Ābī, a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib; and during the month of Ramaḍān, he spent more than in all other months combined.[48] Standard gifts for courtiers ranged from 100 dirhams plus a garment (*thawb*) to 500 dirhams. A 1,000 dirham gift was considered rare, and higher amounts very rare. Aside from gifts of money and garments (or garments exclusively), material benefits could include other presents, accommodation, or even the much coveted profits from the land tax of an estate (*ḍayʿa*).[49] For the sake of comparison, a secretary entering the service of al-Ṣāḥib was reported to have been assigned a position with a 500 dirham monthly salary.[50] An abstract benefit refers to the position of power and significance attained simply by the closeness to the great vizier, as well put by the poet al-Zaʿfarānī in his Mansion Ode [*al-khafīf*]:

Ajmaʿa l-nāsu annahū afḍalu l-nā
Si ḍṭirāran aghnā ʿani l-taqlīdī

Fa-li-hādhā aʿuddu qurbiya min-hū
Niʿmatan laysa fawqahā min mazīdī

The people have unanimously agreed that he is the best of all
To have recourse to, and the least in need of following [others]

This is why I consider my closeness to him
A benefit above which there is nothing more[51]

Even if not originally material, the abstract benefit of closeness to the vizier would often be converted to concrete economic gain. Not only for the availability of significant means and possessions, thanks to which the vizier could easily reward those near him; but also for the fact that closeness to such an eminent person significantly increased one's chances to move to another profitable position (often supported by al-Ṣāḥib's recommendation letters, to be discussed later). The material and abstract benefits of al-Ṣāḥib were usually gained by the same people, although the minority whom he supported without physical attendance at the court (like the poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj) could obviously not benefit from his closeness. Both types of benefits were a mark of prestige for those literary men of the period, who gained them, as said by the poet Abū l-Ḥasan al-Salāmī (336–93/947–1003) in a praise ode to the vizier: "We seek your grace from afar *to be honored* and obtain it close at hand."[52]

While *niʿma* is the key term defining the type of patron–protégé relation found in al-Ṣāḥib's court (as attested, for instance, by the expressions *shukr al-niʿma/kufr al-niʿma*, "gratitude for benefit"/"ingratitude for benefit"), other terms designating the benefits of the vizier, the awarding patron, appear in the sources as well. These, however, are employed without suggesting an alternative type of relation, and should usually be understood as synonymous with *niʿma*: *nuʿmā* (an exact synonym of *niʿma* derived from the same root); *ilan* or *alan* (pl. *ālāʾ*), "grace"; *birr* and *khayr*, both meaning "beneficence," "favor"; *rifd*, "gift"; *ʿaṭiyya*, "present"; *minḥa*, "grant"; and *nāʾil*, "award."[53]

In the case of the Būyid military and civil administration, the gratitude of those receiving benefits usually amounted to allegiance and cooperation with the processes of government. However, that of the literary agents who were al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers was different. Their gratitude meant committed participation in the literary and social life of the court, loyally adhering to the explicit and implicit rules set by al-Ṣāḥib, and accepting his elevated status and privileges as the patron. Yet, more than anything else, this gratitude found expression in acting as the vizier's public relations personnel, as it were, by means of composing praise poetry aimed at spreading everywhere the good reputation of the vizier. At the same time, in addition to good publicity for the patron, the poetry of both professional and non-professional poets who were al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers contained direct and indirect messages acknowledging the gratitude of the poets, and affirming (or reaffirming) their full commitment to the patronage bond of loyalty in speech acts. This procedure was necessary especially for the lack of a fixed formal formula of a binding oath to the patron ceremoniously declared, or a contract signed by both parties, as in some other established types of relations during that period. As we shall see, such poetic messages delivered in front of the vizier were in practice commissive (and other) illocutionary acts, even if not as binding as ceremoniously taken oaths.

Moreover, whenever literary people also held offices or performed administrative or political tasks—for example, Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin (the librarian of al-Ṣāḥib), and Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī (doubling as al-Ṣāḥib's spy in Sāmānid lands, according to al-Tawḥīdī)—their gratitude was measured in addition by proper fulfillment of their duties in these capacities. It is noteworthy that Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī expressed his desire to join the vizier's army as a fighter in a letter to al-Ṣāḥib, when he came to Jurjān to fight the *amīr* Qābūs b. Washmgīr. Abū Bakr considered joining the vizier's army his and other literary protégés' obligation to him, given his benefaction to them.[54]

Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, better known as al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī (d. 392/1002), was one of al-Ṣāḥib's most notable protégés. A learned littérateur, poet, and Shāfiʿī jurist, he joined the court after extensive travels. He became very close to the vizier, and was appointed by him to the office of the Qāḍī of Jurjān.[55] In the introduction to his non-extant *maghāzī* work, *Tahdhīb al-taʾrīkh*, preserved in *Yatīmat al-dahr*, the Qāḍī sets out the two objectives, religious and worldly, that motivated him in writing it. Before we approach them, however, it is important to note briefly that this historical work was written in ornate prose style (*inshāʾ*), which was famously al-Ṣāḥib's preferred prose style. As such, this work was valued not only for its historical content but equally for its rhetorical merits. Indeed, the introduction parts cited by al-Thaʿālibī are aimed at illustrating his excellent prose style, and hence it is a manifestation, or position-taking in the terms of Pierre Bourdieu, in the literary field.[56]

The religious objective of the work is to make manifest God's great succor to the Muslims at the time of the Prophet and after his death, which led them—a few against many—to astonishing victories. The Qāḍī undertakes to "call attention to the graces of God and point out His benefits" (*tadhkīr bi-ālāʾ allāh wa-tanbīh ʿalā niʿam allāh*) by telling edifying stories about the ancients and early Muslims, and by expounding admonitory Qurʾānic verses.[57] Thus, "the intelligent man will strive to retain God's benefit (*niʿma*) to him through gratitude (*shukr*), which the people to whom God denied those benefits had neglected. He is wary of the calamities of ingratitude (*ghawāʾil al-kufr*) that made those retributions descend upon them"; the worldly objective is:

> to raise at the court of the glorious al-Ṣāḥib—may God make the splendor of knowledge lasting through his long life—someone to take my place in reiterating my reputation at his court, and repeating my name at his session. [It is, likewise, to raise] someone to act in my stead in the fierce competition of his service for acknowledging the claim of his benefit (*al-iʿtirāf bi-ḥaqq niʿmatihi*). I knew I would not [be able to] appoint anyone to take my place, who is closer to him in kinship … and nobler at his court in the way of dignity and status than knowledge. It thrives near him as shoots of a palm tree, and is then multiplied as abundant production, is sweet in taste, fragrant in odor, and excellent in renown. Hence, I chose this book, relying on its distinction, and knowing its close standing [to him]. And why should it not be for him distinguished and high-ranking, amiable and affable, while it is solely the offspring of his upbringing and the fruit of his shaping…?! If it had not been for his care, [my] intention would not have been firm; if it had not been for his guidance, [my] astuteness would not have been penetrating; if it had not been for his assistance, [my] state of affairs would not have been good. And what keeps him away from honoring the disciplines of knowledge and glorifying them, from advancing them and making them closer, while he is the one whom God raised for them as a model, put him in charge of them as a lighthouse, made him a support for them, and a cause for their revival?![58]

The Qāḍī's introduction is revealing for stressing the duty of responding thankfully to a benefit—that of God as well as that of man—in a telling parallel. His two objectives may be concisely put as: highlighting the indispensable divine intervention in favor of the Prophet and early Muslims ("religious"); and preserving his high position at the court of al-Ṣāḥib while absent, by means of a proxy—a book holding cherished knowledge ("worldly"). The *niʿma* of God is His intervention in favor of humans, and in the context of the Qāḍī's *maghāzī* work, especially the intervention that made Islam a victorious religion. The Prophet himself, described once as "[God's] benefit lavishly bestowed on us," is an important component of it.[59] The *niʿma* of al-Ṣāḥib is his much fought-over support, not merely financial, but as the author spells out clearly, intellectual and spiritual as a patron totally committed to the cause of knowledge. From the "worldly" point of view then, the Qāḍī composed his historical work to keep on responding gratefully to the *niʿma* of al-Ṣāḥib. By doing so, he tried to make sure he remain a valued and rewarded courtier, despite the distance that set the patron and protégé apart. Describing the book as "someone to act in my stead in the fierce competition of his service for acknowledging the claim of his benefit," the Qāḍī did not conceal his concern that his standing might be lowered while absent, given the possibly successful manifestations of competitors.[60] The analogy found here between the duty of gratitude to the *niʿma* of God and al-Ṣāḥib, using the same terms and referring to the same kind of relation, although remarkable for being outlined in the same context, should be hardly surprising. The relation between man and God as depicted in the Qurʾān was shown by Roy Mottahedeh to serve as a model for the moral relation between ruler and subject, in the case of benefit-based obligations and others.[61]

The *niʿma* of God to man is placed alongside that of man to man also in Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin's letter to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī:

> The benefits (*niʿam*) of God upon our lord al-Ṣāḥib—may God perpetuate His support to him—follow one another, and His favors (*ayādīhi*) to him are multiplied. I see the beneficiaries (*awliyāʾ al-niʿam*)[62]—May God abase their enemies—vying every day for extolling him in beauty, and their minds compete in honoring him vigorously.[63]

In this passage benefits are presented in a clear hierarchical order: first from God to the ruler, and then from the ruler to his subjects. Whereas the way the ruler (i.e., al-Ṣāḥib) responds to these multiple benefits from God is not specified, the way the subjects respond is. The poets receiving the benefits of al-Ṣāḥib are displayed as fighting daily over the much-sought-after duty to praise him in poetry. Similarly to the Qāḍī's introduction, the dynamic of preserving benefit by gratitude is revealed here by al-Khāzin, too.

The idea of the benefits descending in a hierarchical order from God to the patron and then to his protégés appears in an even more evident way in a letter sent from al-Rayy in 366/976 by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī to the tax collector (*bundār*) of Nīshāpūr after al-Ṣāḥib was reappointed a vizier: "Praise be to God the Sublime for the benefit (*niʿma*) to him [=al-Ṣāḥib] first and to us through him last."[64] While distinguishing the ruler—in this case al-Ṣāḥib—from those lower in rank under his tutelage, this order reveals the expectations of him, and his own duty to pass down the goodness of God. Indeed, in the Islamic tradition, the wealth of the powerful is often conceived as a blessing from God, but with this privilege comes the duty to pass down a portion of it to their inferiors, as stated in a *ḥadīth* attributed by ʿAlī to the Prophet: "The benefit of God to a person will not become great unless the burden of the people becomes great upon him. Hence, he who does not undertake this burden of the people, exposes that benefit to cessation."[65] Along the same lines, the *imām* Muḥammad al-Bāqir said: "He upon whom [God] confers a benefit following which he confers upon the people, obtains a safeguard against blame and casts off the tie of bad outcomes from his neck."[66]

A point to note here is that the patron's support to his literary protégés is on the same level as philanthropic activity. The same process of benefit transfer from God to the patron and through him to his literary protégé (as we saw in respect to al-Ṣāḥib) is the one appearing in the tradition with reference to the duties of the powerful to pass down benefit in general, probably with an emphasis on financial aid. In fact, the best proof for this analogy between cultural patronage and philanthropy is the normal use of shared vocabulary for both financial aid to poets and the poor, in such words as *niʿma*, *iḥsān*, *birr*, etc.

Al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers would often state in their poems the constituents of the benefit and acknowledge their gratitude for it through illocutionary acts. Here it is necessary to briefly outline a few rudimentary notions of speech act theory as introduced by J.L. Austin and developed by John Searle. In *How to Do Things With Words*, Austin specified three main sorts of speech acts in language usage: locutionary acts are performed by speakers when they utter sentences with a certain propositional reference, as when giving a description; illocutionary acts with different forces are performed when speakers intend to execute conventional acts, as in making promises or commands; perlocutionary acts are performed whenever speakers' utterances have consequences or effects on hearers (e.g., delighting or persuading them). Austin later realized that illocutionary acts are essential for meaning and understanding in language in general beyond performative sentences, describing being just as much an action as ordering. At first, performative sentences had been construed by him to constitute the opposite of constative sentences. While the latter may be either true or false according to their agreement with the condition of things in the world, these values cannot be applied to the former, which instead are happy or unhappy according to the success or lack of success of speakers in meeting certain conditions in the proper context. Illocutionary acts with felicity conditions are then the minimal complete units of human linguistic communication *in toto*, and so making a statement is an illocutionary act just as making a promise, for example.[67]

Searle contributed to the development of speech act theory by making a case for the limited number of all possible types of illocutionary acts which had been considered to be infinite. In every illocutionary act there is a distinction between: (i) the content of the act; and (ii) the type of act it is, or—in other words—the illocutionary force it has. The structure of illocutionary acts may therefore be represented as *F(p)*, where *F* stands for illocutionary force and *p* for propositional content. The sentences "please leave the room" and "you will leave the room," for example, express illocutionary acts with the same propositional content (that you will leave the room) but with different forces (request vs. prediction). In order to narrow down the potentially enormous number of types of illocutionary acts, Searle suggests focusing on certain common features by introducing the idea of illocutionary point. Each type of illocution has a point or purpose which is internal to its being an act of that type. An illocutionary point is just one component of an illocutionary force but it is its most important and basic one. For example, the point of statements and descriptions is to tell people how things are, and the point of promises and vows is to commit the speaker to doing something.

> When a person makes a promise, he or she might make a promise for a variety of reasons, and with a variety of different degrees of strength. But insofar as it is a promise, then, qua promise, it *counts as* a commitment or an undertaking of an obligation by the speaker to do something for the hearer.[68]

Searle proceeds to argue for the existence of only five different types of illocutionary points: (i) the *assertive* point presents the proposition as representing a state of affairs in the world, like in statements and descriptions; (ii) the *directive* point is to attempt to get hearers to behave in such a way as to make their behavior match the propositional content of the directive, like in orders, commands, and requests; (iii) the *commissive* point is a commitment by the speaker to undertake the course of action represented in the propositional content, like in promises, vows, pledges, contracts, guarantees, and threats (albeit the latter run against the hearers' interest and not for their benefit as in the other instances); (iv) the *expressive* point is to express the sincerity condition of the speech act. Examples are apologies, thanks, and congratulations; and (v) the *declaratory* point is to bring about a change in the world by representing it as having been changed, like in "I pronounce you man and wife" and "War is hereby declared."[69]

It is not difficult to detect illocutionary acts—especially those whose points are assertive, commissive, and expressive—in the praise poetry composed by al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers and performed in front of him. They are usually located at the parts of the poem focusing on the patron–protégé relation between the vizier and the poet. The four last lines ending the eulogy of a certain old man from Antioch (*shaykh anṭāqī*), recited to al-Ṣāḥib among the Mansion Odes, serves us well in illustrating that [*al-munsariḥ*]:

In aghdu dhā ***niʿmatin*** *fa-wāhibuhā*
Anta fadāka l-warā wa-munshīhā

Wa-mā tarāhū ʿalayya min ḥulalin
Fa-anta kāsin bi-hā wa-muʿṭīhā

Wa-kullu mā ḍamma manzilī wa-yadī
Min ***niʿmatin*** *lī fa-anta* ***mūlīhā***

Lā nasiya llāhu ḥusna fiʿlika bal
Asʾaluhū fī l-ḥayāti yunsīhā

If I become the possessor of a **benefit**, its giver
Is you; may mankind and [this ode's] composer be your ransom!

The outfits you see on me
Have been presented and granted by you

And whatever **benefit** my house and hand have gathered,
You are its **renderer**

May God not forget your benefaction! Rather,
I ask Him to prolong the life [of yours]![70]

The goal of the poet in these lines is to make al-Ṣāḥib's benefit and its constituents known, to acknowledge it and thank him, making use of assertive, expressive, and commissive illocutionary acts. The assertive are statements to the effect that the giver of benefits to him is al-Ṣāḥib and no one else ("If I become the possessor of a benefit, its giver is you"; "And whatever benefit my house and hand have gathered, you are its renderer"), and the description of dress and unspecified financial aid and gifts granted; the expressive are the wishes "may mankind and [this ode's] composer be your ransom!" and "May God not forget your benefaction!"; wrapping up this acknowledgement section and bringing it to its culmination is the commissive "Rather, I ask Him to prolong the life [of yours]!," in which the poet, thankful for the patron's benefaction, undertakes to solicit with God for al-Ṣāḥib's long life.

Likewise, when the poet Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī asks al-Ṣāḥib for permission to leave the court in an ode, he performs (twice) an illocutionary act with a commissive point, undertaking to spread the word of al-Ṣāḥib's generosity wherever he goes, owing to his gratitude [*al-basīṭ*]:

Asīru ʿanka wa-lī fī kulli jāriḥatin
Famun bi-shukrika yujrī miqwalan dharibā

…

Lākin lisāniya yahwā l-sayra ʿanka li-an
Yuṭabbiqa l-arḍa madḥan fī-ka muntakhabā

I will go away from you having in each member of the body
A mouth that gives thanks to you putting in motion an eloquent tongue

…

But my tongue would like to leave you to
Spread throughout the land selected praise of you[71]

Remarkably, it is possible to detect in one line, in the very same utterance, two different acts performed by the poet. Having asserted "This is why I consider my closeness to him a benefit above which there is nothing more" (cited above), al-Zaʿfarānī proceeded to make a commitment to the patron in his Mansion Ode's last line [*al-khafīf*]:

> *Lā dhakartu l-ʿirāqa mā ʿishtu illā*
> *An arāhū yaʾummuhū fī l-junūdī*
>
> I shall not mention Iraq as long as I live
> Until I see him aiming at it among soldiers[72]

This is, no doubt, a commissive as the poet pledges not to mention Iraq as long as he lives until the vizier aims at it, leading a military campaign. Still, it would be a mistake, if we *only* focus on the commissive point, failing to notice that at the same time he prompts the vizier to do something (inducing the addressee/s to do things has been among the functions of Arabic poets since old times). In an indirect way, al-Zaʿfarānī expresses here his desire that al-Ṣāḥib should set out on a campaign to conquer Iraq, which in terms of illocutionary points is a directive. In fact, we do know that al-Ṣāḥib had always entertained the hope to administer Baghdad and Iraq, as remarked upon by the vizier to ʿAbbāsid caliphs, littérateur, and chronicler Abū Shujāʿ al-Rūdhrāwarī (437–88/1045–95) in his notes on the year 379/989: "Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād has always wanted Baghdad and leadership in it. He lay in wait for opportunities to achieve this goal." The opportunity finally came in 379/989, and al-Ṣāḥib managed to convince Fakhr al-Dawla to launch a campaign to occupy Iraq. The campaign failed due to unexpected floods and the tight-fisted *amīr*'s refusal—against al-Ṣāḥib's advice—to compensate adequately the army.[73] The directive in this line of poetry, then, should have been a well-planned step by the poet who knew that it would resonate well with the vizier's political aspirations. Yet, unlike commissives as pledges, vows, and promises, a directive coming from the lower in rank to the higher requires special care from the former. Al-Zaʿfarānī had to think carefully about how to express his desire that the addressee would do the directed act without phrasing it too directly as a command, and hence he opted for an additional indirect message. Indeed, thinly veiling the directive by a commissive appears as a clever strategy on his part; the two acts he meticulously performed—the commissive and directive—express his gratitude to the vizier's *niʿma* by showing his dedication and care about the latter's political aspirations. Like the previous examples, this one is telling of how poetry was employed by al-Ṣāḥib's protégés to affirm their commitment to the patron for his benefit, and equally, how those mastering language benefited from its elasticity.[74]

The *niʿma*-based acquired relation between al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers was deemed to be a very important one to the extent that it could even overshadow one's relation to the house of the Prophet and outweigh established family relations with the vizier. This is apparently unexpected given the fact that the relation based on *niʿma* was normally not as well defined and irrevocable as oaths. Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥasanī l-Hamadhānī was a respectable ʿAlīd notable, a remarkable littérateur, and a virtuous and affluent man. Having married the vizier's only daughter and child, he became al-Ṣāḥib's son-in-law and the father of his grandson ʿAbbād. Al-Ṣāḥib was much honored and pleased that Abū l-Ḥusayn had become his relative and extremely happy and proud that his grandson was a descendant of the Prophet, as one learns from the poems he composed following his birth and those recited by his poets.[75] Abū l-Ḥusayn demonstrated his dexterity as a poet and left a mark on the literary field of the court when he recited a unique lipogram ode. Al-Ṣāḥib had previously composed lipogram odes from each of which one letter of the alphabet was entirely excluded, covering thus the whole alphabet except for the letter *wāw*. It was his son-in-law who finally met this challenge successfully composing a *wāw*-less ode in praise of al-Ṣāḥib.[76]

Given Abū l-Ḥusayn's high socio-economic status, let alone his descent from the house of the Prophet, with which the vizier was so delighted to establish family ties, one is rather surprised to read his verse eulogizing al-Ṣāḥib [*al-basīṭ*]:

Innī wa-in kuntu man yudnīhi abṭaḥuhū
Ilā l-fakhāri wa-tanmīhī akhāshibuhū

Ḥattā tuʿalliyahū ṭawran fawāṭimuhū
Ilā l-nabiyyi wa-aṭwāran zayānibuhū

La-ʿabdu anʿumika l-lātī malaʾna yadī
Ṭawlan wa-mayyaztanī ʿam-man unāsibuhū

I, although being someone whose river bed brings close
To glory and his great mountains elevate

To the point that his Fāṭimas raise him once
To the Prophet, and his Zaynabs at other times

Am indeed the slave of your benefits that filled my hand
With bounty, and you distinguished me above those with whom I am related[77]

Abū l-Ḥusayn asserts that despite his noble pedigree descending from the house of the Prophet, he is bound by al-Ṣāḥib's benefits ("the slave of your benefits"). His juxtaposition of inherited relation and acquired relation markedly shows the latter as prevailing, notwithstanding the wide social veneration of the former. Moreover, he leaves no place for doubt that this type of relation gives him an added value which distinguishes him from his fellow ʿAlīds. Needless to say, in Abū l-Ḥusayn's case the economic value of the benefits could hardly play a role because of his wealth, and thus the benefits counted for their abstract or symbolic value—being a token of his closeness to the great vizier. It seems that this is what the Ziyārid king Kaykāwūs meant advising his son:

> although the honor of service of royal masters is the best form of capital (*sarmāyah*), the money which accrues from it is no better than usury.… As long as the capital remains secure, there is always the hope of interest, whereas if the capital is lost no profit can ever be gained.[78]

While al-Ṣāḥib highly cherished the merger of the Prophet's bloodline with his own through Abū l-Ḥusayn,[79] in the above selection, Abū l-Ḥusayn does not mention at all his family ties to al-Ṣāḥib as a son-in-law; instead, he compares his inherited relation to the acquired (patronage) relation, to the detriment of the former. Evidence found in the Mansion Ode of al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan Ṣāḥib al-Barīd (the superintendent of the post and intelligence), the paternal cousin of al-Ṣāḥib, may suggest that this was not a peculiar case. The last two lines of his ode read [*al-basīṭ*]:

Kasawtanī min libāsi l-ʿizzi ashrafahū
Al-māla wa-l-ʿizza wa-l-sulṭāna wa-l-jāhā

wa-lastu aqraba illā bi-l-walāʾi wa-in
kānat li-nafsiyi min ʿulyāka qurbāhā

You presented me with the noblest of honor garments:
Property, glory, power, and dignity

And I am not a relative except by clientship, although
I am related by kinship to your highness[80]

First, al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan enumerates the beneficial things bestowed upon him by the vizier. Then, he notably clarifies that the relation that ties him with al-Ṣāḥib is not that of kinship but clientship (*walāʾ*). By definition, *walāʾ* is not based on blood relation, as in its different forms throughout Islamic history it was a binding affiliation between a non-kinsman client (freedman or other) and a patron.[81] Roy Mottahedeh writes that while the Turkish "slave" soldier and his ʿAbbāsid patron were bound together by the tie of *walāʾ* and *iṣṭināʿ*, patrons in the fourth and fifth centuries preferred *iṣṭināʿ* to *walāʾ* when reminding their soldiers of their obligations.[82] Whether Abū l-Ḥasan uses *walāʾ* strictly or not, he by all means downplays—if not ignores—blood relation, defining instead his relation with the vizier as a standard tie of patronage. At that, he acts like Abū l-Ḥusayn who ignores his family ties with al-Ṣāḥib, too. These two cases suggest that for those taking part in the literary field the benefit-based relation was the cardinal one, even if they had other ties with the vizier. In addition, if this type of acquired relation overruled family and blood ties with the vizier and overshadowed one's descent from the house of the Prophet, it must be thought of as a strong formal tie, even if it misleadingly appears to be less than that for its looseness and open-endedness.

The proverbs of al-Ṣāḥib on the subject of benefaction leave no doubt regarding his expectations for gratitude from his protégés. Couched in the language of intimidation, these are warnings for the recipients of his benefit (*niʿma*): "Whoever is ungrateful for benefit, deserves retribution" (*man kafara l-niʿma stawjaba l-niqma*); "Ingratitude for benefits is the indication of retributions" (*kufrān al-niʿam ʿunwān al-niqam*); "Denial of favors is a cause of catastrophes" (*jaḥd al-ṣanāʾiʿ dāʿiyat al-qawāriʿ*); "Receiving benefaction with denial is exposing benefits to flight" (*talaqqī l-iḥsān bi-l-juḥūd taʿrīḍ al-niʿam li-l-shurūd*); "He for whom benefit is an unbearable burden, loses weight, and he who persists in negligence, long lasts his sorrow" (*man thaqulat ʿalayhi l-niʿma khaffa waznuhu, wa-mani stamarrat bi-hi l-ghirra ṭāla ḥuznuhu*).[83] The effect of these proverbs is undoubtedly empowered by their evocation of Qurʾānic verses recounting the catastrophic fate of those who denied the benefits of God and warning the believers not to follow their example, such as:

> Have you not seen those who exchanged God's benefit for ingratitude (*baddalū niʿmat allāh kufran*), and caused their people to occupy the abode of destruction? [That is,] hell, in which they are roasted. What a wretched place to inhabit![84]
>
> God gives the example of a city that was secure, tranquil, whose provisions came to it abundantly from everywhere, but it was ungrateful for the benefits of God (*fa-kafarat bi-anʿum allāh*), and then God made it taste hunger and fear for what they had done. Indeed, a messenger from among them came to them, but they called him a liar, and so they were punished while they were doing wrong. Hence, eat the lawful and good things that God has provided you, and be grateful for the benefit of God (*wa-shkuru niʿmat allāh*), if it is He that you worship.[85]

And indeed, in practice, the vizier could be very harsh with those he found ungrateful. In a letter of reproach directed to Abū Isḥāq, the disgraced and imprisoned chamberlain (*ḥājib*) of al-Ṣāḥib,[86] Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī elaborated on the benefits al-Ṣāḥib had bestowed upon Abū Isḥāq, their binding nature and the latter's grave error of ingratitude. While this letter is directed to a specific person, its message regarding benefit and its duties has a universal claim. Speaking of al-Ṣāḥib's leading Abū Isḥāq to adopt the Muʿtazilī doctrine and supporting him financially, he says: "His clientship (*walāʾuhu*) is incumbent upon you twice, and his benefit (*niʿmatuhu*) closes in on your neck from two directions; for he saved you from hell [by the adoption of the Muʿtazilī doctrine], just as he saved you from disgrace [poverty]." Abū Isḥāq's fall from favor, says Abū Bakr, is the punishment of Fate in what is described (despite the evocation of an apposite Qurʾānic verse) as a cosmic reaction for his being thankless for benefit: "When you repaid for benefit with ingratitude (*jāzayta l-niʿma bi-l-kufrān*) and forgot 'Is there any reward for goodness but goodness?,'[87] Fate (*al-ayyām*) looked askew at you and gave you difficulty in exchange for ease." Although the ingratitude of the chamberlain is not clearly described, Abū Bakr alludes to it, mentioning that it has to do with expressing criticism against the vizier:

> Your least duty to your master was that you not make use of his benefit to disacknowledge it (*lā tastaʿīna bi-niʿmatihi ʿalā kufrān niʿmatihi*), and not write his good deed (*ḥasanatahu*) on the leaf of his faults; not draw forth against him a sword [made] of your tongue, which his hand polished, and not direct towards him a spear [made] of your words, which his hand put straight.[88]

Thus, in using eloquence against al-Ṣāḥib, Abū Isḥāq turned his back on another benefit conferred upon him by the vizier, namely, eloquence. This seems to Abū Bakr to be a grave act of ingratitude for when he was first patronized by the vizier, he reminds him, "you were not ennobled by pedigree (*nasab*), nor were you raised by good education (*adab*)." As we saw in the case of Abū Bakr himself, ascribing the acquisition of one's literary and linguistic competences to the vizier's tutelage was a common expression of gratitude.[89]

Abū Bakr proceeds to mourn the general human tendency to be thankless to benefit,[90] but adds that all the same it is a forbidden behavior averse to the human nature regardless of the decrees of religion: "Know that if Revelation (*sharʿ*) were to declare ingratitude for benefit (*kufrān al-niʿma*) lawful, nature (*ṭabʿ*) would declare it unlawful, and if it were to be permitted by the way of faith (*milla*), it would be interdicted by the way of virtue (*murūʾa*) and honor." Abū Bakr defines the *niʿma*-based relation as a binding and exclusive commitment, saying:

> Whoever takes upon himself the benefit of God (*niʿmat allāh*) from a person, makes himself responsible for [the benefactor's] honor (*ʿirḍ*), and becomes his slave by virtue of his benefaction (*iḥsān*). If he serves another while [the benefactor] is alive, he betrays the first concerning his benefit (*niʿma*), and acts insincerely towards the second in respect to his service.

Abū Bakr claims that to live up to this type of restrictive commitment he "divorced people irrevocably" and disengaged himself from praise definitely. This disengagement lasted until he met the vizier after extensive globe-trotting and realized that in him his dream came true. He, therefore, devoted himself and his resources (thought, poetry, and prose) wholly and exclusively to the vizier "sealing with him the leaf of praise and eulogy, and closing with his name the gate of solicitation and request."[91]

He then slashes the lack of integrity and sincerity, opportunism, and greed of al-Mutanabbī, whose ethics are reprehensible: "He thanks and then complains; praises and then lampoons; gives testimony and then invalidates it.... How many free people had he distinguished as excellent and then censured!... From how many bowls had he eaten and then spat into them!" It is most likely that al-Mutanabbī was not picked up upon accidentally; despite the many notorious poets who behaved so, Abū Bakr probably chose him for al-Ṣāḥib's enmity to him (to be discussed in Chapter 4). Still, he concedes that al-Mutanabbī's poetry, in contrast to his conduct, is excellent. At this point, Abū Bakr prides himself on being the opposite of al-Mutanabbī, a poet with sound ethics: “But under the shirt of Abū Bakr there is a man, who, when giving, does not take back.... If praising, does not tread on the heel of a panegyric with blame.” Perfidy, explains Abū Bakr, is a feminine trait, and if occurring among men, it is an indication of effeminacy. “Observing a compact (*ḥifẓ al-ʿahd*) is among the conditions of manliness.” Abū Bakr stresses that whoever goes against the auspicious, namely, the Būyid dynasty and the vizier, who are protected by God and Fate, envying their benefit from God, is doomed. Before winding up, Abū Bakr reiterates the offense of Abū Isḥāq:

> I do not grieve for you because of the jail and its fright, nor because of the degradation and its bite, as I do because of your benefactor’s (*walī niʿmatika*) look at you and the falling of his sight on you. You had borne the burdens of his bounty (*aʿbāʾ birrihi*) and requited his benefaction with ingratitude (*qābalta iḥsānahu bi-kufrihi*).[92] In respect to you, the benefit (*niʿma*) was sown in a piece of land that did not yield.[93]

The relentless criticism of Abū Bakr constitutes a detailed—and as such, valuable—depiction of the benefit-based relation between patron and protégé in the fourth/tenth century. It should be emphasized that the content and tone are unmistakably objective, namely, reflecting the hegemonic vantage point and expectations, not the subjective one of the individual agent. By virtue of its power, the hegemony fashioned, universalized, and made natural an order of things that places a heavy burden of indebtedness on the shoulders of the protégé. Indeed, Abū Bakr, representing the hegemonic voice, reiterates it once and again. The case of Abū Isḥāq the chamberlain also shows that a benefit-based relation is terminable. The termination of this type of relation could be either: (i) the patron’s decision, or (ii) that of the protégé:

i Termination of the relation would occur for dissatisfaction of the patron with the gratitude or service of the protégé. Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin, for one, who as a youth became a very close protégé, courtier, and librarian of al-Ṣāḥib, did not live up to the standards of service (*khidma*) expected by the vizier. Al-Thaʿālibī does not elaborate on his dissatisfactory performance, but explains it by his young age. Al-Khāzin himself, however, later said with remorse that he had become spoiled by the benefit (*niʿma*) of al-Ṣāḥib. At any rate, after recurrent punishment and dismissal, “he went away in anger or fled away.”[94] His case then reveals that a failure to meet the standards of service expected by al-Ṣāḥib, that is, failing to show gratitude for his *niʿma*, led in this way or another to the termination of the relation. In this specific case, al-Kaḥzin was pardoned ten years later and returned to the vizier’s service.

ii Termination of the relation would also occur for the protégé’s dissatisfaction with the patron’s benefit. Beneficence marks and underpins the mastery, as opposed to servility or subservience, of a patron. Withholding it or being stingy with a poet's reward meant that the patron is a servant like the poet who praised him. That necessarily annulled his mastery and voided the poet's service to him. On the more practical level, this betrayal of loyalty on the part of the patron could, and often did, push the poet to avenge the patron's disloyalty through satire. This state of affairs no doubt gave the otherwise hierarchically inferior poet some advantage over the superior patron, whose good reputation as a master might be severely compromised, and put the poet in a favorable position to apply pressure and even blackmail him. Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī, one of al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers, explains lucidly in a monothematic poem (*qiṭʿa*) whose addressee is unknown, how a patron loses his status as a master and the benefit-based relation as a whole [*al-mujtathth*]:

Idhā bakhalta bi-birrī
Wa-lam anal min-ka rifdā

Fa-anta mithliya ʿabdun
Wa-fīma akhdimu ʿabdā

If you are stingy with beneficence to me
And I do not attain a gift from you

You are a slave like me
And why should I serve a slave?[95]

The case of al-Tawḥīdī (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5) shows that his failure to function adequately at court led al-Ṣāḥib to limit his benefit to him, which finally made al-Tawḥīdī leave and compose his renowned prose satire, *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn*. Although he was sure the vizier failed to grant him his due benefit based on their patron–protégé relation, there are clear indications in his account that the vizier reacted to al-Tawḥīdī's severely wanting gratitude from the very beginning. This is, therefore, an instance of different interpretations of an interaction (and a relation as a whole) coming from each party involved, an epistemological disparity leading to disagreement on the responsibility for the broken tie. This instance demonstrates that often different expectations and interpretations stood as a cause for the termination of a *niʿma*-based relation. Unlike the richly documented interaction between al-Tawḥīdī and al-Ṣāḥib, it may be at times very difficult or even impossible for us to understand whether a tie was broken for want of gratitude or lack of benefit. The relation of Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī and al-Ṣāḥib is a good example for that. As we shall see in a moment, the different interpretations of each party for the relation's dissolution found expression in a satire and a response.

Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, who commended al-Ṣāḥib's generosity and rebuked Abū Isḥāq for his ingratitude to the vizier, fell out with al-Ṣāḥib at some point. The only source that claims to supply the reasons for the dissolution of their benefit-based relation is al-Tawḥīdī's *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn*. Al-Tawḥīdī says that he questioned Abū Bakr about his opinion of al-Ṣāḥib given the fact that he was very generous to him, advanced him and led to his great success with the *amīr* ʿAḍud al-Dawla. In a way that accords with al-Tawḥīdī's general opinion of al-Ṣāḥib, Abū Bakr disparages al-Ṣāḥib's weakness in noble deeds, grave sins (among them passive sodomy), lending ear to slander, and religious hypocrisy. Al-Tawḥīdī wondered in front of the poet al-Zaʿfarānī, a notable courtier of the vizier, why Abū Bakr was critical of al-Ṣāḥib despite all that he rewarded him. His answer was that while al-Ṣāḥib gave "something" to his protégés, he treated them roughly. He recounts how the vizier once kept slapping Abū Bakr on his face while deriding him for what he said, until he bled from the nose. Interestingly, al-Tawḥīdī, relying on Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Naṣrānī, a confidant of Muʾayyid al-Dawla, has a scoop for his readers. Notwithstanding the fact that Abū Bakr was "among the most eloquent people—we have not seen anyone like him among the Persians," al-Ṣāḥib conferred favors upon him only for spying on Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Sīmjūrī, the army commander in Nīshāpūr, and for reporting to him the news of the East (Khorasan and other areas controlled by the Sāmānids). With this intent, al-Ṣāḥib also drew favors for him from the king of Baghdad (ʿAḍud al-Dawla) through the mediation of the latter's secretary and intimate ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Yūsuf. This, says al-Tawḥīdī, was the real reason for patronizing Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, although apparently al-Ṣāḥib granted him for his *adab*, poetry, and erudition.[96]

Al-Tawḥīdī's report, at least Abū Bakr's cited opinion of al-Ṣāḥib, is not without problems. Since ʿAḍud al-Dawla is mentioned as living at the time the conversation took place, al-Tawḥīdī must have met Abū Bakr before the *amīr*'s death in Shawwāl 372/March 983. We also know that when Abū Bakr fled Nīshāpūr, disguised from his arrest, which was ordered by the Sāmānid vizier, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-ʿUtbī, he came to al-Ṣāḥib's court in Jurjān where he was favorably accepted and rewarded. He stayed there until he was invited to return to Nīshāpūr following the assassination of al-ʿUtbī that occurred in, or shortly after, 372/982. Al-Tawḥīdī had been in Baghdad since returning from al-Ṣāḥib's court in 370/980 and was definitely there, according to his testimony, when the death of ʿAḍud al-Dawla was ascertained.[97] Therefore, al-Tawḥīdī should have heard Abū Bakr's opinion about al-Ṣāḥib before 370/980. If indeed this was Abū Bakr's view of the vizier, one wonders why, when he was later in trouble, he ran away to this very court. Another difficulty rising from *Akhlāq* is related to the typology of al-Ṣāḥib's protégés made by the poet al-Jīlūhī. The latter told al-Tawḥīdī that Abū Bakr was among the poets whose potential satire intimidated the vizier, who therefore "sought to restrain [their] evil by means of benefaction."[98] This remark, if correct, changes the picture of their relationship, as depicted earlier by al-Tawḥīdī, where Abū Bakr was a mistreated victim.

When we compare al-Tawḥīdī's report of Abū Bakr's opinion of the vizier to the one found in his own letters, we find even more points of discrepancy. The letter Abū Bakr wrote "to the tax collector of Nīshāpūr from al-Rayy, when the vizierate returned to the vizier Ibn ʿAbbād, and he pardoned the courtiers of

[Abū l-Fatḥ] b. al-ʿAmīd," presents a diametrically opposed picture. The event of al-Ṣāḥib's succession of Abū l-Fatḥ took place in 366, which is very close to the three-year time-range during which al-Tawḥīdī was most likely to question Abū Bakr (to wit, after he left Baghdad in 367 for al-Ṣāḥib's court in al-Rayy, where he stayed until 370). Abū Bakr, writing from al-Ṣāḥib's court, described enthusiastically to the unnamed tax collector "a man to whom high rank added humility and honor [added] humbleness"; someone whose cordial manners have remained despite his appointment to the high position, who—unlike the reported claim of al-Zaʿfarānī—"awards his cheerful countenance before he awards his favor, and revives hearts by encountering him before he kills poverty by his grant."[99] Abū Bakr lauds al-Ṣāḥib's noble ethics and piety for pardoning Abū l-Fatḥ's (unnamed) courtiers and keeping them at his own court, despite the fact that they had viciously instigated against him and defamed him. He says that their fate could have been catastrophic, had their matters not reached the hands of a man adhering to the tenets of unity and justice (*al-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿadl*, the motto of the Muʿtazila), a man whose forbearance (*ḥilm*) and shame (*ḥayāʾ*) intercede for those under his governance.[100] Since this private letter in which he speaks extensively and passionately about the vizier's noble, generous, and praiseworthy character was directed to the Sāmānid tax collector of Nīshāpūr and not to al-Ṣāḥib or another Būyid official, his words are more likely to represent his genuine thoughts at the moment.

Whether owing to want of gratitude or lack of benefit, there is no doubt that the relation between the two broke at some point.[101] It is obvious that while Abū Bakr believed he had been mistreated by al-Ṣāḥib, the latter considered his behavior as completely thankless. We learn that from the satiric lines composed by the former and the response by the latter:

> Something happened between al-Ṣāḥib and Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, and then al-Ṣāḥib heard that he lampooned him in his words [*al-basīṭ*]:
>
> *Lā tamdaḥanna bna ʿAbbādin wa-in haṭalat*
> *Kaffāhu bi-l-jūdi saḥḥan yukhjilu l-diyamā*
>
> *Fa-innahā khaṭarātun min wasāwisihī*
> *Yuʿṭī wa-yamnaʿu lā bukhlan wa-lā karamā*
>
> You should not praise Ibn ʿAbbād! Even if his two palms
> Pour down torrents of generosity putting to shame continuous rains
>
> These are insanities from his demons
> He gives and withholds neither out of stinginess nor out of liberality
>
> He treated him unjustly with these words, so when al-Ṣāḥib heard about the death of Abū Bakr, he recited [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Saʾaltu barīdan min Khurāsāna jāʾiyan
Amāta Khawārizmīkumū qāla lī naʿam

Fa-qultu ktubū bi-l-jiṣṣi min fawqi qabrihī
A-lā laʿana l-raḥmānu man kafara l-niʿam

I asked a messenger coming from Khorasan:
Did that Khwārazmī of yours die? He said to me: Yes

I then said: Carve in plaster above his grave:
Did The Merciful not curse him who disacknowledged benefits?![102]

The fact that this initially ideal benefit-based relation between al-Ṣāḥib and Abū Bakr ended as each party finding fault with the other's fulfillment of his part, tells a lot about its limitations. As already said, unlike oaths and compacts, where the terms and commitments within a definite time frame are clearly stated and ceremoniously signed, the benefit-based relation, which is the *modus operandi* of patronage in the literary field, is loose and open-ended. In fact, the information we have about the termination of Abū Bakr and al-Ṣāḥib's relation has *niʿma* at stake, and reflects different interpretations of the fulfillment of the duties it entails. Abū Bakr satirizes the apparently whimsical and irrational performance of al-Ṣāḥib's patronal duty to extend benefit, negating the laudable motive of generosity (expected to be organic to a potentate) by reducing it to a demonic-driven action in respect to which al-Ṣāḥib was only an instrument. Undoubtedly, this accusation is at least as injuring to a patron as that of miserliness. Al-Ṣāḥib, on his part, blames Abū Bakr for ingratitude for benefits (*man kafara l-niʿam*), which brought upon him his death due to a divine curse. The disagreement we face here and in other cases on the performance of the involved parties stems from the inexplicit and indefinite nature of this type of relation. "Benefit for gratitude" is too general and ambiguous a formula; it is only natural, for instance, that when the time frame is not explicitly stipulated a change of circumstances for the patron or protégé necessitates a change in the exchange patterns practiced beforehand. If the patron is the affected party he may well condemn the protégé as an ingrate; if the protégé suffers because of the change, he is likely to satirize the patron. In addition, the fact that the illocutionary speech act that commits the protégé and affirms his indebtedness to the patron is performed mostly in praise poetry, without any contract written and signed, contributes to its lesser binding nature.

IV Poetry as a commodity and the court as a market

Unlike artists of modern times, medieval poets did not shrink from speaking openly of their and others' poetry in terms of commodities with a defined economic value traded in the market. This candid view of art by no means considered the discussion of its materialist functions to be reductive of its noble immaterial merits as an elevated human creative form, or harming the legitimacy and reputation of its creator as an artist. Let us see, for example, how Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī describes the ongoing trends in poetry values in Baghdad sometime in the second half of the fourth/tenth century [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Ghalā l-shiʿru fī Baghdāda min baʿdi rukhṣihī
Wa-inniya fī l-ḥālayni bi-llāhi wāthiqū

Fa-lastu akhāfu l-ḍīqa wa-llāhu wāsiʿun
Ghināhu wa-lā l-ḥirmāna wa-llāhu rāziqū

Poetry became expensive in Baghdad after it was cheap
And I trust God in both situations

I do not fear distress while God's wealth
Is vast, and not deprivation while God is the provider of sustenance[103]

Likewise, Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī says in one of his letters: "The happiness of the poet, when his poetry was favorably received and its price found a ready market (*nafaqa siʿruhu*), is like the happiness of the merchant who owns precious stones when his incomparable costly pearl is sold."[104] The word "market" is used by al-Thaʿālibī when he speaks highly of al-Ṣāḥib's patronage activity: "If it were not for him, there would be no market (*sūq*) for learning in our time."[105] In a more detailed way, Yāqūt delineates the attraction of poets to al-Ṣāḥib's court in pure economical terms: "When the poets found for their commodities (*baḍāʾiʿ*) much demand (*nafāq*) and a market (*sūq*) with Ibn ʿAbbād, they brought the products of their thoughts to his court and conveyed them in his direction in big numbers."[106] The anthologist al-Bākharzī (d. 467/1075) described the success of the poet Abū Bakr al-Yūsufī and his poetry at al-Ṣāḥib's court in this commercial language: "His business profited at [al-Ṣāḥib's] court, and his sale brought no loss in his transaction with [al-Ṣāḥib]" (*wa-rabiḥat bi-ḥaḍratihi tijāratuhu wa-lam takhsar fī muʿāmalatihi ṣafqatuhu*).[107]

Therefore, since according to the cultural norms of the period the economical functions of poetry were fully acknowledged and poetry was often legitimately treated as a commodity, the establishment of a brisk market for poetry and knowledge became one of the motifs employed in the praise of al-Ṣāḥib as a patron. We find this motif in a selection from an ode composed by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī extolling the vizier [*al-kāmil*]:

Wa-la-qad ʿahidtu l-ʿilma aksada min
Buhtāni firʿawnin ladā mūsā

Fa-aqāma qāʿida sūqihī rajulun
Maytu l-rajāʾi bi-bābihī yaḥyā

> *Fa-l-ʿilmu aṣbaḥa fī l-warā ʿalaman*
> *Wa-l-shiʿru amsā yaskunu l-shiʿrā*
>
> Indeed, I had been familiar with knowledge as selling worse than
> The false accusation of Pharaoh before Moses[108]
>
> And then a man resurrected its inactive market
> At whose gate he who has no hope alive is revived
>
> Thus, knowledge turned to a manifest mountain among mankind
> And poetry has come to a point where it inhabits Sirius[109]

It is, therefore, expected that in the economy of benefit for gratitude, which drives court patronage, poetry as units in which gratitude often materializes will be considered for its economical value. As we shall see, its aesthetic value—a major focus of interest in this arena of connoisseurs—is inseparable from it; as in any market, and the court was expressly described as one, certain products may enjoy higher or lower demand given their defined characteristics, which in turn determines their prices.

V Co-optation of protégés and terms of patronage

An important characteristic of the court as a social configuration is that poetry and prose were not judged abstractly by the patron, but rather along the profiles of their creators. Especially with regard to those who were patronized for longer periods (unlike temporary visitors), aside from artistic competence—important as it could be—there were other factors that played a role in the evaluation of al-Ṣāḥib. As the court's patron, he had the privilege to determine the criteria of selection, decide who would be co-opted and sponsored, and define the terms of their patronage. Besides various anecdotes and quoted sayings, these are visible in recommendation letters he wrote for his courtiers, when they asked for his permission to leave the court for another or to return to their homeland. One of these letters was written to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī:[110]

> [Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī] had stayed at the court of al-Ṣāḥib some time, profiting from its sessions, and gaining from its advantages. When he asked him for permission to return to his homeland and requested a recommendation letter (*al-kitāb bi-l-waṣā bi-hi*), al-Ṣāḥib signed on the back of his petition (*ruqʿa*):
>
> We would prefer—may God, most high, extend your life—that you stay and not go away. For you had brought together means of excellence that required your patronage (*iṣṭināʿ*) among the closely-related companions: the intelligence is of a perfect nature, the religion is soundly esoteric (*salīm al-bāṭin*), the knowledge is a rich resource, and the natural gift (*ṭabʿ*) is an

> overflowing spring, a place of sweet waters. As for the poetry, it is extremely bountiful and features brilliant opening lines; it is plentiful of *badīʿ*, lively, and the water of beauty flows in it easily; its purity has been protected from the stiffness of harshness, and its fluency from the softness of weakness. The two mainstays of *adab* are grammar and lexicography, and you have in each one of them an arrow shuffling to bring you the portions of the slaughtered camel.[111] You had gained—praise be to God—from the knowledge of theology what is called the capacity of the certain, albeit not the treasure of the eager. If [your wish to leave] were not for a religious duty (*farḍ*), your friends, who are with us, would cling to both sides of your place for a long time. Moreover, your tongue is a security with us for your return. Then, [may your departure be with] God-inspired peace of mind, His protection, blessing, and succor. He who reads this response—my handwriting in it is a proof and my wording in it is an evidence—will not need [al-Nawqātī] to approach him with a [formal recommendation] letter, as I have made it the refuge of truthfulness and the mainstay of certitude.[112]

Responding to Abū l-Ḥasan's petition (*ruqʿa*) in a signature phrase (*tawqīʿ*), as was often his practice, al-Ṣāḥib gives expression to various laudable qualities and competences he found in this courtier: intelligence, knowledge, religion, poetry, grammar, lexicography, and theology. The items al-Ṣāḥib specified and approved of disclose what his preferences as a patron were, what he deemed important, and what he thought other patrons should know about Abū l-Ḥasan. Clearly, given the long reference to Abū l-Ḥasan's literary capacity, this was a significant criterion for al-Ṣāḥib (these remarks are subjected to analysis in Chapter 4). When writing that "the religion [of Abū l-Ḥasan] is soundly esoteric," al-Ṣāḥib shows his approval of the Shīʿī faith of this courtier. This is not at all to suggest that Sunnīs were barred from his court, but it nevertheless demonstrates a predilection for Shīʿī protégés, given his own Zaydī Shīʿī belief. As for theology, despite his approval of Abū l-Ḥasan's position—which he does not fully unveil—he is somewhat reserved because of his lack of eagerness to accumulate more knowledge in this field.

In other instances, al-Ṣāḥib was more explicit regarding denominational affiliation and theological doctrine when communicating with actual or would-be protégés. A signature phrase (*tawqīʿ*) by al-Ṣāḥib on the petition (*ruqʿa*) of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shaqīqī l-Balkhī stipulates plainly and exactly who are those deserving the vizier's patronage: "Whoever takes care of his religion, we take care of his worldly prosperity. If you opt for justice and unity, we will grant you favor and ease. If you abide in compulsion, your fracture will find no setting."[113] More information on al-Shaqīqī l-Balkhī and the situation in question could not be found, but at any rate, al-Ṣāḥib made it clear to him that clinging to his present theological stance (*jabr*) instead of switching to the Muʿtazilī theological school would prevent him from taking advantage of the vizier's support. Therefore, at least according to this signature phrase, we gather that al-Ṣāḥib was adamant to co-opt only those who "cared about their religion," as understood by him, and adhered to the Muʿtazilī tenets.

Al-Ṣāḥib's co-optation policy of Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī religious scholars has already been observed by Wilferd Madelung, who noted the systematic way in which he drew them into his circle and generously supported them. "It was evidently to a large extent due to his efforts that al-Rayy became the center of a current in both Zaydī and Imāmī Shiism which tended to identify itself fully with Muʿtazilite theology."[114] While the evidence at our disposal suggests that adherence to the Shīʿa and Muʿtazila was not an absolute requirement in the literary field, it is clear that it was much encouraged and that the vizier used his political and economical power to advance his denominational and theological causes. A red line for the agents was certainly active negation or questioning of Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī principles and tenets, which would lead to exclusion from the court. Having won the admiration of al-Ṣāḥib immediately upon his arrival at the court, the poet Abū Ṭālib ʿAbd al-Salām b. al-Ḥusayn al-Maʾmūnī (d. 383/993 before his fortieth birthday) achieved an eminent standing that greatly frustrated fellow courtiers. Eventually, al-Maʾmūnī's competitors managed to have the upper hand after an aggressive defamation campaign that tarnished his image in the eyes of the vizier and led to his exclusion. This was accomplished by accusing al-Maʾmūnī of satirizing the vizier, plagiarizing the panegyrics with which he praised him, and by claiming that he was a staunch partisan of the ʿAbbāsids and held strong anti-Shīʿī and anti-Muʿtazilī sentiments. Indeed, in reference to this court, the accusations made by al-Maʾmūnī's competitors were the gravest, "the ugliest lies," according to al-Thaʿālibī, which indicates the strength of al-Ṣāḥib's Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī sympathies.[115]

Given the Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī orientation of this court, it would be hardly surprising to find literary people responding to al-Ṣāḥib's religious sympathies. Concerning the poet Abū Bakr al-Yūsufī, we know that he sought access to the vizier by means of adherence to the Muʿtazilī school. He was certainly a talented literary man, but was served well by this adherence, and prospered at the court.[116] The poet and adventurer, Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī, who dedicated to al-Ṣāḥib his *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* (more on that in Chapters 3 and 5), answers in the closing section of the poem (l. 180–8) those who supposedly blame him for being a globe-trotter. He does so by evoking the model of the "pure" Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) who became scattered all over the Islamic world due to persecution.[117] Just as his birth and death dates are unknown, it is unclear whether Abū Dulaf was a Shīʿī or not.[118] Still, this type of answer and the praiseful way in which he describes the family of the Prophet, whether indeed truthful to his sentiments or contrived to appeal to those of the vizier, is meaningful. Abū Dulaf was a favored protégé of al-Ṣāḥib; he gained a lot from him, and was generously rewarded for this ode.[119] It is indubitable that besides his great appreciation for the argot and lore of the Banū Sāsān exposed in the *qaṣīda*, this pro-Shīʿī ending resonated well with al-Ṣāḥib. In addition to Abū Dulaf, Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī—another courtier who greatly benefited from al-Ṣāḥib and who was a Shīʿī himself—praised the vizier's moral behavior, which he attributed to his being a Muʿtazilī.[120]

Despite the determined exclusionist message of al-Ṣāḥib cited above ("whoever takes care of his religion…") and the additional evidence pointing to the vizier's preference of Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī courtiers, he was definitely not excluding from his court Sunnīs or those professing theological stances other than his; knowledge, talent, and skill were still the foremost criteria for co-optation. When the young Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (358–98/969–1008) came to the court of al-Ṣāḥib and demonstrated his amazing literary talent, he was patronized and honorably treated. Badīʿ al-Zamān was "an unyielding partisan of the supporters of tradition and Sunna," and theologically was suspected of being an Ashʿarī. This fact, however, did not stand in his way to achieve immediate success at the court, although it was later used against him by scheming competitors and led to his departure.[121] In this context, we should also mention al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, a Shāfiʿī jurisprudent,[122] who prospered under al-Ṣāḥib.

Al-Ṣāḥib's policy of co-optation, which while showing greater sympathy to Shīʿīs and Muʿtazilīs, was far from making religious denomination, theological position, or legal school an overruling criterion, is best illustrated by his ties with Abū Bakr b. al-Muqriʾ (285–381/898–991):

> It was said to al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād: you are a Muʿtazilī man and Ibn al-Muqriʾ a traditionist (*muḥaddith*), and you like him. He replied: he was a friend of my father, and it was said "those whom fathers like are relations for their sons"; it is also because I was once asleep and saw the Prophet in my dream saying to me: "You are asleep while a friend of God is at your door." I woke up, called the doorkeeper, and said: "Who is at the door?" He answered: "Abū Bakr b. al-Muqriʾ."
>
> Abū ʿAbdallāh b. Mahdī said: I heard Ibn al-Muqriʾ saying: "In respect to the principles (*uṣūl*; of religion or jurisprudence), I subscribe to the school of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī" … And I [= al-Dhahabī] said: al-Ṣāḥib Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād used to respect him and he was his librarian.[123]

Given the well-known enmity between Ḥanbalīs and Muʿtazilīs, Ibn al-Muqriʾ—a reputed Ḥanbalī traditionist—would seem an unnatural protégé for a Muʿtazilī like al-Ṣāḥib. Yet, this evidence is a manifest proof of al-Ṣāḥib's primary reliance on criteria other than denomination or theological stance. In what stands as another proof of the mutual appreciation and solid relationship between the two scholars and attests to the possible cooperation and trust between ideological rivals, Ibn al-Muqriʾ, despite his seniority, is counted among those who passed on traditions from al-Ṣāḥib.[124]

As is only to be expected, one's personal traits and conduct—besides religion, knowledge, and intellectual abilities—were an important factor among al-Ṣāḥib's considerations in selecting his protégés. In this respect, we are fortunate to have enough information on the poet Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Jawharī, who hailed from Jurjān, and was a close protégé and courtier of al-Ṣāḥib. Explaining how the poet was co-opted, al-Thaʿālibī remarks that the vizier "extremely admired the way his face and poetry harmonized in beauty, and the way his animated spirit and witty nature resembled each other, and patronized him." Al-Ṣāḥib would send him on a mission to different provinces, and thus al-Thaʿālibī met him when he arrived in Nīshāpūr as a messenger to the *amīr* Abū l-Ḥasan al-Sīmjūrī in 377/987. When he returned from this mission and wished to visit the court of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī in Esfahan, the vizier supplied him with a lengthy recommendation letter, produced by al-Thaʿālibī.[125]

In this letter, al-Ṣāḥib lavishes praise on him as the most distinguishable poet of Jurjān and Ṭabaristān ever, despite his young age. He notes that unlike his fellow Jurjānīs (native speakers of Persian), the eloquent al-Jawharī was fluent in Arabic and Persian, expressing himself eloquently in poetry and prose in both languages. Yet, it is the vizier's approval of al-Jawharī's mastery of the courtier's craft, his command of the social and cultural codes that make one an apt courtier, which deserves our special attention here. Al-Ṣāḥib highlights al-Jawharī's merits in this realm as follows:

> Perspicacity in the etiquette of service (*adab al-khidma*); knowledge of the courtier's craft and companionship (*al-nidām wa-l-ʿishra*); obedience with which he fills the [formal] assembly (*majlis al-ḥafla*), listening silently to the leader unless when speaking is requisite,[126] and revering [voicelessly] the master unless when response is imperative; wit (*ẓarf*) filling up the private [informal] session (*majlis al-khalwa*); a speech with which he silences the Hazār Dāstān birds and vies with nightingales.[127]

In addition to these extraordinary competences—and, in fact, owing much to them—al-Jawharī made an accomplished diplomat. Al-Ṣāḥib attests to his success at a sensitive and demanding mission to the over-critical *amīr* of Khorasan Nāṣir al-Dawla Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sīmjūrī.[128]

The fondness of al-Ṣāḥib for this protégé is seen throughout the letter. Among other things, it is observable in his meticulous instructions to al-Ḍabbī concerning the careful, considerate, and even pampering treatment that al-Jawharī deserves. This is, no doubt, the result of embodying a totality of qualities associated with the *métier* of the courtier, which al-Jawharī mastered. While not an acquired skill, his good looks appealed to the vizier as well and increased his value as a courtier. Al-Jawharī was a versatile man who was not only a remarkable littérateur, but could also serve on sensitive political missions as an accomplished envoy. This was definitely not anticipated from all courtiers, but those who could fulfil this function (Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī included) were taken as an even greater asset by the vizier. On top of that, al-Jawharī demonstrated Shīʿī sentiments in his poetry addressed to the vizier.[129] Whether genuine or affected, these must have been well received by the vizier, too.

Thus far, it was the vantage point of the patron that concerned us the most, not that of the courtier. We have just seen how al-Ṣāḥib draws a distinction between formal and informal circumstances at the court when it comes to the conduct expected of the courtiers. In Chapter 2, we shall examine this distinction, so fundamental at the court, with a greater focus on the point of view of the courtier.

Notes

1 Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, rev. ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 82–3; Lane, *ṣ.n.ʿ*.

2 *Akhlāq*, 109; date-stones are of very little value, but—according to al-Zaʿfarānī—still preferable to the present of the vizier, and his patronage in general, due to his harsh treatment; the *ṣanāʾiʿ* ("protégés") of al-Ṣāḥib are also referred to in Y, III, 129, 148, 259, among other places; note that *ṣanīʿ* and *ṣanīʿa* (pl. *ṣanāʾiʿ*) may also denote "benefit," "favor": Lane, *ṣ.n.ʿ*. (under *ṣanīʿ*). This is exactly the meaning of *ṣanāʾiʿ* in "his [i.e., al-Ṣāḥib's] benefits are limited to them" (*wa-ṣanāʾiʿuhu maqṣūra ʿalayhim*): Y, III, 32; likewise, the *ṣanīʿa* of the vizier appearing along its synonym *niʿma* is mentioned in the sense of "benefit" in *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1970), 11/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Muḥammad Pūrgul (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār wa-Mafākhir-i Farhangi, 2005), 132.

3 Y, III, 32; for other occurrences of *iṣṭanaʿa*, see for example (in the first and second references the subject is al-Ṣāḥib; in the last one, taken from a short passage written by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, it is any patron whatsoever), Y, III, 118 (*fa-ṣṭanaʿahu li-nafsihi*), Y, III, 259 (*wa-yaṣṭaniʿuhu li-nafsihi*) and Y, IV, 122 (*mani ṣṭanaʿaka*); the noun *ṣināʿa* may occur as "patronage," too. The vizier Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd did not want al-Ṣāḥib beside him in al-Rayy, for "he was frightened of him owing to the rank of his patronage (*li-maḥallihi min al-ṣināʿa*) and his place in the heart of Muʾayyid al-Dawla": Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, IV, 1893.

4 For example, *nudamāʾ*: al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba ʿanhu al-muṭrib*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿīn al-Mallūḥī (Damascus: Dār Ṭalās, 1987), 73, 103; Y, III, 81, 129, 148; Y, III, 259; *julasāʾ*: Y, I, 60; Y, III, 38; Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Ayman Sayyid (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1988), XVIII, 33.

5 For example, *aṣdiqāʾ*: Y, III, 130; *aṣḥāb*: Y, III, 38; Y, IV, 238; *ikhwān*: Y, III, 40; Y, III, 38.

6 Y, III, 148; see also Y, III, 129.

7 The following anecdote illustrates the formal use of the term *ṣanīʿ*: It is said that al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Muʿtazilī (d. 414/1023 or 415/1024 at 91), who was appointed chief judge of al-Rayy by al-Ṣāḥib, cared little about his duties to the vizier. In the beginning, he would title his letters to al-Ṣāḥib, "[from] his slave, protégé, and the product of his cultivation, ʿAbd al-Jabbār" (*ʿabduhu wa-ṣanīʿuhu wa-gharsuhu ʿAbd al-Jabbār*). When he noticed his high standing in the view of the vizier, he started writing "[from] his slave and protégé," and later, "[from] the product of his cultivation." Then, al-Ṣāḥib commented wryly to his courtiers: "if the Qāḍī stays with us long enough, he will title his letters to us 'al-Jabbār' ['The Almighty,' one of the ninety-nine names of God] and leave out the rest of his name": al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XVIII, 33.

8 That is, present through the manifestation of their competences in various ways (composing or reciting poetry, prose, and engaging in literary criticism) and attending the events where literature was taken up (even if not as the single topic); Joseph Sadan, too, opts for translating *nadīm* as "courtier" and not "boon-companion" based on the fact that at least as early as the ʿAbbāsid period his function extended beyond merely wine drinking with the patron: "The Division of the Day and Programme of Work of the Caliph Al-Manṣūr," in J. Blau *et al.* (eds), *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 261, n. 19. Charles Pellat, to whom Sadan refers, notes in his translator's introduction to the pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj* (*Le livre de la couronne* [Paris: Les belles lettres, 1954], 19) that in this work *nadīm* was applied to people who did not sit at the king's table. For this reason, he preferred in his French translation *familier* ("close friend") to *commensal* ("eating and drinking companion") to include all those taking part in the royal pastimes.

9 Y, III, 46; for other examples of odes where al-Ṣāḥib is addressed as a king (*malik*), see: Y, III, 157; Y, III, 224 (l. 9 and 17); Y, III, 275 (l. 21–3).

10 Y, III, 204–5 (apart from the above, al-Ṣāḥib is addressed once more as a king on p. 204).

11 See lines 10 and 11 of the ode produced and translated by Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 181, 194, 196.

12 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, ed. Jalīl al-ʿAṭiyya (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 113–15, 147; the Mansion Ode referred to is found among the others in Y, III, 53; Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī (291–352/903–63) was the vizier of the Būyid *amīr* of Iraq Muʿizz al-Dawla between 339/950 and his death. "Al-Muhallabī acquired great contemporary fame not merely for his vigorous effective career as both administrator and military leader, but also for his rôle as one of the several literary luminaries and maecenases in the employment of the Būyids": K.V. Zettersténe and C.E. Bosworth, "al-Muhallabī," *EI2*; al-Thaʿālibī dedicated an entry to al-Muhallabī with many examples of his poetry and prose: Y, II, 8–23.

13 Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. Abū l-Qāsim Imāmī (Tehran: Dār Surūsh, 2002), VI, 207.

14 Y, II, 11–14.

15 Y, II, 12.

16 Y, III, 33, 41; the term *khilʿa* does not appear until ʿAbbāsid time with the institutionalization of garment bestowal. The *khilʿa*, granted by rulers to subjects, men and women they wished to reward or distinguish, was often not a single robe, but an entire sumptuous outfit: N.A. Stillmann, "Khilʿa," and Y.K. Stillmann, "Libās," *EI2*; on robes of honor as part of royal ceremonial, see P. Sanders *et al.*, "Marāsim," *EI2*; *nithār*, "scattering," refers to the act of showering jewels, money, and other valuables on festive occasions. It was one aspect of the general practice of largesse by superiors to inferiors, but also an aspect of charity to the poor: E. and J. Burton-Page, "Nithār," *EI2*. In the circumstances reported above, the *khilaʿ* were distributed to their grantees in a *nithār* ceremony. Hence, these two types of present-giving (bestowal of robes of honor and scattering of valuables) were connected.

17 Y, III, 197; the Baghdadi poet Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bābak died in 410/1019: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VII, 657; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ ʿalā shawāhid al-talkhīṣ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1947), I, 64, 70; on his turbulent relations with al-Ṣāḥib, see Ḍiyāʾ Khuḍayyir, *ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bābak: shāʿir al-ḥanīn wa-l-ghurba. sīra dhātiyya wa-fanniyya li-shāʿir min al-ʿaṣr al-ʿAbbāsī (t. 410 H)* (Amman: Dār al-Yāqūt, 2001), 48–59.

18 *Akhlāq*, 188; the incident following which this investiture occurred is narrated in Chapter 5.

19 Y, II, 23–86; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 130–58; Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 31–5; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ*, ed. Riyāḍ Murād (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2012), I, 187–8; F.C. de Blois, "Ṣābiʾ," *EI2*.

20 Yāqūt narrates (*Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 147–8) that he read an account written by Abū Isḥāq's son, Abū ʿAlī l-Muḥassin b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābī (d. 401/1010), according to which his father contacted the poet al-Mutanabbī asking that he praise him in two odes for 5,000 dirhams. The poet answered that Abū Isḥāq was the only man in Iraq deserving his praise, but warned him that it would cause him trouble. Since al-Mutanabbī did not praise Abū Isḥāq's master, al-Muhallabī, in case he praised Abū Isḥāq, the vizier would treat his inferior with hostility. Still, if he did not care about this risk, the poet said, he would praise him for free. Abū Isḥāq realized his error and did not respond to the poet. This account is indeed remarkable and telling of Abū Isḥāq's standing as a littérateur, since al-Mutanabbī was known as being nit-picky,

and very selective with regard to those figures he was willing to eulogize. As we shall see in Chapter 4, al-Ṣāḥib, while still a secretary, was less lucky in this respect, for al-Mutanabbī snubbed him ignoring his request to be praised by him; Abū Isḥāq's *dīwān* is lost, but selections from his poetry are preserved in various sources: *GAS*, II, 592.

21 Y, II, 28; quoted by Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 141; Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Yūsuf was the secretary of ʿAḍud al-Dawla and among his closest courtiers throughout his reign. He served as a vizier of his sons several times: Y, II, 86–7; *balīgh* (pl. *bulaghāʾ*), literally, "eloquent," refers here specifically to prose style. This use of *bulaghāʾ*, paralleling it to *kuttāb* ("secretaries"), agrees with Shawkat M. Toorawa's observations that (in the third–fourth/ninth–tenth century) *balīgh* referred to "an eloquent master of prose style" or an "eloquent prose stylist," with a primary emphasis on epistolary writing: *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 59.

22 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 61; the interaction between Ibn Saʿdān and al-Tawḥīdī is studied in detail in Chapter 5.

23 Y, II, 27–8; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 140–1 (cites al-Thaʿālibī). Whereas in *Yatīmat al-dahr* the two possible motives of al-Ṣāḥib to have al-Ṣābī as a courtier are *immā tashawwuqan aw tafawwuqan* ("either … desire or superiority"), the cited text in *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ* reads *immā tashawwuqan wa-immā tasharrufan* ("…desire or becoming honored"); al-Ṣāḥib's (unfulfilled) desire to have Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī as his secretary while administering Iraq, was also reported by Hilāl b. al-Muḥassin, Abū Isḥāq's grandson: Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 715.

24 Y, II, 27; al-Thaʿālibī produces two short selections from a letter sent by al-Ṣābī to al-Ṣāḥib, where he thanks him heartily for his presents, and a short poem in which the former expresses his love to the latter: Y, II, 35–6, 53.

25 Y, III, 99–101.

26 Y, II, 28.

27 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās al-Khwārazmī (323–83/934–93) was born in Khwārazm but descended from Ṭabaristān (hence nicknamed Ṭabarkhazmī). A knowledgeable young man, good poet and littérateur, he left for Iraq and Greater Syria (al-Shām) to study with scholars and poets, and became—in the words of al-Thaʿālibī—"matchless at his time considering *adab* and poetry." The highlight of his travels was his service to the *amīr* Sayf al-Dawla (r. 333–56/945–67). At the latter's prosperous court in Aleppo he benefited greatly from the many distinguished scholars, poets, and littérateurs he encountered. Back in the eastern areas of Bukhara, Nīshāpūr, Sijistān, and Ṭabaristān, he praised several great men, not always with favorable results. Nevertheless, he succeeded immensely after praising al-Ṣāḥib at his court in Esfahan. Al-Khwārazmī entered the circle of his close courtiers, was generously awarded and supplied with a letter of recommendation that introduced him to ʿAḍud al-Dawla's court in Shiraz. The great profits he made allowed him to buy real estate and live comfortably in Nīshāpūr, but the fact that he sided fanatically with the Būyid dynasty and detracted from the sultan of Khorasan led to his imprisonment and the confiscation of his property. He ran away disguised to the court of al-Ṣāḥib in Jurjān, where he was generously rewarded as in the past. In around 372/982, after the assassination of the Sāmānid vizier Abū l-Ḥusayn al-ʿUtbī, who had ordered his arrest and confiscation, al-Khwārazmī returned to Nīshāpūr, invited by the new vizier Abū l-Ḥasan al-Muzanī who was a great admirer of his. In Nīshāpūr, he led a comfortable and respectable life again until the dismal effects of losing a debate to Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī precipitated his death: Y, IV, 123–7; Y, I, 8; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 68–9; C.E. Bosworth, "al-ʿUtbī," *EI2*.

28 Y, III, 148; al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 236.

29 Lane, *ḥ.ḍ.r*.

30 John Simpson (ed.), “Court, *n.1 (branch II)*” *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed. 1989), *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 13 May 2009 http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50052372

31 For instances of *ḥaḍra* in connection with al-Ṣāḥib, see: Y, III, 32, 243; Y, II, 27, 159; al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 114; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 706.

32 Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin, for example, used this deferential expression in reference to al-Ṣāḥib in the mentioned letter: Y, III, 148.

33 Lane, *f.n.y.* and *ḥ.ḍ.r.* (under *ḥaḍra* as a “court,” *fināʾ* is mentioned as a synonym).

34 See, for example, Y, III, 149; Y, III, 243; Y, IV, 126 (where *fināʾ* and *ḥaḍra* are used synonymously).

35 Lane, *s.w.ḥ.* See, for example, Y, III, 51; Lane, *ṣ.ḥ.n.* See, for example, *Akhlāq*, 186; Y, III, 46, 48, 54.

36 Lane, *dh.r.w.*; there *inna fulānan la-karīmu l-dharā* is translated by Lane, “verily, such a one is generous in disposition.”

37 Y, III, 194.

38 Compare it to the last line of Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim’s Mansion Ode, “And were it not for your dragging along the hinder skirt at the court (*sāḥa*) of sublimity and reciting poetry, its [= poetry’s] Jarīr would be returned”: Y, III, 51.

39 Y, IV, 140; these are the last two lines of Abū Bakr’s Mansion Ode: Y, III, 54–5 (*al-nadā*, “liberality,” appears instead of *al-dharā*).

40 Y, IV, 85. I changed *tabahā* (an obvious typographical error) to *tahabā*, as appearing in Y, A, IV, 162; *dharan* is also mentioned in a poem recited to al-Ṣāḥib in Y, IV, 275.

41 Lane translates *anā fī ẓill fulān wa-fī dharāhu* “I am in the protection of such a one, and in his shelter”: *dh.r.y.* (see also the entry *ẓ.l.l.*)

42 Y, IV, 162.

43 Y, III, 194.

44 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, 72–82.

45 Ibid., 78.

46 Ibid., 72, 78–9.

47 Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār wa-nuṣūṣ al-akhbār*, ed. Salīm al-Nuʿaymī (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1982), IV, 325.

48 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 693 (citing from al-Ābī’s lost *History of al-Rayy*); Y, III, 36.

49 These figures were given by al-Tawḥīdī on the authority of the poet al-Jīlūhī (*Akhlāq*, 193; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 689). Given al-Tawḥīdī’s bias, the actual figures might have been higher than reported. According to an unrelated account, al-Ṣāḥib awarded 500 dirhams plus one of his own robes of honor to a courtier, whom he prompted to describe extempore in poetry the bread on his table (the bread was given to him as well): Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 2302; Y, III, 33–4 (garments); *Akhlāq*, 188 (garments and perfume); Y, III, 34–5 (a reward combining “a robe of honor, two camels, and a present” for a praise ode); here are several examples for the allotment of land-tax profits to courtiers: the poet Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī, whose poetry al-Ṣāḥib highly appreciated, was allotted the land tax of his estates (*wa-yusawwighuhu kharāj ḍiyāʿihi*) among other rewards: Y, III, 130; Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin reports happily to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī in a letter that he was assigned a landed estate in Esfahan (*wa-min khabarī anna lī ḍayʿa bi-iṣbahān muqṭaʿa*). The reason for this assignment is a panegyric on the occasion of the New Year addressed to the sultan, which he composed following the order of al-Ṣāḥib: Y, III, 150; Abū Saʿd Naṣr b. Yaʿqūb, a secretary, littérateur, and poet, sent al-Ṣāḥib an anthology of similes he composed alongside a well-written letter and a unique ode. Al-Ṣāḥib praised the literary merits of Abū Saʿd as a *tashbīhāt* anthologist, prose writer, and poet in his response letter. He then touched upon the matter of a landed estate (*ḍayʿa*), which Abū Saʿd addressed to the vizier, promising to concede it to him

although in a gradual process: Y, IV, 274–5; the littérateur and bilingual poet Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ghawwāṣ was identified as Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Junaydī in Muḥammad ʿAwfī's Persian literary anthology *Lubāb al-albāb* (ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī, [Tehran: Kitābkhānah-yi Ibn Sīnā, 1957], 261) and a poet of al-Ṣāḥib's. Al-Thaʿālibī mentions that al-Ghawwāṣ was conferred "a benefit and landed property" (*la-hu niʿma wa-dihqana*; *dihqana* may also refer to the local administrative position of village heads in Persia, who were principally responsible for tax collection). The identity of the patron conferring these is unknown, although given the poet's association with Khorasan, it was probably by a patron other than al-Ṣāḥib: Y, IV, 318; on the delegation of the state's fiscal rights over lands to beneficiaries in the Būyid period, see Claude Cahen, "*Iqṭāʿ*," *EI2*.

50 Abū Saʿd Manṣūr al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, eds ʿAlī l-Bijāwī and Muḥammad Qurna (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1980–91), V, 305.

51 Y, III, 50; cf. Miskawayh's pride for being constantly with the vizier Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, "day and night," during his seven years of service as a librarian and courtier: *The Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah of Abū Sulaimān al-Sijistānī*, ed. D.M. Dunlop (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 136.

52 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, ed. Maʾmūn al-Jannān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 214.

53 For example, *nuʿmā*: Y, III, 45. Likewise, the *nuʿmā* ("benefit") of God to al-Ṣāḥib is mentioned by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 75/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 218; *ilan*/*alan*: al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 171 (*ālāʾ* contracted to *alāʾ* to fit the meter); al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 214 (*alāka*); *birr*: *Akhlāq*, 110; Y, II, 36; Y, IV, 239; *khayr*: *Akhlāq*, 110; *rifd*: Y, II, 36; Y, IV, 239; *ʿaṭiyya*: *Akhlāq*, 109; *minḥa*: Y, II, 27; *nāʾil*: Y, IV, 140.

54 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 75–7/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 217–20; al-Khwārazmī's spying is mentioned in *Akhlāq*, 108–10.

55 Y, III, 238–9; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, III, 278–81; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn, 2002), IV, 300.

56 Y, III, 242; al-Thaʿālibī's opening of the Qāḍī's entry shows how much he prized his prose as a whole, among other artistic and scholarly merits, extolling it as "al-Jāḥiẓ's prose": Y, III, 238; *Tahdhīb al-taʾrīkh* is not mentioned in *GAS*.

57 Note the use of *ālāʾ* and *niʿam* as synonyms.

58 Y, III, 243–4.

59 *Niʿmatuhu l-mufāḍa ʿalaynā*: Y, III, 242.

60 There is no indication of the circumstances that set the patron and protégé apart. This separation could have possibly happened when al-Jurjānī was appointed as the Qāḍī of Jurjān, while al-Ṣāḥib's court was in al-Rayy or Esfahan; we shall discuss competition at the court in Chapter 2.

61 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, 72–4 (*niʿma*); likewise, oaths, compacts, and covenants in the Būyid era (and earlier) were shaped by Qurʾānic models of binding relations between God and humans: ibid., 42–6.

62 The expression *walī l-niʿma* often denotes "a benefactor," as in (referring to al-Ṣāḥib): *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 10, 16, 61 (twice), 106/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 131, 139, 199, 201, 259. Nevertheless, here, *awliyāʾal-niʿam* has the sense of "beneficiaries," as determined by the context. This is possible either for ideas of proximity (to benefits) or possession (of benefits) conveyed by *waliya*: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4925 (*w.l.y.*).

63 Y, III, 44.

64 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 108/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 261; the same hierarchical order of divine benefits (*niʿam allāh*) to the vizier followed by benefits (*niʿam*) extended by the latter to his protégé Abū Bakr appears in another letter as well: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 75/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 217–18; the addressee of Abū Bakr's letter is only identified

as *bundār nīsābūr*. The Persian word *bundār* has many meanings, but in our context it denotes a high-ranking official in charge of tax collection and government revenue (see Muḥammad Riḍā Nājī, "Bundār (1)," in *Dānishnāmah-yi jahān-i islām*, ed. Ghulām-ʿAlī Ḥaddād ʿĀdil (Tehran: Bunyād-i Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif-i Islāmī, 1996–). Later, after the Sāmānid defeat in Jurjān (371/981), the *bundār* of Nīshāpūr, Abū l-Muẓaffar al-Ruʿaynī, was involved in the process of Abū Bakr's arrest and the seizure of his property (Y, IV, 126). It is unclear whether al-Ruʿaynī was the *bundār nīsābūr* addressed by Abū Bakr in his letter five years earlier.

65 *ʿAlī ʿalayhi l-salām rafaʿahu: mā ʿaẓumat niʿmat allāh ʿalā ʿabd illā ʿaẓumat ʿalayhi maʾūnat al-nās. Fa-man lam yaḥtamil tilka l-maʾūna li-l-nās ʿarraḍa tilka l-niʿma li-l-zawāl*: al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār*, IV, 329; this tradition is cited in "The Chapter on Benefit and its Gratitude…" (*bāb al-niʿma wa-shukrihā*…). In the same chapter (ibid., 317), we find an almost identical but shortened version of this *ḥadīth* cited directly from the mouth of the Prophet: "the benefit (*niʿma*) of God to one will not become great unless the burden of the people becomes great upon him"; the longer version of this *ḥadīth* is also found in a chapter set apart for the Prophet's sermons and exhortations in the earlier *History* of al-Yaʿqūbī (*fl.* second half of the third/ninth century): Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb, *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq (al-Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1964), II, 86.

66 *Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib raḍiya llāh ʿanhum: man anʿama ʿalayhi niʿma fa-anʿama ʿalā l-nās fa-qad akhadha amānan mina l-dhamm wa-khalaʿa ribqat sūʾ al-ʿawāqib min ʿunuqihi*: al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār*, IV, 328.

67 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, eds J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

68 John Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Doing Philosophy in the Real World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 135–47 (citation is from p. 147); John Searle and Daniel Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Universty Press, 1985), 12–15.

69 Searle, *Mind*, *Language and Society*, 148–50; in my outline, I benefited from the brief historical survey of speech act theory given by the editors Daniel Vanderveken and Susumu Kubo, *Essays in Speech Act Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 1–8.

70 Y, III, 54.

71 Y, IV, 85.

72 Y, III, 50.

73 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 196–205 (citation taken from p. 196); on Abū Shujāʿ, see C.E. Bosworth, "al-Rūdhrāwarī," *EI2*; on al-Ṣāḥib's desire to administer Iraq and Baghdad, see also Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 715.

74 For another application of speech act theory to medieval Arabic poetry with a focus on the poet Ibn al-Rūmī, see Beatrice Gruendler, *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 36–9, 59–76, 235–46.

75 Y, III, 223–4; Y, III, 74–7; T, II, 99–100. Interestingly, al-Thaʿālibī dedicated two entries to Abū l-Ḥusayn: one in *Yatīmat al-dahr*'s third volume and the other in the Supplement (*Tatimmat yatīmat al-dahr*); ʿAbbād, al-Ṣāḥib's grandson, was later married off to the daughter of a relative of Fakhr al-Dawla: Y, III, 76.

76 Y, III, 223–4 (a part of the ode is presented).

77 T, II, 100.

78 Kaykāwūs b. Iskandar, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa-Nashr-i Kitāb, 1967), 199. The translation above is Levy's: *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs Nāma*, tr. Reuben Levy (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), 193. This celebrated mirror for princes was composed in 475/1082.

79 T, II, 99; Y, III, 74.

80 Y, III, 46.

81 P. Crone, “Mawlā,” *EI2*.

82 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*, 84.

83 Y, III, 77–8; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 571; al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 138.

84 Q 14:28–9.

85 Q 16:112–14.

86 The editor Pūrgul suggests that al-Ḥājib Abū Isḥāq may be identified with Abū Isḥāq al-Naṣībī: *Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, 129. Al-Naṣībī was a student of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baṣrī’s, the Baghdadi Muʿtazilī who was among al-Ṣāḥib’s teachers. When al-Ṣāḥib asked al-Baṣrī to send him a Muʿtazilī propagandist, he sent him Abū Isḥāq al-Naṣībī, but the vizier was displeased by his ill nature and let him go (al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XVIII, 32). Al-Tawḥīdī mentioned al-Naṣībī in several places, noting that he was (unflatteringly) nicknamed Maqʿada, “buttocks.” While acknowledging his knowledge, he criticized him violently for being a religious skeptic, a grave sinner, and a promiscuous person. He cites al-ʿAttābī who claimed that al-Naṣībī was the one who “ruined” al-Ṣāḥib by making him an apostate (*mulḥid*): al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 141; idem, *al-Muqābasāt*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Irshād, 1970), 159–60 [*muqābasa* no. 35]; *Akhlāq*, 202, 211–12, 297. The Abū Isḥāq in question, however, cannot be Abū Isḥāq al-Naṣībī, since the latter came to al-Ṣāḥib as a Muʿtazilī propagandist, not as a chamberlain. In addition, far from being disgraced and imprisoned, when he was sent away, the vizier refrained from punishing him and let him go with money and gifts (al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XVIII, 32). Most importantly, in the present letter Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī mentions that al-Ṣāḥib influenced Abū Isḥāq to become Muʿtazilī (*Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 11/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 132), that is, this could not have been al-Naṣībī, who as a student of al-Baṣrī’s was Muʿtazilī already in Baghdad before his arrival. The disgraced Abū Isḥāq, therefore, remains unidentified.

87 *Hal jazāʾ al-iḥsān illā l-iḥsān*: Q 55:60.

88 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 9–12/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 129–34.

89 Ibid.; in his line (quoted above), “Indeed, I—imposing on you by means of poetry, having learned it from you, [to grant me] shelter and gifts,” Abū Bakr claimed to have acquired his poetic skills from the vizier.

90 Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī voices the same pessimistic view in his letter to Abū Bakr b. Samaka, where he says: “But the human being is ungrateful for benefit and unfaithful to compact” (*wa-lākinna bna ādam li-l-niʿma kafūr wa-bi-l-ʿahd ghadūr*): *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 152/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 322.

91 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 12–14/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 135–6; in his letters, both to al-Ṣāḥib and others, Abū Bakr lauds in numerous places the great liberality of the vizier toward him, an acknowledgment which is a significant part of being grateful. In a letter he wrote to al-Ṣāḥib after the death of the latter’s sister, he expressed thankfully his surprise at the munificence of the vizier, for his benefits were bestowed on him not only while he was in his presence but were also tracking him down when he was away: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 104–6/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 255–8; in the letter to the tax collector of Nīshāpūr, Abū Bakr wrote enthusiastically about the indescribable wealth granted to him by the vizier, which he looked forward to showing off in his home town Nīshāpūr in front of friend and foe: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 109/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 263.

92 Aside from the expression *aʿbāʾ birrihi*, we find in Abū Bakr’s letters equivalents such as *aʿbāʾ niʿamihi* (“the burdens of his benefits”) and *aʿbāʾ minanihi* (“the burdens of his graces”) referring to the obligations undertaken by the protégé of

al-Ṣāḥib: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 106/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 258–9.

93 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 14–6/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 136–40; Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī refers to his practice of censuring poets who praised a person and then lampooned him also in his letter to Abū Bakr b. Samaka: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 152/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 322–3; despite priding himself for not doing that, he did praise and lampoon al-Ṣāḥib, as we shall see.

94 Y, III, 148, 39. Al-Thaʿālibī's *dhahaba mughāḍiban* alludes to Q 21:87, *wa-dhā l-nūn idh dhahaba mughāḍiban* … ("And Dhū l-Nūn—when he went away in anger…") This verse refers to Dhū l-Nūn (Prophet Jonah) who fled angrily without God's permission, thinking He has no power over him, but once in distress in the belly of the fish, called for His help acknowledging his sin. Likewise, al-Khāzin fled away inappropriately, but had to return out of need and called upon al-Ṣāḥib to forgive him; cf. al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, IV, 117.

95 Y, IV, 239; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 488 (Abū l-Ḥasan's *nisba* is misspelled in both sources as al-Nawqānī). This *qiṭʿa* was possibly a part of a longer satire, but the circumstances that made Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī to compose it are unknown. Given the strong letter of recommendation written for him by al-Ṣāḥib (translated below), it is very unlikely that he left the vizier's court displeased. It, rather, seems that he addressed the *qiṭʿa* to another patron. Abū l-Ḥasan ʿUmar al-Sijzī l-Nawqātī is described by al-Thaʿālibī as a littérateur, poet, and jurisprudent from Sijistān who traveled more than once to Khorasan and Iraq in quest of *adab* and knowledge (Y, III, 238; the year of his death is not provided). Yāqūt dedicated no entry to him in *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, but mentioned his name in an entry on his father, the secretary, scholar, and littérateur Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nawqātī, who died after Rajab 382/September 992. He commented that Abū ʿUmar's place of origin in Sijistān was called Nawqāt, the Arabized form of Nawhā. In comparison, Nawqān was a town in the district of Ṭūs in Khorasan (*Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 2345–6; idem, *Muʿjam al-buldān* [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977], V, 311). Thus, apart from Yāqūt's comment, Abū l-Ḥasan's first *nisba*, al-Sijzī, and a poem in which he refers to his roots in Sijistān (*Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 635) confirm that the correct form of his second *nisba* was al-Nawqātī.

96 *Akhlāq*, 107–10; according to al-Tawḥīdī, his scoop's source, Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Naṣrānī, knew a lot of shameful things about al-Ṣāḥib. He quotes him as saying: "if I were to reveal the accounts about this catamite (*maʾbūn*) I keep to myself, the mountain would split apart and the stones uproot": *Akhlāq*, 110.

97 Al-Tawḥīdī recounts that he was at the house of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī with other members of the circle when ʿAḍud al-Dawla's death was ascertained, and those present uttered sayings on this occasion demonstrating their attitude toward worldly power: Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 148.

98 *Akhlāq*, 192.

99 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 108/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 261–3; Abū Bakr refers to al-Ṣāḥib's cheerful countenance, when awarding, in his Mansion Ode, too (Y, III, 54): "gardens as beautiful as the life of those who ask you [for favors] and cheerful as your face when you view someone who hopes [for favors]."

100 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 109–11/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 264–6; caught between the requirements of gratitude for the benefit of the executed vizier (Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd) and his strong commitment to the present vizier, Abū Bakr walks on a thin line. While not shrinking from mentioning Abū l-Fatḥ positively and acknowledging his benefits to him, he also takes him to task for not being more thoughtful when selecting his courtiers as expected of a leader (*Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 110/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul,

265–6). The relatively favorable mention of the dead vizier, who at that point naturally could not have been a source of any benefit to Abū Bakr (rather, he became a liability), tells us a lot about the power of the religious and social injunction to be thankful. The dominance of this injunction over immediate interest is a proof for the strong moralizing function of a cultural superego; as for Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd's courtiers, in a poem addressed to al-Ṣāḥib (*Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 603), Abū Bakr was less charitable compared to the above letter. In fact, he calls upon al-Ṣāḥib to take the necessary measures against them, finding fault with his leniency toward them.

101 A letter that Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī addressed to al-Ṣāḥib (possibly written after he left for Nīshāpūr, following al-Muzanī's invitation), in which he shows anxiety on account of al-Ṣāḥib's ignoring him while corresponding with another, may be related to the termination of their relation. Toward the end of the letter, Abū Bakr pleads: "Let the vizier not sell me, because I had bought him for the world's inhabitants" (*lā yabiʿnī l-wazīr wa-qad ishtaraytuhu bi-ahl al-dunyā*). In what may be understood as a hinted intimidation to lampoon him, Abū Bakr writes that just as al-Ṣāḥib was not stingy with him financially, he expects him not to be stingy with his letters, so that his name would not be recorded among the stingy. Unfortunately, the lack of contextualizing details in the letter does not allow us to be sure about its place in their broken relation: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 194–5/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 361–2.

102 Abū l-Barakāt Kamāl al-Dīn b. al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181), *Nuzhat al-alibbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-udabāʾ*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1970), 239; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, IV, 401 (with some minor changes); Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022) adduces the above poem of al-Ṣāḥib as evidence for Abū Bakr's irreverent insolence toward his benefactors: *Jamʿ al-jawāhir fī l-mulaḥ wa-l-nawādir*, ed. ʿAlī l-Bijāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1987), 254; another satirical couplet, which Abū Bakr composed against al-Ṣāḥib, blamed him for silliness (in the first line) and for passive sodomy (in the second): "The position of our Ṣāḥib is lofty, but his chamber is empty/If you knew the secret of his sickness, you'd ask God for nothing but [his] health": Y, III, 110. "Empty chamber" is a euphemism describing the condition of a silly (empty-headed) person (al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb al-kināya wa-l-taʿrīḍ*, ed. Usāma al-Buḥayrī [Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997], 103). Satires of the period often paired the silliness of the victim with a "dreadful sickness" of the lower part of the body—a euphemism for passive sodomy (*ubna*)—as done by al-Ṣāḥib himself (Y, III, 103; al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 132; cf. Y, IV, 71; Aḥmad al-Jurjānī, *Kināyāt al-udabāʾ wa-ishārāt al-bulaghāʾ*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Qaṭṭān [Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 2003], 146; al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb al-kināya*, 91; Franz Rosenthal, "Ar-Rāzī on the Hidden Illness," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 52 [1978]: 47–8).

103 Y, IV, 239.

104 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 109/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 263.

105 Y, III, 32.

106 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 706; likewise, Yāqūt cites al-Tawḥīdī from his lost work *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarāt*, speaking of the ready market knowledge had with the vizier Abū l-Qāsim al-Mudlijī in Shiraz (*kāna yanfuqu ʿalayhi sūq al-ʿilm*). After him, commodities became unsaleable (*bārat al-baḍāʾiʿ*) and the knowledge market stagnant (*wa-kasada sūq al-ʿilm*): ibid., V, 1929.

107 ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-qaṣr wa-ʿuṣrat ahl al-ʿaṣr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnjī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), II, 1356.

108 The word *buhtān* (as "calumny," "slander") appears six times in the Qurʾān, but none of its occurrences is related to Pharaoh. "The false accusation of Pharaoh before Moses" glances at the two charged meetings between Pharaoh and Moses

(and his brother Aaron), when he is demanded to release the Children of Israel and is shown "signs" of God, as described in Sūrat Ṭā Hā (Q 20:49–73), Sūrat al-Shuʿarāʾ (Q 26:18–51), and Sūrat Yūnus (Q 10:75–82). Pharaoh, however, refuses and accuses Moses falsely for sorcery (Q 20:56–8). In Q 20:71 Pharaoh baselessly accuses his sorcerers, who were defeated by the sign of Moses and declared their belief in God, of having learned sorcery from Moses, their "master." A relevant use of *buhtān* appears in the interpretation of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) to Q 10:76 ("Thus, when the truth came to them [=Pharaoh and his council] from Us, they said: 'This is certainly evident sorcery'"): "It was as if they … swore this, knowing that what they said was a lie and a false accusation (*kidhb wa-buhtān*)…": *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Khann (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 2000), 646. Based on the Qurʾān and this exegetic vein, we understand that Pharaoh's sorcery accusation was a hard sell, something that one would not buy. Knowledge before al-Ṣāḥib, says Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, sold even worse than that; interestingly enough, Abū Bakr's line revolving around the bad conditions of patronage before al-Ṣāḥib connects well with the bad patronage extended by Pharaoh to Moses, as told in Q 26:18–22. When Moses demands Pharaoh to let his people go, Pharaoh condemns him as ungrateful (*wa-anta min al-kāfirīn*), because he was reared as a child in his household. Moses denies this accusation saying that at that time he was away from the right, but since then he has become a Messenger of God, and proceeds to charge (Q 26:22): "And is that a benefit you bestowed upon me? That you have enslaved the Children of Israel?" (*wa-tilka niʿma tamunnuhā ʿalayya an ʿabbadta banī isrāʾīl*).

109 Y, IV, 140; in the last line, *ʿalam* may also be translated as a waymark or a banner. On Sirius (*al-shiʿrā al-ʿabūr*), the brightest of the fixed stars, see note to l. [B]7 in my Appendix translation.

110 Two other extant letters of recommendation were written by the vizier for the poet Abū l-Ḥasan al-Salāmī (336–93/947–1003), who sought ʿAḍud al-Dawla's patronage in Shiraz (Y, II, 162–3), and to the poet Abū l-Ḥasan al-Jawharī, who wished to be admitted by Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī in Esfahan (Y, III, 260–2). Al-Thaʿālibī refers to Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī's taking along with him in his travels al-Ṣāḥib's letters of recommendation, but provides no example (Y, III, 175). He also mentions a letter of recommendation al-Ṣāḥib wrote for Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī that was the cause of his great success with ʿAḍud al-Dawla in Shiraz (Y, IV, 125).

111 *Wa-laka fī kull minhumā qidḥ yajūlu ḥattā yajliba ilayka aʿshār al-jazūr*. The metaphoric image employed here by al-Ṣāḥib is that of the pre-Islamic *maysir*, a gambling game played with arrows, which could be roughly described thus: a slaughtered camel is divided to ten portions (*aʿshār al-jazūr*; the erroneous *jazūl* is printed in Y and in the later editions of the text) for which seven players contend. Each player has his own arrow marked by notches from one to seven standing for a respective share of the camel. Three unmarked arrows are added to the seven for control purposes, and then all arrows are shuffled in a container with a small opening by an entrusted person. He shakes out one winning arrow at a time until the total indicated by the arrows reaches ten or more (e.g., 1, 4, and 5; or, 6 and 7). The players whose arrows did not come out split the price of the camel and pay for it. The winners are expected to donate their shares to the poor of the tribe: Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 74–7; for detailed terminology, see Lane, *b.d.ʾ.* (*badʾ*), *j.z.r.* (*jazūr*), *y.s.r.* (*maysir*); al-Ṣāḥib's image displays Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī as a lucky winner of a high share of knowledge in each of grammar and lexicography.

112 Y, IV, 238.

113 *Man naẓara li-dīnihi naẓarnā li-dunyāhu fa-in ātharta l-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd basaṭnā la-ka l-faḍl wa-l-tamhīd wa-in aqamta ʿalā l-jabr fa-laysa li-kasrika min jabr*: Y, III, 39; al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 139; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 708; al-Thaʿālibī

comments (Y, III, 39) that Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shaqīqī l-Balkhī showed this *tawqīʿ* to him; the text of Y reads “if you abide in tradition” (*khabar*), which I rejected in favor of the reading “if you abide in compulsion” (*jabr*), found in Y, A, III, 201, as it is clearly required by the context. *Jabr*, “compulsion,” means that all actions emanate from God and not from humans, in contrast to *qadar*, “free will,” a tenet held by the Muʿtazilīs. The latter applied the name Mujbira to traditionists, Ashʿarī theologians, and others who denied their doctrine of *qadar*: W. Montgomery Watt, “Djabriyya, or Mudjbira,” *EI2*; I translated the second *jabr* in the *tawqīʿ* literally as “setting” despite the fact that it is also understood tropically (see Lane, *j.b.r.*): restoring someone from a state of poverty to wealth or sufficiency; conferral of benefits upon a poor man (likened to one with a broken bone).

114 Wilferd Madelung, “Imāmism and Muʿtazilite Theology,” [1979], repr. in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985). VII: 20.

115 Y, IV, 84–5.

116 Al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-qaṣr*, II, 1356; T, II, 26–9.

117 Y, III, 193; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature. Part Two: The Arabic Jargon Texts. The* Qaṣīda Sāsāniyyas *of Abū Dulaf and Ṣafī d-Dīn* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), ٣٨, 212–13 (for his edited text and translation).

118 Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature. Part One: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Life and Lore* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 48, 94.

119 Y, III, 174–5.

120 *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 109/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 264.

121 Y, III, 36; Y, IV, 168; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 234–6 (*wa-kāna … mutaʿaṣṣiban li-ahl al-ḥadīth wa-l-sunna*); his strong Sunnī belief is seen also in his poetic response to the Shīʿī Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, who defamed the Prophet’s Companions in an ode: ibid., 249–51; for a more detailed analysis of Badīʿ al-Zamān’s religious views, see Everett K. Rowson, “Religion and Politics in the Career of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī,” *JAOS* 107: 4 (1987), 653–73, and Wadād al-Qāḍī, “Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī and His Social and Political Vision,” in Mustansir Mir (ed.), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1993), 215–16; Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī’s departure from the court will be discussed in Chapter 2 according to information gleaned from his poetry.

122 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, III, 278.

123 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 39–40; idem, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Akram al-Būshī (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla, 1984), XVI, 401; idem, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), III, 974–5.

124 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 93.

125 Y, III, 259–60; Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḍabbī (d. 399/1008) was a poet and prose writer, and al-Ṣāḥib’s friend and protégé. He was al-Ṣāḥib’s deputy during his lifetime, and after the vizier’s death, Fakhr al-Dawla appointed him as his vizier together with Abū ʿAlī l-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamūla. Al-Ḍabbī’s honorific was al-Kāfī l-Awḥad: Y, III, 118–24, 199–200; Y, III, 259–60; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 175–81.

126 The mirrors for princes literature prescribes that the ruler be the first to open a conversation or discussion, while the courtier listens silently unless his response is required: Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj fī akhlāq al-mulūk*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1914), 49–50.

127 Y, III, 261; Lane (*ʿ.n.d.l.b.*) glosses *ʿandalīb* (pl. *ʿanādil*, but here *ʿanādib*) as “a small passerine bird called Hazār Dāstān” (In Persian, “[teller] of a thousand tales”), identified by some with the nightingale (*bulbul*, pl. *balābil*). The nightingale is

characterized by a beautiful voice and a tuneful and harmonious song (see Ali Nihat Tarlan, "Bulbul," *EI2*), hence, by attributing to al-Jawharī superiority to this bird, al-Ṣāḥib seeks to highlight his exquisite oral delivery and storytelling skill.

128 Y, III, 261; al-Thaʿālibī writes that al-Jawharī died soon after he returned happy from Esfahan to Jurjān, but provides no date: ibid., 262.

129 Y, III, 75; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 708.

2 The courtiers

> The way one sits, moves, and behaves while alone at his home is not the same as in front of a mighty king; nor are his speech and unreserved manner while among his family and relatives as his speech at the session of the king.
>
> Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*[1]

> Who can name certain changing colors that vary depending on the various lights in which one views them? Likewise, who can define the court?
>
> La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*[2]

I Why courtiers?

Courtiers (*nudamāʾ*, *julasāʾ*) were indispensable for a leader like al-Ṣāḥib, as we saw, but we have yet to discuss their functions and functioning in greater detail. We are interested first and foremost in the courtier's profile as perceived by al-Ṣāḥib's contemporaries and close contemporaries. Al-Thaʿālibī's mirror for princes, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, discusses manifold aspects of kingship, and is certainly a good place to start. Like other mirrors composed in the medieval Islamic world, it draws on Islamic, Persian, and Greek cultural models. The two passages to follow explain why courtiers' services were essential and why those in leadership positions relied on them:

> A king's courtiers (*nudamāʾ*) are the lamps of his session (*majlis*), the keys to his happiness, the cores of his heart and God's gifts to his soul. It is necessary that they be from people of distinction, the most select elite, bringing together decorum (*adab al-nafs*) first, education (*adab al-dars*) second, and service ethics (*adab al-khidma*) third. [They should be] acquainted with the requisites of the courtier's craft and conditions of intimate fellowship, hitting seriousness and jesting with victorious arrows, and zealous in disputation and contention. [They should be] listening unless speech is necessary and refraining from unreserved behavior (*yanbasiṭūn*) unless an order has been issued…
>
> The souls of kings are exhausted by the great tasks of conducting wars and armies, corresponding with kings on weighty matters, weighing thoroughly

> how to close up breaches, and other significant matters. Among the things that relieve, soothe, relax, and assist them in bearing the burdens of kingship and enduring the affliction of leadership are holding entertainment sessions (*majālis al-uns*), stringing the necklace of courtiers, in addition to asking the clouds of happiness for rain and producing the fire of pleasure by drinking the blood of a bunch of grapes [i.e., wine]. The foundation of this condition [namely, the kings' relaxation] is superior and royal music.[3]

Courtiers should be highly qualified elite members, refined, well versed in many fields, and masters of etiquette and tact. These qualifications, with certain variations, are prescribed by many mirrors for princes (and related works) and are ultimately traced back to Sāsānid models.[4] The models in question also prescribe that rulers have a balanced daily schedule combining time spent for the benefit of the subjects and another for relaxation; hence, the kings of ancient Persia are said to have divided their day into four parts and the Sāsānid king Bahrām Gūr (r. 420–438 AD) into two—in each case half of the daily schedule was dedicated to work and the other to recreation.[5] The mirrors literature emphasizes that rulers sorely need their courtiers with whom they engage in informal recreational and intellectual activities to counterbalance the unavoidable exhaustion and stress concomitant with their office. The problem is that to really enjoy his time in these situations, the ruler must be familiar and informal with his courtiers. When the ruler is rigid and formal, the courtiers are uncomfortable or, worse, petrified, and no enjoyable interaction could possibly take place. Nevertheless, the risk faced by the ruler is that his courtiers may become emboldened and arrogant by his familiarity, which as a result may make him less awe-inspiring than desired for a leader. The solution proposed is to take professional courtiers, and avoid office holders whose interaction with the ruler is to be restricted to the formal part of his schedule.[6] One ruler who was adamant about not letting his office holders double as courtiers was ʿAbdallāh b. Buluqqīn, the last Zīrid king of Granada (r. 465–83/1073–90). Ibn Buluqqīn's comments on that are included in his autobiography.[7] This solution, however, turned out to be not quite practical, as medieval Islamic history documented enough cases of courtiers who were also office holders.[8] This was the case of al-Ṣāḥib as well, among whose courtiers we find office holders such as secretaries alongside poets, littérateurs, and scholars. Using the terms and dramaturgical analysis of the sociologist Erving Goffman, it would be possible to say that al-Ṣāḥib did not attempt to apply the measure of audience segregation, so that the individuals witnessing him in one of his roles (entailing the formal "frontstage behavior language") will not be those witnessing him in another role (entailing the informal "backstage language of behavior").[9]

The hierarchical gap between the superior and the inferior at the court, and the problem which the intimacy between the two parties created for the former was clearly seen from the perspective of the courtier as well. Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, one of al-Ṣāḥib's prominent courtiers, argued apologetically in an ode that the superior's (*al-rajul al-kabīr*) intimate association (*ʿishra*) with the inferior (*al-rajul al-ṣaghīr*) did not degrade the former. Not only did the superior's dignity remain intact, he said, but in order to function properly, the superior *had to* rely on the inferior. He, therefore, considered the intimacy to be of mutual benefit to both parties.[10] This is, of course, not a transaction unique to medieval Islamic societies. Discussing interaction in everyday situations in the modern world (with an emphasis on Anglo-American society), Goffman shows that despite the general tendency to maintain social distance between inferiors and superiors (subordinates and superordinates in his usage), there are spaces and times calling for its relaxation. He comments:

> Such relaxation of front provides a basis for barter; the superordinate receives a service or good of some kind, while the subordinate receives an indulgent grant of intimacy. Thus, the reserve which upper-class people in Britain maintain during interaction with tradesmen and petty officials has been known to give way momentarily when a particular favor must be asked of these subordinates. Also, such relaxation of distance provides one means by which a feeling of spontaneity and involvement can be generated in the interaction.[11]

In our case, based on the benefit for gratitude patronage bond, the courtier received for his service to the patron material benefits *as well as* abstract benefits. In fact, the abstract benefits are comparable to Goffman's "indulgent grant of intimacy," which was made possible by the relaxation of front on the part of the patron.

The interaction patterns between al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers are inseparable from the court institution. Norbert Elias looked at the medieval European court as a specific social configuration that brought about a change in the psychological make-up of its members, constructing the civilized personality. By elaborating and refining his conceptualization, Gadi Algazi and Rina Drory contributed to a better understanding of this institution and its dynamics. In their usage, which is followed here, it does not designate highly hierarchical court systems limited to formalized ceremonies, but rather elite social configurations in which power relations are dimmed at times to allow models of interactions and creativity based on cultural competences.[12]

Courts are established on complex patterns of cultural codes involving behavior, language, and aesthetic perceptions, according to which the agents interact. The patron, by means of whose power the cultural activity is maintained, enjoys the privilege of having a significant influence on their structures. The first thing the courtiers have to know is how to adapt themselves to the different demands of the formal and informal parts of his schedule. The success of artistic, intellectual, entertainment, or leisure activities, taking place during the informal part, depend fundamentally on loosening up the hierarchic tension between patron and courtiers. Niẓām al-Mulk stresses that "courtiers need to be familiar; if a courtier is not familiar the king will not find any pleasure in his company."[13] This recommendation contradicts the idea that the monarch should be distanced from his courtiers to preserve his majesty, and that strict formality should be observed even during recreational activities. We should remember that drinking and enjoying music may make him behave in a way which, some believe, does not behoove an exalted monarch. The material manifestation of this separation was the curtain (*sitāra*, *ḥijāb*), setting apart the ruler and his courtiers, which was an old practice of the Persian kings. The Umayyad caliphs (with some exceptions) kept the practice; the ʿAbbāsids did not at first, but then reinstated it. Caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85) broke with it for finding no pleasure in being distanced from his courtiers, whereas Caliph al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809) is said to have observed it.[14]

The decision whether or not to be separated by the curtain and how strictly to follow this practice was clearly a personal choice that had to do with the ruler's character and proclivities. Al-Ṣāḥib, we are told in a eulogy by the secretary Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid, was "easy with [lifting] the veil for newcomers and guests" (*sahlu l-ḥijābi li-zuwwārin wa-wuffādī*).[15] After serving as a secretary for al-Ṣāḥib, Abū ʿAbdallāh was at some point appointed by him as the superintendent of the post and intelligence in Qom.[16] His was also a case of a courtier who was an office holder at the same time, which with al-Ṣāḥib was certainly not uncommon. Yet, the limits were set clear: "Al-Ṣāḥib used to say at night to his courtiers (*julasāʾ*), when he wanted to make them feel unreserved and intimate with him, 'we are sovereigns during the day, but friends at night'."[17] The same message was also transmitted, apparently by al-Ṣāḥib, from the opposite angle: "(Abū) ʿAbbād said one day to Abū Bakr al-Muqriʾ, 'beware of taking liberties not in place, for we are friends at night and sovereigns during the day. Excess of liberty-taking prompts vexation'."[18]

This motto (phrased twice) contrasts the formal part of the vizier's schedule with the informal part. It frames two binary time zones, the formal governed by hierarchy, stringent protocol, and strict obedience of subjects (as forcefully described by the historian al-Ābī and by the vizier himself in al-Jawharī's recommendation letter);[19] the informal governed by equality and congeniality. We shall see that the motto is somewhat misleading, since friendship between the vizier and his courtiers was limited and hierarchy by no means disappeared during the informal part. It was only temporarily dimmed, still requiring the courtiers to rely on their developed "second nature" to know the proper boundaries in interaction with the superior. The dormant hierarchy in the informal relationship between the vizier and his courtiers is betrayed by the *pluralis majestatis* in this motto ("*We* are…"). Al-Ṣāḥib could never be just a friend, and was always at least to some extent, a vizier, or, as he defined himself, a sovereign.

The account to follow gives an idea of the level of tolerance and the relaxation of hierarchy shown by al-Ṣāḥib during informal activities: al-Ṣāḥib relates that four nonpareil witty poets (*al-shuʿarāʾ al-ẓurafāʾ*) silenced and shamed him with their unique witty rejoinders. The first among the four—all, curiously, share the *kunya* Abū l-Ḥasan—was Abū l-Ḥasan al-Badīhī who was at the vizier's residence in Esfahan among other courtiers, when plates with fruits, including delicious Esfahani apricots, were served. Al-Badīhī's attention was held by the apricots and he fixed his eyes on them. Al-Ṣāḥib, then, told him that apricots upset the stomach and he replied, “The host does not please me when he is engaged in medicine.” Al-Ṣāḥib later commented: “[With this response, al-Badīhī] dressed me with the veil of shame and cut me off.”[20] It was indeed the opinion of physicians, such as Ibn Sīnā (370–428/980–1037), that apricots are quick to rot and become sour in one’s stomach, which is the cause of fever.[21] Still, the vizier could not have made the remark seriously (otherwise, why would he have apricots served at his table?), but rather sought to tease his courtier for showing robust appetite. Al-Badīhī silenced al-Ṣāḥib with his rejoinder because the vizier realized that his “medical remark” was not in agreement with table etiquette. The courtier obviously took advantage of the informal situation that tolerated bold rejoinders of this sort, and al-Ṣāḥib himself made it clear that the way he was silenced in this situation actually pleased him.

Also having to do with appetite, albeit of a different type, the third case in which al-Ṣāḥib was speechless involved a very attractive youth. When Abū l-Ḥasan al-Munajjim came once to al-Ṣāḥib, he saw him with this youth, and could not help staring at him, “almost eating him with his eyes.” Al-Ṣāḥib said to Abū l-Ḥasan “*sikbāj*” (sour meat stew), and the latter replied promptly “*kashkiyya*” (meat dish with dried dough), which left the vizier amazed at his quick grasp of this cryptic wordplay and his rejoinder in the same form.[22] This meaty wordplay is established on intentional *taṣḥīf* (misreading or miswriting of the diacritics), a refined linguistic game requiring the decipherment of a message encoded by altering the diacritics of an expression. Al-Thaʿālibī provides no key, but it seems that *sikbāj* (سكباج) means *tanīku yā akhi* (تنيك يأخ), “would you fuck [him], my friend?,” while the reply *kashkiyya* (كشكية) means *kuntu niktuhu* (كنت نكته), “I already have!”[23] Evidently, al-Ṣāḥib was silenced and shamed by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Munajjim for his prompt and apt response, and—beyond mere words—for outdoing the vizier in action: the rather arrogant and teasing message targeting the unrestrained lust shown by Abū l-Ḥasan was met with another ridiculing the vizier’s sense of privilege, precedence, and achievement with regard to the youth. This case and others, as we shall see, attest to the high level of freedom and the relaxed atmosphere during informal activities and interactions at the court. The courtiers were certainly not in a state of permanent fear of the vizier, and felt free to poke fun at him, or to criticize him, when the situation called for it. Although hierarchy could never vanish, even during the entertainment session (*majlis al-uns*) and other informal courtly activities, it was necessarily relaxed and often sublimated on such occasions to appear in a more subtle way (e.g., turn-taking in improvised poetry competitions). Otherwise, as we already saw, the requisite conditions for recreation and relief for the preoccupied leader could not have materialized. We should, therefore, be cognizant that the contours of hierarchy in effect during formal activities were certainly different from those of informal activities. This difference should not be overlooked,[24] because it created the conduct patterns and atmosphere characteristic of each time zone.

It is evident, then, that medieval Islamic sovereigns conceived of their schedule as divided in a binary fashion into two zones, formal versus informal, although this division could not have been as clear-cut as displayed, and would be better understood as a continuum ranging from the most formal to the least. This division begs an essential question that should not be taken for granted: How were these time zones socially defined and subjectively construed in such a way that the agents related to activities according to their meaning? Or, in other words, how were these time zones framed as such? Goffman saw social experience as organized by frames, which (after Gregory Bateson) he described as "principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them."[25] If we are to borrow Goffman's term, our concern here is with the framing of the formal and informal time zones. For the sake of comparison, Richard Bauman, in a chapter of his illuminating work, *Verbal Art as Performance*, sought to describe the ways in which performance (as a mode of speaking) is framed; those characteristics that define for the audience a certain event as a performance of verbal art, distinguishing it from other modes of speaking. Bauman overviews communicative means that have been widely documented in various cultures as serving to key performance: special codes, figurative language, parallelism, special paralinguistic features, special formulae, appeal to tradition, and disclaimer of performance. Through the culturally-conventionalized use of these or other means, the framing of performance in a given community is accomplished, that is, all communication taking place within that frame is to be understood as performance.[26]

As any frame, the time zones we study may be misread by individuals, or as Goffman puts it "misframed."[27] Obviously, the risk of misframing the formal time zone as informal could have grave consequences for a courtier, who might lose his life for showing wit at the expense of the ruler. A courtier, however, might lose his job if he misframes the informal time zone as formal, and refrains from showing wit and humor. At the court, there was not much room for errors of this type. Still, albeit possible, misframing the formal as informal, or vice versa, was not likely to happen. Several of the major characteristics that defined the formal/informal frames at the court of al-Ṣāḥib and precluded errors were: time—intellectual and entertainment activities were often, although not always, scheduled at night. In contrast, formal activities related to al-Ṣāḥib's official duties as a vizier were usually scheduled during daytime; space—despite the dearth of evidence in this respect, some spaces, such as gardens, were always linked with informal activities; event—the designation of an event was probably the strongest frame indicator as it carried with it for those present a whole gamut of meanings. Hence, discussions with the *amīr* about a military campaign or the campaign itself were obviously framed as formal events. An entertainment session or a meal with courtiers were by definition informal.

Nevertheless, a greater challenge for the courtier was to interact properly within the frame. Since hierarchy was only dimmed, or relaxed, in informal activities, there existed sufficient ambiguities that made it harder for the courtier to know how to interact with the patron. Even when an event was framed as informal, how could one know what "excess of liberty-taking" means? How could one tell whether a certain timing was ripe for a risqué anecdote? How should one avoid dangerous faux pas? The volatility of monarchs was notorious and so was their punishment for violating their usually unwritten rules. Al-Ṣāḥib expressed that well in the following [*al-wāfir*]:

Idhā adnāka sulṭānun fa-zidhū
Mina l-taʿẓīmi wa-ḥdharhū wa-rāqib

Fa-mā l-sulṭānu illā l-baḥru ʿuẓman
Wa-qurbu l-baḥri maḥdhūru l-ʿawāqib

If a ruler brings you close to him,
Glorify him even more, beware him, and be on your guard!

The ruler is nothing but an ocean in might,
And being near an ocean has outcomes one should beware of[28]

Speaking about newly established royal dynasties, Ibn Khaldūn comments on the adoption of “royal character qualities” (*khulq al-mulk*) by the rulers. These are “strange, peculiar qualities,” of which people who interact with the rulers are often not adequately aware, and fail in their performance. Consequently, the rulers become displeased and prone to punish them. The command of interaction manners (*ādāb*) with the rulers becomes “the sole property of their special friends.”[29] Ibn Khaldūn describes here specific and exclusive cultural codes known to a small elite group only. This leads us to the inquiry of the cultural mechanism that made one succeed, or, in the case of its absence, fail at court. We now turn to discuss the habitus concept with a special reference to the courtly habitus.

II The courtly habitus

The preliminary question to be asked is what made a literary person successful in that specific historical environment. The success or failure of agents in a given social setting may be normally explained by their own performance vis-à-vis the accepted hegemonic rules (success or failure are understood in their ability to command these rules, from an *objective* institutional point of view). To succeed at court, one had to acquire the relevant courtly habitus, in other words, to inculcate a set of dispositions capable of generating practices and perceptions, which is indispensable for functioning correctly at it. Agents who have internalized this “practical sense” behave in a manner which is not necessarily calculated or conscious, rather it becomes a second nature to them.[30] The concept of habitus as elaborated and used by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu makes an efficient analytic tool for studying the navigation and success or failure of an agent in the literary (or any other) field. In the context of the court in particular it is expedient to point to Norbert Elias’s previous employment of this concept. In *The Civilizing*

Process, Elias undertook to explain how the modern European personality was shaped to become "civilized" in reaction to changing social developments—the gradual establishment of more stable central organization and a firmer monopolization of physical force—in a long process starting in the twelfth century and ending in the nineteenth century. Elias located the initial site of transformation in medieval court society, when the monopoly of force became more and more concentrated in the hands of fewer predominant rulers, in whose courts poorer warriors had to assemble owing to their inability to maintain independent estates. The co-existence of a number of people, whose actions constantly intertwined, and the forced interdependence in a monopolistically controlled competition under a strong ruler led them to a stricter control of their conduct and a greater restraint of their affects. Hence, through the ascending dominance of the superego in the "civilized" personality, sublimation and refinement gave expression to the various types of behaviors, manners, and cultural repertoires we identify as courtly. Through self-regulation people have become able to act in accordance with the demands of the social network, and cope successfully with the growing differentiation of social functions in a complex society. With the passing of centuries this process, starting with the warriors, by slow and steady permeation changed Europeans of all classes bearing the modern European personality.[31] Elias employs habitus in the meaning of a psychological make-up that enables people to act in a given society and argues for the gradual changing of the European habitus in response to the mentioned far-reaching and stabilized social changes. Hence, he sees self-restraint as "the decisive trait built into the habitus of every 'civilized' human being … only in conjunction with these monopolies does this kind of self-restraint require a higher degree of automaticity, does it become, as it were, 'second nature'."[32]

Habitus is by no means a modern concept; rather, it has a long history in the East (which I discuss in detail elsewhere) and West.[33] The idea of practical habituation forming character and finding expression in one's behavior goes back to Aristotle.[34] The latter used the Greek word *hexis*, later translated by the Romans into the Latin *habitus*, to refer to rather stable traits of character or expert knowledge acquired through habituation and practice. In his discussion of quality (*Categories* 8b26–9a13), Aristotle differentiates between habitus and condition according to the criteria of length of time and changeability: habitus (e.g., of justice in a person) both lasts a long time and is hard to change, while condition (e.g., of hotness in a person) does not last a long time and is easy to change. Elsewhere in *Categories* (11b16–13b35), Aristotle employs *hexis* in a different, albeit related, sense. One of the four ways by which things are opposed to one another is habitus and privation. This opposition is spoken of in connection with the same thing, for example, sight and blindness in connection with the eye.[35] In *Metaphysics* (1022b4–14), Aristotle, concentrating on the process and nature of *having*, discusses *hexis* as the intermediate state that exists between the haver and the thing had. Considered from the angle of the agent, this state is an action, and, from that of the patient, it is the undergoing of an action. For example, *hexis* is the state between a person who *has* (=wears) a garment and the garment *had*

(=worn). Another sense of the term is a disposition by which something is well or badly disposed, either independently (e.g., one is well disposed by health) or in relation to something else (e.g., one is well disposed by health compared to another). *Hexis* is also the disposition of a part of the disposition of a whole. Hence, the excellence of a certain part is also the excellence of the whole thing.[36] Far from being a philosophical concept devoid of practical application, the practical aspect of *hexis* is well-seen in Aristotle's ethical writing. He makes it clear that excellences of character (as well as their opposites, or the various sorts of expert knowledge)—to find expression in behavior—result from habituation and are *hexeis* (habitus, pl.). Humans possess the natural capacities to achieve excellences of character through habituation that requires one's engagement in activities. Once acquired, the benefit of *hexis* is realized solely through practice.[37] In short, habitus (*hexis*) is discussed in relation to: (1) length of time and changeability in qualities; (2) opposition of things; (3) the process and nature of having; and (4) the ethical implications of quality acquisition. These aspects are largely connected to logic and ethics.

The translation of Aristotle's works into Arabic introduced the concept of habitus to the Islamic world. The concept appeared in the late third/ninth century Arabic translations of Aristotle's *Categories*, *NE*, and *Metaphysics* and soon afterwards started to appear in works composed by indigenous philosophers and philosophically-inspired authors. The appropriation and naturalization of this concept in various intellectual systems and environments (Muslim *and* non-Muslim) is not quite surprising given what we know about the trajectory of Greek knowledge in general in the Islamic world, as shown by A.I. Sabra in a seminal article.[38] The translations made by Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 289/910) and Usṭāth (*fl.* third/ninth century) made it possible for philosophers such as al-Fārābī (*c.*256–339/*c.*870–950) to acquaint others with the concept and apply it in new ways.[39]

Here, I will focus mostly on key philosophers active in the Islamic world of the fourth/tenth century, who employed habitus in various ways. Most of these thinkers were associated in this way or another with the Baghdad philosophical school, founded by the Nestorian Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940), or interacted intellectually with figures associated with it. At the time, Baghdad was the main philosophical center of the Islamic world, where philosophy was taught and discussed, and where philosophical works were translated, commented upon, and composed.[40] The Baghdad school had a special focus on logic and ethics; these were, as a matter of fact, the broader philosophical contexts in which habitus was employed in the Aristotelian corpus.[41] The approach of the said fourth/tenth-century thinkers to habitus in these aspects, especially the ethical, will be now discussed.

The term commonly, although not exclusively, used in medieval Arabic philosophical works to express the idea of an *acquired* disposition through habituation is *malaka*, which literally means "possession." *Hayʾa*, "disposition," is also employed as habitus, often interchangeably with *malaka*. Likewise, the alternative terms *qunya* ("acquired disposition"), *ḥāl* ("state"), *ḥāl lāzima* (“inseparable state”), and even *ʿāda* (“custom”) may convey the technical sense of habitus.[42] In Book I of *NE*, Aristotle opines that the chief good is excellence, and stresses that it still matters whether it merely means the (acquired) habitus or its (actual) activity. The Arabic version features the synonymous pair *qunya* and *malaka* standing in contrastive parallel with *istiʿmāl* and *fiʿl*:

> Presumably the difference is not slight between the belief that the chief good is in acquired disposition and habitus (*al-qunya wa-l-malaka*) and the belief that it is in use and act (*al-istiʿmāl wa-l-fiʿl*), because habitus (*malaka*) may exist in a man without his doing any good at all, as in the case of the sleeper or some other who is precluded from action in some way.[43]

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) studied in Baghdad with the Nestorian scholar Yuḥannā b. Ḥaylān and was scholarly active for a long period in this city, before leaving for Syria in 330/942.[44] “The second teacher” (the first being Aristotle), as al-Fārābī became to be known, set out to elucidate Aristotle’s *Categories*, one of his cardinal logical works, in an introductory monograph. What is most important for us in al-Fārābī’s *Paraphrase of the* Categories *of Aristotle* is his discussion of quality (*kayfiyya*), the *summum genus*, and its four intermediate genera (*ajnās mutawassiṭa*). The first among these intermediate genera is “habitus and condition” (*al-malaka wa-l-ḥāl*): “Habitus and condition are [1] every disposition (*hayʾa*) in the soul and [2] every disposition in the animate being *qua* animate.” [1] The dispositions in the soul (*i*) come either out of volition and habituation (*irāda wa-ʿtiyād*), or (*ii*) are natural. The former (*i*) are fields of knowledge, arts, crafts, skills, morals (*akhlāq*), etc., like wrestling; the latter (*ii*) are the natural types of knowledge, like knowledge of the first premises and some moral dispositions (*akhlāq*), with which humans are born (likewise, animals are born with various types of knowledge or skills). [2] The dispositions (*hayʾāt*) in the animate being *qua* animate, like health and sickness, when consolidated and difficult to vanish are called “habitus” (*malaka*), and when unconsolidated and quick to vanish, “condition” (*ḥāl*).[45]

It is not clear from al-Fārābī’s discussion of habitus and condition in *Categories*, whether the criterion of length of time and changeability is applicable to “every disposition (*hayʾa*) in the soul” ([1]) as it does to “every disposition in the animate being *qua* animate” ([2]). We understand that it *is* applicable from his words in one of his ethical works, *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā sabīl al-saʿāda*. Setting out to explicate how noble dispositions (*akhlāq*) become habitus (*malaka*), and then how the potentiality to apprehend what is correct (*al-ṣawāb*) turns into a habitus, he says:

> By habitus (*malaka*) I mean that [a disposition] becomes impossible or hard to vanish. Thus, we say: all dispositions, noble and ignoble, are acquired. It is possible for one whenever he does not have a disposition existent in him, to attain one for himself. Likewise, when he finds himself in some matter with a disposition—either noble or ignoble—he can shift through his

> volition to the opposite of that disposition. The means by which one acquires a disposition or carries himself away from a disposition he finds in himself is habituation (*iʿtiyād*). By habituation I mean to repeat doing one thing many times over a long period in close intervals … I therefore say that the things by means of which we acquire a noble disposition when done habitually, are actions associated with those who possess noble dispositions. The things that impart us an ignoble disposition are actions characteristic of those who possess ignoble dispositions. The state (*ḥāl*) in which dispositions are obtained is the same as that of the arts and crafts (*ṣināʿāt*). For skill in the secretary's craft (*kitāba*) is only attained when one gets habituated to the functioning of someone who is a skilled secretary (*kātib*), and the same applies to the rest of the arts and crafts.[46]

Al-Fārābī's younger contemporary, the philosopher Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-ʿĀmirī (*c.*300–81/*c.*912–92), was mostly active in Khorasan and Transoxania. While not a member of the Baghdad school, he did interact with some of its members intellectually, also during two visits to the city.[47] Like other philosophers of the time,[48] al-ʿĀmirī composed a commentary on *Categories*, surviving only fragmentarily without the sections from the complete work discussing habitus. The surviving parts display al-ʿĀmirī's familiarity with earlier and contemporary commentaries on *Categories*; citations are made from Greek (e.g., Porphyry) and Arabic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī and his teacher Abū Bishr Mattā, recognized as the master of logic in Baghdad at his time.[49] In a response from an unknown work, al-ʿĀmirī praises philosophy, "knowledge of the truth and acting in accordance with the truth," as a peerless habitus (*hayʾa* and *qunya* synonymously) for the soul.[50] Likewise, the link between epistemology and praxis as ingrained in habitus is indicated in a definition of faith made by him: "Faith is submission of the soul to the truth by way of affirmation (*taṣdīq*) of it with certainty; and when (this) becomes a habitus (*malaka*) of the soul it will lead to doing what accords with the truth."[51]

In his ethical and political work, *al-Saʿāda wa-l-isʿād*, al-ʿĀmirī cites extensively from Plato and Aristotle (largely from *NE*) and comments on their words. In defining excellence of character (*faḍīla*), al-ʿĀmirī quotes Aristotle (*NE* 1106b36–1107a2) describing it as "a habitus [put into practice] by will, in an intermediacy [between two excesses] relative to us, defined in word" (*ḥāl lāzima bi-irāda fī tawassuṭ muḍāf ilaynā maḥdūda bi-l-qawl*). Al-ʿĀmirī adds (based on *NE* 1105b19–1106b35) that moral traits must be actualized consistently for an extended period to the point they "become habitus like a nature" (*ṣārat hayʾa ka-l-ṭabʿ*).[52] Here and elsewhere he shows his familiarity with the ethical teachings of Aristotle, which includes the concept of habitus.[53]

A student of Mattā b. Yūnus and al-Fārābī in Baghdad, the Jacobite Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 363/974) repeats the *Categories*' criterion of length of time and changeability as distinguishing between the two relatives habitus (*malaka*) and condition (*ḥāl*) in the first *genus* of quality; the former being "long lasting, difficult to vanish," and the latter "short lasting, quick to vanish."[54] Interestingly, he does not use the term *malaka* in his ethical work *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*. The equivalent idea to *malaka* as a "second nature," however, is conveyed at times with *ʿāda*, "custom," as he already says in the introduction:

> We will also indicate the way to train oneself in the praiseworthy manner, and to exercise it, as well as to refrain from the blameworthy manner, and to shun it, so that it becomes for the person who trains in it a wont (*daydan*) and custom (*ʿāda*), natural disposition (*sajiyya*) and nature (*ṭabʿ*).[55]

Ibn ʿAdī's argument is similar to the one we found in al-Fārābī's *Kitāb al-tanbīh* (and in Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*—see below) in that all moral dispositions—good and bad—are acquired; acquisition (*iktisāb*, *iqtināʾ*) of virtues and their consolidation through habituation is necessary for the refinement of one's character and the obtainment of happiness.[56]

Noteworthy is Ibn ʿAdī's three-time employment of the reflexive Form V verb *takhallaqa*, which—as it may happen with this Form[57]—expresses aptly the idea of gradual progress in an activity and endeavoring to acquire a quality, in this case of *akhlāq* (morals or dispositions). In the first occurrence, when Ibn ʿAdī explains that a young person acquires the morals of those around him and hence becomes good or bad, he adds on the latter possibility: "When the youth also looks at the leaders and those above him, and envies them for their ranks, he opts for imitating them and to be molded by their morals" (*al-takhalluq bi-akhlāqihim*).[58] He shows that he is well aware of the element of power relations in this process, when he clarifies: "People by nature imitate one another, and the subordinate always emulates the conduct of the leader."[59]

Habitus (*malaka*) also appears in the writings of Ibn ʿAdī's student, the philosopher and historian Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh (325–421/936–1030). In his ethical work *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (*The Refinement of Character*), Miskawayh—following Aristotle—repeatedly emphasizes the indispensability of practice in achieving the perfection of character and subsequently human happiness; one's virtue must necessarily develop, be exercised, and perfected among many other people in a city, hence there exists no way to attain it through a reclusive hermitic way of life.[60] This is a fundamental perception for it entails a model of character formation in which one's personality is molded—for the good or for the bad—by means of interaction with others. And indeed, when Miskawayh approaches the definition of character, he says:

> Character (*khulq*) is a state of the soul which causes it to perform its actions without thought or deliberation (*min ghayr fikr wa-lā rawiyya*). This state is of two kinds. One kind is natural and originates in the temperament (*mizāj*).… The other kind is that which is acquired by custom and self-training (*bi-l-ʿāda wa-l-tadarrub*). It may have its beginning in deliberation and thought, but then it becomes, by gradual and continued practice, a habitus (*malaka*) and a trait of character (*khulq*).[61]

We see here clearly that Miskawayh was of the opinion that the human character was established on the interplay between genetic and habituation-based elements, which he also repeated elsewhere.[62] According to him, *malaka*, the non-natural habituation-based element of character becomes one's "second nature." We should now turn to one of Miskawayh's answers to al-Tawḥīdī's queries involving sensations and their control vis-à-vis stimuli appearing in *al-Hawāmil wa-l-shawāmil*, most likely from the 360s/970s. Al-Tawḥīdī wondered about the reason for one's feeling of strong disgust for an open wound, while the surgeon looked at it, treated it, and spoke about it directly without shrinking from it at all. How could one get accustomed to something running against his nature and custom, he asks, to the point that he becomes as someone who was born and lived long with it? Miskawayh responds:

> As for the practitioner … who is accustomed to the wound by habituation, it is only for the recurrence of the form and because this action has become as a nature for him.… When forms recur to the soul, they bring about something fixed that is like their essence.… If it were not for this condition we would not [be able to] educate the young, and accustom boys to noble customs at the beginning of their growing up. This is because the soul gets habituated to actions, when they become continuous and persistent, regardless of their being noble or ignoble. Thus, if a person perseveres in [practicing] them, they become a habitus (*malaka*) for him and an acquired disposition (*qunya*), and then their vanishing is difficult.[63]

Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (*c.*300–*c.*375/912–85) was a student of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī in Baghdad and later became an influential teacher who led a philosophical circle in the city.[64] His admiring follower, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, preserved an answer he gave to a question in a session regarding the fixation of one's soul on—among other things—God. Al-Sijistānī explains that the soul desires peace and aspires to become free of anxiety. Recurrent thinking of God leads to one's awakening (*yaqaẓa*) by "the acquisition of a good habitus, an enduring acquired disposition, and divine moral dispositions." (*iktisāb al-hayʾa al-ḥasana wa-l-qunya al-bāqiya wa-l-akhlāq al-ilāhiyya*). Al-Sijistānī proceeds to specify the virtues in question that are the "sources of good deeds."[65] Note that in his application of habitus, al-Sijistānī bridges between the psychological and the ethical, describing a process that starts in one's mind and ends in action.

It is possible to say, then, that for those associated with the fourth/tenth-century Baghdad philosophical school, habitus was the term used to denote a well-established disposition or set of dispositions, which, having been acquired and habituated, enables one to act successfully in a certain way. Despite the ethical emphasis of this discourse, it is evident that habitus also applies to value-free practices, disciplines, skills, arts, and crafts. It combines both mental and behavioral aspects—perceptions and practices—as demonstrated by Miskawayh's apt example of the surgeon who through habituation becomes able to perceive an open wound in a neutral and calm way, and act accordingly in order to treat it. Human potential for adjustability is high, and facing conditions one cannot cope with, he can become adapted to them over time through the acquisition of the proper disposition; or, says al-Fārābī, in case one has a disposition opposite to that desired, he can shift to the latter through volition and habituation. Ibn ʿAdī grasps well the dimension of power relations inherent in the process of disposition acquisition, when he remarks on the model always set to the lower in rank by the conduct of the "leader."

A thorough comparison of this medieval concept of habitus to those of the twentieth century is beyond the scope of the present chapter. I will only note that as a whole the modern concept moved beyond the logical and ethical emphasis toward a social and cultural one, as class, ethnicity, gender, and other related factors came to the fore; after all, social scientists and not philosophers have been those studying habitus since the twentieth century. In the fourth/tenth-century Baghdad, habitus belonged to the philosophical discourse, but given the ethical emphasis, habitus was not conceived as a mental (or intellectual) process solely, but rather primarily as a mental process realized and finalized in action (as stressed by al-Fārābī, al-ʿĀmirī, and Miskawayh). The difference between this medieval concept and the modern one is, therefore, more a question of focus, point of view, and application, than one of essence. Whereas in this section I displayed habitus from a theoretical point of view, in Section IV we will use it as an analytic tool to examine the performance of al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers. In Chapter 5, I will show that the concept has already been applied for this very purpose by a notable figure of the Baghdadi scientific and philosophical milieu of the fourth/tenth century.

III Screening and auditioning

"Those arriving at his flourishing gate are like a great swarm of locusts."[66] This is but one description of the multitude of poets flocking to al-Ṣāḥib's court. His court enterprise attracted continuously many hopeful and would-be courtiers who sought recognition and financial success. While not every candidate was a qualified one, the demands on the time and attention of al-Ṣāḥib as a court patron (let alone his responsibilities as a chief administrator) were very high. Therefore, access to the busy vizier had to be monitored and screened to make sure that only those literary men demonstrating talent and knowledge be admitted. When he first arrived at al-Ṣāḥib's court, Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī was a twelve-year-old prodigy. Because of his fame and reputation, al-Hamadhānī's admission is well documented, and sheds light on a somewhat obscure selection process, which was not of primary interest to the sources:

> I was twelve years old when I came to al-Ṣāḥib. While I was at his library (*dār al-kutub*), the poet Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ḥimyarī, a venerable elderly man, entered. They said to him, referring to me, "this boy is indeed a poet!," and in order to examine my skill, he said: [*al-kāmil*]

> *Qul lī idhā thakilatka um-*
> *-Muka man yaqūmu bi-amri dārik*
>
> *Aw man yaqūmu bi-mā yahum-*
> *-Muka min shiʿārika aw dithārik*
>
> Tell me, if your mother loses you
> Who will be in charge of your household?
>
> Or who will take care of
> Your loved ones or other folks?
>
> Al-Ḥimyarī had a donkey he had made stand opposite to him, and that [examination] coincided with the donkey's putting forth its member. I, then, said:
>
> *Yā shaykhu innaka shāʿirun*
> *Lā yaṣṭalī aḥadun bi-nārik*
>
> *Raʾsī wa-rijlī fī ḥiri m-*
> *-Mika wa-l-muʿallaqu min ḥimārik*
>
> O shaykh, you are a poet
> No one can beat
>
> My head and leg are in your mother's slit
> Together with the thing hanging from your donkey
>
> I pointed to the donkey, and those present laughed and were full of amazement at that coincidence.[67]

According to this account narrated in the first person by al-Hamadhānī, a rising talent arriving at the court had first to prove himself in an audition administered by a poet. In the case of al-Hamadhānī, the examiner was a revered elderly poet, whose condescending attitude to the very young newcomer (stemming from his position and old age) is very visible in the poem he expected al-Hamadhānī to continue in keeping with its thematic and prosodic characteristics. "Tell me, if your mother loses you…" has a manifest mocking tone, which becomes even more disrespectful with the insinuation that the young addressee has no father (and hence, might be an illegitimate child), who is the head of his household. Clever and quick-witted youth that he was, al-Hamadhānī retaliated promptly, initially belittling the revered poet's skill by sarcastic praise. He then shifted gears abruptly to a crude lampoon tearing apart his examiner's honor while taking advantage of the coincidental behavior of the latter's donkey. We hear nothing of the examiner's reaction; he must have been not only furious from the boldness of the very young al-Hamadhānī, but also amazed at his improvisatory poetic skill and wit. Whether he liked it or not, this was the type of courtiers sought by al-Ṣāḥib, and al-Hamadhānī's turning the table on his examiner was appreciated by the audience, if not by its victim. We have no information about al-Ṣāḥib's reaction to this audition, but given his fondness of crude humor of this sort and quick wit (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5), he must have loved it.

Based on the available evidence, we cannot tell whether the examiner or the audience broke the news about the young talent and his successful performance to the vizier. Still, the subsequent account—preserved in a Persian literary anthology of the early seventh/thirteenth century, but not in the Arabic sources—describes al-Hamadhānī's demonstration of his prodigious skill before al-Ṣāḥib. This was the audition of the vizier himself, who after hearing about the talent, needed to see it for himself. When the twelve year old reached the court,[68] we are told, he was able to compose difficult Arabic verse and had "an overflowing natural gift" (*ṭabʿī fayyāz*). Al-Ṣāḥib asked him to recite some poetry of his, and the confident al-Hamadhānī's reply was "test me, please." The vizier recited to him a Persian *ghazal* of three lines composed by a favorite courtier of his, Manṭiqī, requesting al-Hamadhānī to render it into Arabic verse. The latter asked the vizier to determine the rhyme and meter for the translated version, and he did. Without any delay, al-Hamadhānī improvised an Arabic equivalent which was almost a replica of the original.[69] This was an astounding literary feat, and although we have no information about the vizier's reaction, we do know that al-Hamadhānī stayed for a while as one of al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers. It was certainly not al-Hamadhānī's only feat of this sort, given his reputation—among other things—for rendering Persian verse with rare motifs into Arabic brilliantly and spontaneously whenever he was challenged to do so.[70]

As a patron who was also a distinguished literary man with a sharp eye, al-Ṣāḥib set the bar high for prospective courtiers. Among the manifestations of his very high standards of literary excellence and expectations of poetic skill and knowledge was the stipulation that no littérateur be entered to see him unless he had memorized 20,000 lines of Arabic verse. This was what he told his chamberlain (*ḥājib*) in Arrajān (a city located in the south-western Persian province of Khuzistan), who let him know that someone identifying himself as a littérateur (*aḥad al-udabāʾ*) sought access to him. When the chamberlain returned to the vizier with the littérateur's reply, "that much from the poetry of men or women?," al-Ṣāḥib realized immediately that he must have been the great connoisseur of poetry, Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, and ordered to admit him.[71]

The vizier was certainly not easy to impress, especially because of his command of the literary canon and enthusiasm about criticism, which made him a tough examiner. When the blind littérateur and poet Abū Ḥafṣ al-Shahrazūrī sought access, one of al-Ṣāḥib's secretaries admitted him. At first, the vizier, who held his own audition was not at all impressed with al-Shahrazūrī's knowledge of the discussed topics, and taunted the secretary in verse for his poor judgment.[72] However, when he asked al-Shahrazūrī to recite fine verse selections (*mulaḥ*) of his, al-Ṣāḥib was pleased by what he heard. He, still, made some critical notes. First, he traced the origin of the poetic idea in one of al-Shahrazūrī's poems to Jamīl's, and then he compared it to a poem by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, only to find al-Shahrazūrī's inferior. Although we hear nothing about the audition's results, we are told that following the recital of another poem, the vizier ordered that al-Shahrazūrī's two poems be collected in his anthology of fine verse selections (*safīnat al-mulaḥ*) together with the lines of Jamīl and Ibn al-Muʿtazz quoted by him.[73]

The discussed accounts reveal the involvement of various intermediaries in the indispensable screening process: al-Hamadhānī faced a venerable elderly poet, al-Ḥimyarī, who administered the first audition; it was the chamberlain, asking for further directions from the vizier, who stood in the way of Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī; al-Shahrazūrī gained initial access to al-Ṣāḥib, based on the judgment of a secretary. Of these three intermediaries, hopeful literary people necessarily had to face the chamberlain. Bearing in mind that the chamberlain was responsible for controlling access to the vizier, maintaining order and security, facing him was unavoidable, even if not quite pleasant. Indeed, the poet al-Jīlūhī decried "the humiliation brought by the chamberlains (*ḥujjāb*) and the bad manners of the doorkeeper (*bawwāb*)" among the obstacles in the way of those seeking al-Ṣāḥib's patronage.[74] In Arrajān, only the chamberlain separated between the protégé al-Khwārazmī and his patron, probably because it was not a location in which al-Ṣāḥib resided for a long period. Whether he was there on campaign or for another purpose, he could not have taken with him the full personnel available at the more permanent sites of his court (Esfahan, al-Rayy, and Jurjān). This may explain the increased involvement of the chamberlain in al-Khwārazmī's screening process. At the more permanent sites, there were additional intermediaries (poets, secretaries) who had the cultural competences required for screening literary people. Filtering the stream of hopefuls was necessary so that the final arbiter, al-Ṣāḥib, could audition only the most promising among them, and make the last decision in the process.

An aspect on which our sources are completely silent is failure in auditions. The story of those who were not selected as qualified literary men was not found worthy of telling by the sources. Literary anthologies and biographies were interested in those whose production and verbal performance was found by the compilers and contemporary audiences to be of high quality. Hence, we have some accounts of selecting and admitting the successful with their pertinent production, while the "losers" are left out of the picture. This may be justified from the vantage point of the compiler, but is unfortunate for the modern student of Arabic literature, who would wish to know more about the practical side of the fourth/tenth century's aesthetic judgments. We occasionally come across a bitter poet, who, having been turned down by those entrusted with the selection process, vented out his frustration. This was the case of Abū Bakr al-Yūsufī, a poet and littérateur, who, finding success at al-Ṣāḥib's court notwithstanding, did not find it elsewhere later: "The most splendid poetry came to be rejected, and the most ignorant of it are the literary critics (*man naqad*)/Indeed, the one who puts aside our poems is better suited to be a herdsman than a critic."[75]

IV Frameworks and structures of the literary activity

Literary activity at the court was relatively structured, and framed in ways that made it possible for the courtiers to "read" it properly and relate to it accordingly. There were no specific written rules of conduct, of course, but those equipped with the right courtly habitus were not in need of them. That is, those who have come with the suitable cultural sensibilities and fine-tuned them by studying attentively the "ways" of this particular patron could enjoy a relatively high level of security and predict what course of action would be best at a given time.

Literary events, as other activities belonging to the informal part of the agenda, would often take place at night. The fragmentary nature of the evidence at hand makes it impossible to answer questions connected to the frequency of events with literary activity, whether they were exclusively held for that purpose, or—in case they were not—what other content was discussed or performed. A man with a broad range of intellectual interests like the vizier, who showed a keen interest in artistic and intellectual interchange with other qualified individuals, was certainly not focusing on literature solely. In fact, we learn that at one point in Jurjān he used to hold a session (*majlis*) attended by jurists and theologians during most nights of the week. The specified participants and the vizier's known fondness of theological disputation suggest that this was their main purpose.[76] Nevertheless, literature—performed, discussed, and criticized—appears to be the main topic in the entertainment sessions (*majālis al-uns*) held by al-Ṣāḥib. Literature, and more specifically, formal recitation of special odes (*qaṣāʾid*), was the highlight of events held on festive occasions such as holidays, inaugurations, military victories, and official visits. These were big events in which al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers or other poets congratulated and praised him in original odes composed for the occasion.[77] Compared to the big events, the typically more casual entertainment sessions were more subtle in presenting power relations, more flexible in their organization, and featured a higher degree of artistic and behavioral improvisation on the part of the courtiers and the vizier. The bits and pieces of evidence culled from the sources present altogether some picture of these events, their structure, and unscripted rules.

1 Festive occasions

To get a sense of the role of literature—more precisely, poetry—in festive occasions, let us look at the available evidence on the inauguration of al-Ṣāḥib's new mansion in Esfahan. Whatever we know about the event appears in a letter containing the Mansion Odes (*al-diyāriyyāt*) sent by Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī. Before presenting generous memorized selections from the poetry recited at the inauguration, al-Khāzin remarks:

> [Al-Ṣāḥib] moved to the flourishing building with the auspicious omen, and then we saw a well-attended day, and a holiday driving away a holiday, the eulogists got together and the poets recited.[78]

The picture we get from this concise description, the selections from the recited odes, and the brief comments preceding each one of them is of a festive event with a long list of performing eulogists (selections of eighteen poets are recorded and there may have been more) and a big audience. Al-Ṣāḥib is said to have prompted the poets to compose odes on the newly-built mansion, but their products do not only concentrate on the magnificent mansion or the praiseworthy vizier; the building and its builder are also eulogized in an interconnected way that displays them as being inseparable from each other, a splendid representation of each other, and as a towering figure overlooking a towering building. This is not surprising since the main feature of the big events we discuss is solemn praise of the patron from the angle of the given occasion (mansion inauguration, holiday, etc.) Here are a few examples from the Mansion Odes:

- From the ode of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī [*al-ṭawīl*]:

  Li-yahna wa-yasʿad man bi-hī saʿida l-faḍlū
  Bi-dārin hiya l-dunyā wa-sāʾiruhā faḍlū

  Tawalla la-hū taqdīrahā ruḥbu ṣadrihī
  ʿAlā qadrihī wa-l-shaklu yuʿjibuhu l-shaklū

  …

  Wa-lākin arāhā law hamamta bi-rafʿihā
  Abā llāhu an taʿlū ʿalayka fa-lam taʿlū

  Let the one through which excellence has become happy take pleasure and prosper
  In a mansion which is the world, while the rest of the mansions are leftover

  His wide chest undertook assigning the mansion's measures for him
  According to the chest's magnitude, and a form is delighted by a likeness[79]

  …

  But—I believe—if you were to plan elevating the mansion
  God would refuse that it exalt itself against you,[80] thus it would not[81]

- From the ode of Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim [*al-ṭawīl*]:

  Muʿaẓẓamatun illā idhā qīsa samkuhā
  Bi-himmati bānīhā fa-tilka naẓīruhā

  The mansion is sublime except when its roof is compared
  To the ambition of its builder, for that is its parallel[82]

Setting the tone of the big event, these panegyric odes were its cornerstone and the principal medium by which the vizier's capacities and authority were publicly affirmed and legitimized. Still, despite the more formal nature of such events, these did not belong to the formal part of the vizier's schedule as did, for example, discussions of state affairs with high-ranking bureaucrats. This is because the big events were not *directly* connected to the process of administration and governing, even if they reaffirmed these capacities held by the vizier. The dimension of entertainment, more pronounced in the entertainment sessions, was still present in a big event like the inauguration. Among the ode selections included in the letter there was a humorous one (*qaṣīda hazliyya*), which, however, also contained serious lines. The inclusion of an ode incorporating seriousness and jest (*al-jidd wa-l-hazl*), a guiding principle of *adab* literature and social gatherings held in its spirit, is an indicator that a certain amount of jest was a legitimate component of the big events. Here is this part of the letter:

> What follows is from a humoristic ode by Ibn ʿAṭiyya al-Shāʿir [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Al-milku milkun wa-l-amīru amīrū*
> *Wa-l-dāru dārun wa-l-wazīru wazīrū*
>
> The estate is an estate and the *amīr* is an *amīr*
> The mansion is a mansion and the vizier is a vizier
>
> From it, as well, are lines where Ibn ʿAṭiyya was serious (*wa-qad jadda*):
>
> *Tuzhā l-mulūku bi-dūrihā wa-la-anta man*
> *Tuzhā bi-hi l-dunyā fa-kayfa l-dūrū*
>
> *Lā yaʿdamu l-umarāʾu minka siyāsatan*
> *Lawlā saʿādatuhā wahā l-tadbīrū*
>
> Kings vaunt their mansions, and you are indeed whom
> The world vaunts, and how much more the mansions!
>
> The *amīr*s are not devoid of your government;
> If not for the bliss of the mansion, your management would be weakened[83]

The first line is all we have of the humorous part of this "humorous ode," but it is evident that the opening is tautological, which conceivably was meant to parody solemn panegyrics of this sort.[84] That it appears just as all other memorized selections in the letter and commented upon in a matter-of-fact way means that this ode and its humor were not taken as offensive and agreed with acceptable norms.

Another thing to notice about the inauguration event is the fact that the panegyrists were not only professional poets or even regular courtiers. Out of the eighteen specified, three were office holders of al-Ṣāḥib (Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī, Abū l-Ḥasan *Ṣāḥib al-Barīd*, Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Kātib), four non-regular courtiers and visitors (a young resident of the city, two "strangers" (*ghurabāʾ*), an old visitor from Antioch).[85] The rest, eleven in number, were professional poets and courtiers of al-Ṣāḥib. This makes up a diverse group, and serves as another indication that the vizier did not try to assign office for office holders and verbal art for professional poets. Unfortunately, this letter does not provide us with more details that could have shed light on this big event, since what really mattered to the sender and receiver was the poetry itself.

An additional piece of information we have about this type of events appears in an account taking place during the Mihrajān festival. The narrator recounts that it was very crowded when he entered, and that he had to wait for two rounds of poets to finish, until it was his turn to recite in front of al-Ṣāḥib. The host of reciting poets has taken a toll on the vizier's attention, and he is reported to become sluggish.[86] What may be gathered from this account is that the festive events were less selective in terms of those allowed access to the vizier compared to the more intimate entertainment sessions. The narrator of the account said that having been abandoned by the vizier before, he took advantage of the festival to approach him and praise him among the multitude of congratulators. Indeed, holding royal audiences for *all* subjects during the Mihrajān and Nawrūz festivals without barring anyone is an old Persian tradition commended in the mirrors for princes literature.[87]

2 *Entertainment sessions*

The entertainment session (*majlis al-uns*) was at the core of the court. The most informal activity of the vizier's informal part of the schedule, it had many of the features that were uniquely courtly in accordance with the conventions characteristic of elite ʿAbbāsid society. A motto of al-Thaʿālibī reads, "Entertainment is found at the private session, not at the overcrowded assembly."[88] Indeed, the aim of these events, as seen in short, ornate prose pieces written by al-Ṣāḥib to invite courtiers to them, was pure entertainment. The participants are called "refined" (*ẓirāf*, pl. of *ẓarīf*), referring to those embodying the ideals of elegance, urbanity, wit, and good taste in every respect. Taken together, these features show similarity to those characterizing people of *adab* (or *udabāʾ*).[89] The refined are said to adhere to the principles of manly virtue and friendship dubbed *futuwwa* and *muruwwa*. The setting of the session is always described as beautiful, elegant, and luxurious, sometimes in a blossoming garden, near a pool, or a stream, surrounded by lovely scents. The atmosphere is pleasant, happy, and amicable, not only for the courtiers—and the attractive young women and men who are present, too—but also for the wine, music, and singing. This is nicely put by "the tongues of the lutes address the courtiers, saying 'come now to the cups!'." The wine, in fact, was taken as a precondition for the success of social interaction to the point that one would be tagged as a disagreeable person (*thaqīl*) if he did not drink. Although the "famous" statement of the vizier spoke of events in this spirit as held at night ("We are … friends at night!"), the majority of events described here are held during daytime. And, as the description of one event tells, even a day of gloomy weather cannot spoil the entertainment session's charms.[90]

These events were depicted as a feast for the senses and a celebration of good taste. In the above invitation pieces, literature is not mentioned among the contents of the entertainment session, and it is likewise the case in prose and poetry depicting it collected in the *adab* anthology *Zahr al-ādāb* (405/1014).[91] We do see the literary component, however, in many anecdotal materials revolving around the occurrences at certain sessions which were found worthy to be recounted. The entertainment session is less structured than the big events held on festive occasions, as it provides more room for improvisation and is more open-ended. At one session, the vizier brought a handsome and skillful slave-boy who specialized in performance with swords. Al-Ṣāḥib asked his courtiers to describe him in poetry, but after they failed to do so, he did.[92] This example shows the unpredictability and relatively loose structure of the entertainment session; it could not be known in advance to the vizier whether his courtiers would respond well to the challenge. The sword performer "episode" could have lasted a longer time had they responded and would have developed in a different way. For instance, their improvised poetry could have been criticized, commented upon, or supplemented by the vizier as had happened on similar occasions. In comparison, the odes recited on festive occasions were prepared in advance by the poets who were scheduled to perform, and, thematically, the recited poetry was eulogistic, whereas according to the circumstances, the entertainment session made it possible to recite or discuss poetry of any theme or genre. We will now turn to the various types of literary activity that took place at the entertainment session.

3 Poetic interaction and collaboration

Over all, we have more information on the performative aspects of poetry at the entertainment sessions than at the festive events. This is for the greater propensity of the sources to supply readers with contextual details when poetry is part, or rather the heart, of an *adab* anecdote focused on incidents occurring at the sessions. When, as often, whole or parts of praise odes are quoted without any details apart from "Said by X in praise of Y," our picture of the performance is limited to the speech acts observable in the poet's text (discussed in Chapter 1). The session, we should bear in mind, was typically not the place for reciting the long polythematic odes, but for the relatively short, monothematic poems of all modes (*qiṭʿa*; on the differences, see Chapter 3). These *qiṭʿa*s were frequently performed by the participants for artistic and communicative purposes, as we shall see in the following.

The entertainment session's more intimate and relaxed atmosphere invited interactivity, an important performative aspect that was more pronounced at the session than at the festive event. This interactivity is most evident in bilateral (or multilateral) improvisation of poetry, a favorite literary game called *ijāza* or *tamlīṭ*. *Ijāza*, "completion": a hemistich or line were improvised by one participant and completed by another who had to do so in an aesthetically pleasing way, following the theme, meter, and rhyme chosen by the starter.[93] This game was not randomly played; its dynamics disclose the power structure at the court and—more specifically—at the informal session. The evidence at hand shows that it was initiated by the highest-ranking participant who had the most control over the event and chose to respond to a certain stimulus. In general, it was the prerogative of court patrons to challenge the poetic skill of their protégés, whenever they wished and for whatever reason, expecting them to complete their verse. Thus, when al-Ṣāḥib was a protégé of Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, he was once summoned urgently at an unusual hour to complete a line of his patron's, after the latter was unable to continue. Anxious notwithstanding, he picked up where Ibn al-ʿAmīd left off, to the full satisfaction of the latter.[94]

Tamlīṭ, "finishing," is a near synonym of *ijāza*, and both terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Unlike *ijāza*, it does not appear in *Yatīmat al-dahr*, but al-Ṣāḥib includes *mālaṭa* and *amlaṭa* in his dictionary in the sense of one's composing a hemistich to be finished by another.[95] Ibn Rashīq distinguishes *tamlīṭ* as an improvised poetry competition in which one poet attempts to outdo another leaving him unable to continue a hemistich or line (in accordance with the suggested theme and rules of prosody). Still, the competitive element is found in *ijāza*, too, and in fact the two pieces of evidence adduced by Ibn Rashīq display interchangeable use of the terms. Ibn Ẓāfir who builds on Ibn Rashīq's discussion, sees *tamlīṭ* as an endeavor on the part of two or more poets who agree in advance to take turns composing a poem on a certain theme.[96] Examining the evidence, one may often find it difficult to understand the grounds for classifying a composition as *ijāza* and not *tamlīṭ* (or vice versa), although examples of the latter tend to be longer. A subtle difference setting *ijāza* apart from *tamlīṭ*, is that the former is associated to some degree with an unequal patron–protégé relationship whereas the latter is associated with a consensual peer endeavor. When a patron is involved, as it is often the case at the court, both *ijāza* and *tamlīṭ* operate similarly, and hence the taxonomical classifications (vague and unsystematic as they are) are hardly important.

In that respect as well, al-Ṣāḥib followed the model set by his patron Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd. When a beautiful citron (*utrujja*) was presented to him by a visitor, Ibn al-ʿAmīd suggested that he and the courtiers describe it: "He said to them, 'Let us apply ourselves to describe it.' They answered: 'if our master sees fit to commence, let him do so.' And he commenced and said. . . ." Following Ibn al-ʿAmīd's extemporized hemistich, each one of the five courtiers followed up with his own one, continuing each other's contribution to describe the citron while heeding the meter and rhyme. Ibn Ẓāfir classifies this collaborative composition as "a finishing carried out by five [composers]" (*al-tamlīṭ al-wāqiʿ bayn khamsa*), although in *Yatīmat al-dahr* it is subsumed under Ibn al-ʿAmīd's poetic interchanges (*muqāraḍāt*).[97] This was a collaborative poetic undertaking alternately composed to consist of three lines in total. On another occasion, prompted by Ibn al-ʿAmīd to follow a given topic, meter, and rhyme, each courtier improvised independently a complete monothematic poem. That time, Ibn al-ʿAmīd was the last to perform, improvising a poem of nineteen lines and outdoing the other courtiers who had composed four- and seven-line poems respectively.[98]

To engage in collaborative–interactive composition of this sort, a patron had to be confident in his poetic skill and improvising ability. A failure on his part would certainly harm his reputation as a whole in a society that attached great importance to excellence in language and poetry. A chief goal of the patrons initiating extempore collaborative composing was to demonstrate their excellence and superiority over other skilled individuals in order to gain societal prestige. The accounts reporting about the patrons' outstanding performances were propagated orally and in a written form, perpetuating their name as highly-skilled leaders and thus contributing largely to their political legitimacy. As a genuinely talented court patron, al-Ṣāḥib was at ease showcasing his extempore poetic skill and gained for that (and for his other literary and intellectual achievements) great prestige as a political leader. Here is an example for collaborative and interactive composition at his court, classified as *tamlīṭ* by Ibn Ẓāfir:

> Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAlī l-Muṭawwiʿī said in his book, *Darj al-ghurar wa-durj al-durar*, that contains beautiful poetry pieces of the *amīr* Abū l-Faḍl al-Mīkālī: I heard the *amīr* Abū l-Fadl saying: I heard Abū l-Qāsim al-Karkhī saying: One night, I was at al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād's and with us was Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī. Serving us was a slave-boy, [as handsome] as if he had been split off the moon. After he disappeared, al-Ṣāḥib said improvising [*al-ramal*]:
>
> *Ayna dhāka l-ẓabyu aynah*
>
> Where is this gazelle, where is he?
>
> And Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī said:
>
> *Shādinun fī ziyyi qaynah*
>
> A fawn in a singing-girl's garb
>
> Al-Ṣāḥib said:
>
> *Bi-lisāni l-damʿi tashkū*
> *Abadan ʿaynāya ʿaynah*
>
> By the tongue of tears
> My eyes always complain to his eye[s]

> Abū l-Qāsim said:
>
> *Liya daynun fī hawāhū*
> *Laytahū anjaza daynah*
>
> He owes me his love
> I wish he had paid off his debt
>
> The *amīr* Abū l-Faḍl added following Abū l-Qāsim's recitation:
>
> *Lā qaḍā llāhu bi-baynin*
> *Abadan baynī wa-baynah*
>
> May God never decree a separation
> Between me and him[99]

Triggered by the beauty of the slave-boy, al-Ṣāḥib, the patron, initiated this interactive composition with a homoerotic *ghazal* hemistich. Al-Ḍabbī was the first courtier to respond with the second rhyming hemistich (*ʿajuz*), pursuing the poetic direction taken by al-Ṣāḥib, content- and form-wise. Although he opened this collaborative–interactive composition on a hemistich to hemistich basis, the patron indicated the expansion of each participant's contribution to a full line merely by his choice to do so himself when taking the next turn. Abū al-Qāsim al-Karkhī closed with his line, which made the composition *in toto* a three-line collaborative–interactive *ghazal*, but that was not the end of this piece. When al-Karkhī recited it to the *amīr* Abū l-Faḍl al-Mīkālī, the mayor of Nīshāpūr, a literary man and patron of poets (d. 436/1044),[100] he found it worthy enough to add his own closing line to this *ghazal* and became the fourth collaborator albeit separated by time and distance. An after-the-fact non-interactive collaboration was not a rare practice at all, and it was common for someone who considered a previously-composed poem worthy of his continuation to undertake it. Ibn Ẓāfir treats non-interactive collaboration as "the completion of old poetry" (*al-ijāza … li-shiʿr qadīm*) illustrating it by many examples.[101] At times, a patron would assign a courtier a previously-composed poem to continue as done by al-Ṣāḥib.[102] We can, therefore, speak of collaborative–interactive composition and collaborative composition as two practices in which poets, who were also poetry connoisseurs, engaged at the court.

The upper hand in collaborative–interactive composition was plainly the patron's as the initiator, the one who could choose the content and form of the composition, determine the length of each participant's contribution, change it during the performance (if he willed), and decide on its closure. At the same time, it would be a mistake to underestimate the agency of the courtiers. The court *qua* court was not controlled by a puppeteer who pulled the strings of mere objects. A refined environment in which the patron dimmed hierarchical relations during informal activities, the court was a place where the patron would expect—and had to tolerate—intricate messages that challenged his decisions in a delicate way. To illustrate this, let us look at this completion. When al-Ṣāḥib praised the judge of Sijistān saying [*al-sarīʿ*]:

> *Wa-ʿālimin yuʿrafu bi-l-sijziyī*
>
> There is a religious scholar known as al-Sijzī
>
> He motioned the courtiers to complete it (*ashāra ilā al-nudamāʾ bi-l-ijāza*). When it was Sharīf's turn, he said:
>
> *Ashhā ilā l-nafsi mina l-khubzī*
>
> More craved by the soul than bread
>
> And he [=al-Ṣaḥib] ordered to bring the food.[103]

The hungry courtier, Sharīf, manipulated this collaborative–interactive composition (*ijāza*) to allude that it was about time to stop versifying and have a good meal. The vizier got the message instantly. The scholastic rhetoricians bring forth this composition, and more specifically Sharīf's completion, as evidence for a simile (*tashbīh*) in which the purpose (*gharaḍ*) is to show interest in the *secundum comparationis* (*al-mushabbah bi-hi*) rather than in the *primum comparationis* (*al-mushabbah*). That is, to Sharīf who drew the analogy between the eminent judge and bread, what mattered solely was the bread (*al-mushabbah bi-hi*), not the judge (*al-mushabbah*). Al-Sakkākī, followed by others, called this type of purpose, distinguishing certain similes, "disclosure of the desired" (*iẓhār al-maṭlūb*), stipulating that it should be only employed when one sought the fulfillment of a wish.[104] When we look at it rhetorically, this allusion is a pragmatic, non-referential message; even though the referential meaning of "[the judge was] more craved by the soul than bread" cannot be understood as "I am hungry," its pragmatic meaning—the use of "bread" in that situation—signified to the vizier that it was about time to feed his courtiers. The composition in its context shows that even when the patron decided on the activity, its rules and practice could be subversively manipulated by a protégé to disrupt it and direct all to another activity, preferable to him at that point. This is but one example demonstrating that the protégé had a certain range of agency and that his courtly habitus could guide him in finding the right way to realize it. As long as the protégé asserted his agency "properly," the patron was willing to concede some of his power to create and maintain the courtly environment.

Collaborative–interactive composition was a regular undertaking at al-Ṣāḥib's court, and is even reported to have been practiced while asleep. It is narrated that al-Ṣāḥib's courtier, Abū l-Qāsim b. Abī l-ʿAlāʾ, one of Esfahan's notables, was addressed in his dream by a speaker, who questioned him about his failure to compose an elegy on al-Ṣāḥib after his death. He responded that the many excellences of the late vizier made him concerned he might not do them full justice. In response, the domineering speaker (the voice of his superego?) commanded him to complete his poetry (*ajiz mā aqūlu*!), and started to exchange hemistichs with the sleeping Abū l-Qāsim. The speaker's opening hemistich was "Generosity and al-Kāfī [=Kāfī l-Kufāt, i.e., al-Ṣāḥib] remained together in a grave." Abū l-Qāsim responded adequately to the elegiac mode to compose with the speaker a three-line piece commemorating, of all other excellences, the "unique" liberality of the late vizier, and established on the motif of Generosity's passing away with the patron.[105] We should note the fact that the challenging, and arguably punishing, position of the speaker in the dream was the one regularly taken by the patron. He is the party that, given its superior power, is culturally authorized to initiate a collaborative–interactive composition and demand that the inferior play by its rules.[106] Curiously, this reported dream composition might have goaded Abū l-Qāsim on to fulfill his duty to the dead patron in real life, because al-Thaʿālibī referred to several (!) elegies of his on al-Ṣāḥib, and included selections from two.[107]

A different manifestation of poetic interactivity was the impromptu translation of Persian verse into Arabic (and, probably, vice versa). The only fully documented case of that practice at the court was al-Hamadhānī's, as discussed above. Nevertheless, the bilingual al-Ṣāḥib patronized other bilingual poets as well, and Persian—albeit not as artistically substantial as Arabic at that time and place—was still a language of literary production and a medium of high culture and scholarship. It is very likely that the dearth of extant evidence veils a common literary exercise, as suggested by Browne.[108] Except in rare cases, the Arabic sources—even those written by bilingual speakers of Arabic and Persian like al-Thaʿālibī—did not quote Persian poetry and prose. This may be explained by the bigger target audience of Arabic speakers who did not know Persian and the fact that, unlike Arabic, New Persian has only emerged as a legitimate language of artistic expression in the fourth/tenth century. Later Persian anthologies preserved only a little of the bilingual literary production in the western Iranian territories of our period. As a result, all that we have is fragmentary evidence for the impromptu poetic translation practice.[109]

Finally, the fact that the structure of the festive occasions was more fixed and less encouraging of poetic interaction in comparison to the sessions does not mean that interaction was completely absent from it. The vizier would interject or otherwise interrupt a praise ode addressed to him on festive occasions in order to criticize, comment, show pleasure, or displeasure.[110] At least in one case, he got so passionate about a hemistich that he brought the recitation of the eulogy to a halt and completed the line himself. This happened during an official visit to al-Ahwāz, when he stopped (for the second time) the poet Abū l-Rajāʾ al-Ḍarīr to guess the intended second hemistich in a way that gave expression to his above-mentioned desire to take Baghdad. The vizier then asked Abū l-Rajāʾ if this was indeed his intended second hemistich, and the poet answered in the affirmative. Al-Ṣāḥib said, "You did well," and the poet responded, "My master, *you* did well; it took me a night to compose it, while only a moment to you."[111] To us, it hardly matters whether the poet was sincere in his affirmation or not; the importance of this anecdote lies in showing the confident impulsiveness of al-Ṣāḥib, who—having stopped the recitation of a eulogy addressed to him—assigned himself the completion of this line out of his burning passion for poetry and desire that his wish come true.

4 Challenging, criticizing, and discussing

Al-Ṣāḥib's court brought together learned and skilled literary men, who were his natural interlocutors, given the vizier's literary interests, knowledge, and talent. When literature was discussed and produced, the atmosphere was enjoyable, albeit competitive, and the directing hand was to a large extent the vizier's. He is the one who usually appears in the sources as picking the topic for discussion or setting a literary challenge to his courtiers, even if it was possible for them to reciprocate and come up with theirs in certain circumstances. The picture we have is of a milieu of literary connoisseurs who aside from possessing the "passive" skills of literary criticism were able to be creative on demand putting their knowledge into practice. As composers, they were expected to defend successfully their products, and to meet challenges set to them in order to maintain their position in this selective group of skillful men. Likewise, making valuable critical observations and answering the vizier's questions correctly ensured that he would not lose interest in their company.

The two discernible types of challenges set at the court were: (1) creative, and (2) critical. Unsurprisingly, poetry rather than prose is the object in both cases.

(1) The creative challenges came as assignment of collaborative–interactive compositions, discussed in the previous section (including the interactive Persian into Arabic poetic translation), and as assignment of independent compositions: (i) on a certain topic, and (ii) in a certain form. We will focus here on independent compositions.

(i) Topic: Al-Ṣāḥib's courtiers had to be ready to employ their improvisatory skill when he commanded them at various places and times to versify on a given topic. This happened in reaction to various stimuli, as in the following instances. When an anonymous man recited an anti-Arab and pro-Persian poem, al-Ṣāḥib stopped him and started looking for Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī among the audience members attending the session. He had to ask where he was, in order for al-Hamadhānī to get up from his place and kiss the ground in front of the vizier, ready to comply with his orders. These details indicate that this was not an intimate entertainment session, but rather a more formal and crowded one. Al-Ṣāḥib commanded al-Hamadhānī to defend his culture, descent, and faith. His defense of the Arabs and Arab heritage at the behest of al-Ṣāḥib was a true demonstration of improvisatory poetic skill. This would not have been a due response, of course, if it had not been delimited by the formal strictures (meter and rhyme) of the original anti-Arab poem, as a pair of *naqāʾiḍ* (contradicting poems), the pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetic duels between members of opposing clans or tribes.[112] A courtier had to be ready for poetic challenges of this sort whenever he was with al-Ṣāḥib, who would assign them whenever and wherever he pleased, not necessarily at his sessions. Indeed, one day, while riding alongside Abū l-Qāsim b. Abī l-ʿAlāʾ,

the vizier commanded him to describe his horse. The courtier improvised immediately a short *qiṭʿa* depicting the swiftness and beauty of the vizier's horse.[113]

Al-Ṣāḥib, himself, was no stranger to these poetic topic challenges. He had acquired this improvisatory skill in his socialization process, and he gave a successful demonstration of it in 347/958, as a young man, when he arrived in Baghdad as the secretary of the prince Abū Manṣūr (later to govern as Muʾayyid al-Dawla). The purpose of the latter's visit was to get engaged to Zubayda, the daughter of the Būyid ruler Muʿizz al-Dawla. There, the vizier al-Muhallabī, at a pleasurable entertainment session, commanded al-Ṣāḥib to describe the event in verse, and so he did, on the spot, with a poem that won the approval of the audience.[114] As a vizier, when his courtiers failed to extemporize poetry on a topic assigned by him, al-Ṣāḥib did that himself, proving that he was skillful enough to outdo them in handling the challenge.[115]

(ii) Form: In creative challenges, the formal aspect was usually not explicitly stated. Most of the time, it was not necessary since the poets were familiar with poetic conventions. It was obvious that in poetic dueling the respondent's poem employed the same meter and rhyme of his opponent, as in the dueling between the anonymous man and Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī treated above. Likewise, when a courtier composed a *muʿāraḍa* (an emulation of a model poem seeking to honor it while attempting to surpass it),[116] he adopted the model's meter and rhyme. This happened when Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī paid homage to the Mansion Ode of al-Rustamī, his fellow courtier. The former undertook the "emulation" of the model poem for its excellence, and his poem should be seen as responding to the challenge set by al-Rustamī's poem.[117] Nevertheless, at least in one documented case, form comes to the fore to become the main object of the poet responding to a challenge. This is the lipogram, a quintessential formal exercise, in which the author avoids using a certain letter. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, al-Ṣāḥib challenged himself to compose a lipogram ode for every alphabet letter, and succeeded except for one without the letter *wāw*. His son-in-law, Abū l-Ḥusayn, undertook the non-improvisatory challenge and was successful.[118] His achievement in writing a *wāw*-less ode, should be also seen as outdoing his father-in-law and patron, but as we shall see in a moment the vizier was normally not exasperated when a courtier had the upper hand as long as he was surpassed in an acceptable way. And Abū l-Ḥusayn's lipogram was an ode in his praise, which was easy for him to appreciate.

(2) The critical challenges assessed the proficiency of the courtiers and the vizier in such topics as the Arabic literary heritage, stylistics, and grammar. Under the following subheadings, I study some examples that focus on these and additional aspects.

(i) Testing the courtiers' critical skills and familiarity with the literary heritage: One night, al-Ṣāḥib recited to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī and other courtiers a *ghazal* poem of his [*al-rajaz*]:

Badā lanā ka-l-badri fī shurūqih
Yashkū ghazālan lajja fī ʿuqūqih

Yā ʿajaban wa-l-dahru fī ṭurūqih
Min ʿāshiqin aḥsanu min maʿshūqih

He appeared to us like the full moon in its rising
Complaining about a gazelle who was obstinately refractory

How strange it is that while being smitten by Fate
A lover is more beautiful than his beloved!

He went on to ask whether they knew of a comparable poetic idea in the poetry of the "moderns" (*muḥdathūn*). Al-Khwārazmī replied that he knew of none aside from al-Buḥturī's line [*al-mutaqārib*]:

Wa-min ʿajabi l-dahri anna l-amī—
Ra aṣbaḥa aktaba min kātibih

Among the wonders of Time is that the *amīr*
Became more skilled in the secretary's craft than his secretary

Then, the vizier commended him and his memory of poetry.[119] The critical challenge of the vizier was successfully met by al-Khwārazmī, who detected the poetic idea (*maʿnā*) and thanks to his proverbial memory was able to trace the original line that inspired al-Ṣāḥib's poem.[120] Al-Buḥturī's line was certainly not from one of his famous poems; it is the third and last line of a satire against Abū Ghānim, the secretary of the *amīr* Abū Nahshal (a patron of al-Buḥturī),[121] in which the poet sought to discredit the secretary. This was not only a challenge whose purpose was to assess the critical skills of the courtiers. It was also a demonstration, in front of a knowledgeable audience, of the vizier's familiarity with the literary heritage and his ability to establish an intertextual link with earlier poetry. In this particular case, it was the deft transference of a poetic idea from the satiric to the *ghazal* mode. The common denominator between the two closely-related poetic ideas underlying al-Buḥturī's line and al-Ṣāḥib's poem boils down to "one excels another where he is not expected to" (the lover is more beautiful than the beloved, and the *amīr* is a better secretary than his secretary). The vizier gave the existing poetic idea a twist, applying it in a different mode, and hence developing it. Medieval literary critics often approved of this practice considering it *sariqa ḥasana*, "good literary borrowing."[122] Thus, al-Ṣāḥib's challenge was also aimed at increasing his reputation as a dexterous and knowledgeable poet in front of literary connoisseurs, to whom the evaluation of intertextual links and the genealogy of poetic ideas was aesthetically pleasing.

(ii) Real-time criticism during poetic delivery: Reciting poetry before the vizier exposed the poet to his scrutiny and criticism. One had to be well prepared and ready to defend his artistic choices when these were questioned. While eulogizing al-Ṣāḥib, the poet al-Awsī Kadī reached the following line [*al-kāmil*]:

Lammā rakibtu ilayka muhrī unʿilat
Badra l-samāʾi wa-summirat bi-kawākibī

When I rode my colt to you, she [*sic*] was shod
With the full moon with stars as nails

He was then interrupted by the vizier, who asked him why he had applied the feminine gender to the masculine colt (*muhr*); and why he had likened the horseshoe to the full moon, which did not resemble it, instead of to the crescent moon which did. The poet answered that he used the feminine gender because he had a filly (*muhra*) in mind. As for the analogy he made between a horseshoe and the full moon, what he meant was the bar shoe (*al-naʿl al-muṭbiqa*; a shoe with a closed—rather than open—heel that has a circular shape).[123] We are not informed about the vizier's reaction, but the defense of the poet seems unconvincing, and so it probably sounded to the vizier. The formula "and God knows best," an insertion made by the anthologist (or a copyist) at the end of the report, suggests that the poet's explanation was found dubious and hard to believe. What counts most to us, however, is the attentive and critical reception of the vizier, who would not wait to the end of the eulogy to grill the poet over his grammatical (gender agreement) and stylistic (use of tropes) choices.

(iii) Stylistics as indicating genuineness of poetry: The poet and prince Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (320–57/932–68) was admired by al-Ṣāḥib to the point that he said "poetry was started by a king and ended by a king," referring to Imruʾ al-Qays and Abū Firās, respectively.[124] Stylistically, the poetry of Abū Firās was characterized as "natural" and elegant,[125] possessing the combination of poetic qualities that appealed to the vizier. Moreover, Abū Firās's Shīʿī verse and dislike for al-Mutanabbī must have made his poetry even more attractive to al-Ṣāḥib.[126] When once Abū Firās was discussed by al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers, the vizier averred that no one could forge his poetry. In response, Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (the narrator of the report) questioned the possibility that someone would be able to do that to Abū Firās, the poet who—he said—composed the two lines he went on to recite. Following al-Hamadhānī's recitation, al-Ṣāḥib replied that he was right, but to the astonishment of the vizier, the jubilant al-Hamadhānī revealed that he had just been successful at forging Abū Firās's poetry.[127]

This is a good example for the literary discussions at the court and the brilliance of the participating discussants. Although al-Ṣāḥib often used to set challenges explicitly to his courtiers, this time he had just made a decisive statement, confident that Abū Firās's style was inimitable. Nevertheless, he was proved wrong by the genius of his courtier, al-Hamadhānī, and fell for his forgery, which was established on a thorough knowledge of Abū Firās's style and a formidable poetic dexterity. Bringing together the critical and the creative, al-Hamadhānī demonstrated once again his literary gifts and gained the upper hand with his discerning patron. We have no sign that the latter was annoyed by his failure to detect the forgery and for being proven wrong. The dimming of hierarchy when al-Ṣāḥib engaged in activities of this sort facilitated artistic victories of gifted courtiers over the powerful and knowledgeable vizier. As long as these little challenges to the intellectual authority of the patron agreed with accepted courtly conventions—most importantly, that they were executed graciously and at the right time and place—they were considered legitimate.

(iv) Al-Ṣāḥib as a plagiarist: One might think that it was even bolder for a courtier to make an accusation of plagiarism against al-Ṣāḥib.[128] This, indeed, is the impression created by the following anecdote. Abū Muḥammad b. al-Munajjim said:

> I recited to Abū l-Qāsim al-Zaʿfarānī al-Ṣāḥib's poem [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Raqqa l-zujāju wa-raqqati l-khamrū*
> *Wa-tashābahā fa-tashākala l-amrū*
>
> *Fa-kaʾannamā khamrun wa-lā qadaḥun*
> *Wa-kaʾannamā qadaḥun wa-lā khamrū*
>
> The glass was clear and so was the wine
> And they became confused for their resemblance to each other
>
> As if it were wine without (glass) goblet
> Or (glass) goblet without wine
>
> Then, al-Zaʿfarānī said: "May God curse the one who [claimed to have] composed these two lines, for he had stolen (*saraqa*) them from Abū Nuwās!" I responded: "They were composed by al-Ṣāḥib." He said: "May God curse Abū Nuwās, for he had stolen them from our master al-Ṣāḥib!" I said: "How could Abū Nuwās steal from our master al-Ṣāḥib?!" He responded: "Enough of that! He stole from no one but him [=al-Ṣāḥib]."[129]

The famous early ʿAbbāsid poet, Abū Nuwās, had died around 128 years before al-Ṣāḥib was born. Therefore, the insistence of al-Zaʿfarānī that Abū Nuwās stole poetry from the vizier was obviously unreasonable, albeit understandable. Not having been told initially whose the poem was, he rushed to curse him for his alleged plagiarism from Abū Nuwās. When al-Zaʿfarānī learned that he actually cursed his patron and declared him a plagiarist, he became alarmed and backed down on his accusation by reversing it, at the price of looking foolish.[130]

Still, when a courtier blamed al-Ṣāḥib for raiding (*ighāra*; objectionable outright plagiarism in both meaning and expression) a line of al-Mutanabbī, the vizier showed no sign of exasperation but rather his tolerance toward unflattering criticism of this sort. His reaction was simply to demonstrate that al-Mutanabbī did the same when he raided a line by the poet al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf.[131] The vizier's argument gives the literary discussion an ethical turn; that is, he should not be disapproved of for plagiarizing al-Mutanabbī's line, because the latter did the same to another poet. To us, this anecdote suggests that taking the vizier to task concerning blameworthy plagiarism would not have been possible without a high level of liberty and security for his discussants when they exchanged views on literature. This is, of course, when the criticism was made in the right way.

One would be justified in asking what was meant by "the right way." Obviously, it is not merely the polite manner in which the courtier just mentioned phrased his plagiarism accusation ("I think our master had raided in his words … al-Mutanabbī's words…"). His polite speech, showing awareness of hierarchy differences between the two parties, was important in circumstances like these, but it was one component only of a broader pattern of behavior. It was the courtly habitus of the courtiers that assisted them in assessing variables, such as the proper timing and the vizier's mood, before they set a challenge to al-Ṣāḥib's authority. How to respond to challenges and set them successfully without risking one's position was an acquired competence among others serving the courtier. In the next section we will look at more evidence that shows how, in addition to their previous experiences in similar social environments, the accumulated attentiveness of the courtiers to the vizier—his speech, body, and schedule—reinforced their courtly habitus and made them better agents at the court.

Evaluating altogether the evidence of interactive and independent compositions presented in Sections 3 and 4, we can conclude that the conventions at al-Ṣāḥib's court provided opportunities for the vizier to set *critical* challenges to the courtiers and vice versa. As for *creative* challenges, interactive compositions were assigned by the vizier and not the other way around, but given that he often participated in verse completion games, the challenge (and poetic strictures) was also self-imposed. I have not encountered any piece of evidence in which al-Ṣāḥib, as a vizier, is prompted to complete verse initiated by a courtier. This is unconceivable despite the fact that the non-formal part of the vizier's schedule does show a high degree of freedom for the courtiers and loosened manifestation of hierarchy. It is another indication that hierarchy was dimmed, but in its sublimated form it was reflected in the unspoken rules of entertaining literary games. Similarly, independent composition was assigned by the vizier only, but was also a self-imposed challenge when the courtiers failed to produce or when al-Ṣāḥib pleased (as with the lipograms). Finally, according to the available evidence, the most exceptional demonstration in which a courtier met a creative challenge was arguably Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's in his audition. The three constraints of topic, form, and language (Persian into Arabic translation) were imposed on him by the vizier (in fact, with his encouragement), let alone the extemporaneous stricture. Moreover, his astonishing creative skill was buttressed and complemented by a thorough familiarity with the Arabic literary heritage and his fine critical skills. It was for this ideal combination that he was able to forge dexterously and successfully the poetic style of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī, and mislead a literary man of the stature of al-Ṣāḥib. Indeed, al-Hamadhānī may have well been one of the most versatile courtiers to grace al-Ṣāḥib's court, if not the greatest literary virtuoso of them all.

5 Strategies, messages, and effects in performance

Even in an informal environment in which the atmosphere was relatively relaxed and the superior dimmed the hierarchical differences, the courtiers could never relax completely and had to stay tuned to the reactions of the audience—first and foremost the vizier, but also their peers. This was, *a fortiori*, the case when the courtiers had to decide whether the vizier had opted to frame a certain activity as an informal one. Familiarity with some cultural conventions acquired at other courts before reaching al-Ṣāḥib's could assist the courtiers at that. Still, given the different personality and preferences of each patron, this familiarity based on previous experience could only selectively and cautiously be relied on. Thus, the crucial means to determine what course of action was feasible for them at a certain time was to follow closely the expression given off by the vizier. My use of "expression given off" draws on Erving Goffman, who referred by it to a presumably unintentional and largely non-verbal type of communication, which he contrasted to "expression given," intentional and conventional verbal communication. The expression people give off consciously or unconsciously is interpreted by their interactants as information different from what was signified on the apparent level; it is received in a given context as a non-referential, pragmatic message that creates a certain impression.[132]

While non-referential messages of this sort are found in everyday life, their function is even more pronounced at the refined and sophisticated environment of the court. Indeed, al-Ṣāḥib expected his courtiers to interpret properly the expression he gave off and was quoted as highlighting the crucial role of attentiveness to cues and bodily signs as a mark of intelligence: "Whoever unaffected by a little hint will not benefit from much expression" (*man lam yahuzzahu yasīr al-ishāra lam yanfaʿhu kathīr al-ʿibāra*); "For the intelligent person a glance is enough and a glimpse spares him a word" (*al-labīb takfīhi l-lamḥa wa-tughnīhi ʿan al-lafẓa al-laḥẓa*); "the intelligent one is he to whom a gesture is sufficient, an indication is adequate, a word will do, and on whom a glance makes an impression" (*al-labīb man al-ʾīmāʾ yakfīhi wa-l-ʾīḥāʾ yughnīhi wa-l-lafẓa tujzīhi wa-l-lamḥa tuʾaththiru fīhi*).[133]

At that, al-Ṣāḥib was following a long courtly tradition as attested by mirrors for princes and *adab* sources. The old Sāsānid tradition prescribed in *Kitāb al-tāj* specified the eye signals exchanged between the ruler and a courtier seeking departure to answer the call of nature. The courtiers had also to be attentive to the king's glances and gestures to know when and how to stand up or sit down as the king was on his way out or as he took his seat at the session.[134] As in other respects, the Sāsānid tradition influenced later Islamic rulers. In his *adab* encyclopedia, al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī listed signs (*amārāt*) given by pre-Islamic Persian, Umayyad, and ʿAbbāsid rulers to their courtiers, when they wished them to take off. While each ruler had his own sign, they all deemed it necessary to resort to messages, verbal and non-verbal alike, whose pragmatic meaning was the equivalent of the referential message "now, leave!" Thus, for instance, the Sāsānid king Yazdgird (I?) is reported to say "the night passed" (*shab be-shod*) and so did the caliph

Muʿāwiya, albeit in Arabic (*dhahaba l-layl*); as for gestures, stretching, rubbing eyes, or touching the cheeks are among those mentioned.[135] Describing the requisite qualities of the courtier, Kushājim values presence of mind, which allows one to understand the mind of the leader he is serving, based on acquaintance with his character. When the courtier grasps the meaning of the leader's glimpses and hints, he can spare him the trouble of expressing himself in elaborate detail, and is hence able to act accordingly before the leader's wishes are clearly spelled out.[136]

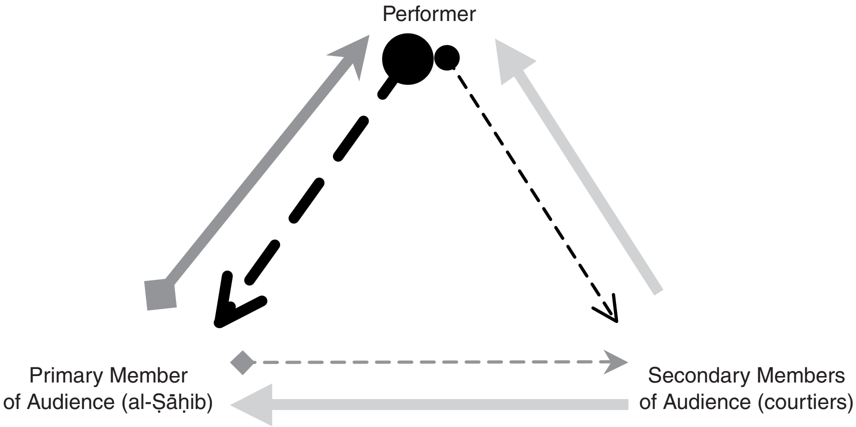
The attention of the courtiers to the expression given off by al-Ṣāḥib during performance of verbal art was very close. The vizier, who for the performers was the key member of the audience, was closely observed by the other members, while all members were paying attention to the performer. In a report showing among other things the degree of attention paid by the courtiers to the vizier's expression, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāmidī recounted to al-Thaʿālibī how he first saw al-Ṣāḥib's courtier, Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin. The poet was reciting before the vizier an ode starting with a *nasīb* that, says al-Ḥāmidī, elicited the following reaction from the vizier:

> I saw al-Ṣāḥib gazing at him intently, listening carefully to his recitation, repeating most of the lines, and showing his admiration and thrill to an extent that those present were amazed. When he reached the lines [*al-basīṭ*]:
>
> *Udʿā bi-asmāʾa nabzan fī qabāʾilihā*
> *Kaʾanna asmāʾa aḍḥat baʿḍa asmāʾī*
>
> *Aṭlaʿtu shaʿrī wa-alqat shaʿrahā ṭaraban*
> *Fa-allafā bayna iṣbāḥin wa-imsāʾī*
>
> I am called "Asmāʾ" derogatorily among her tribesmen
> As if Asmāʾ became one of my names[137]
>
> I let my hair appear and she lets her hair down in excitement
> And they put together dawn and evening[138]
>
> He crawled away from his seat of honor in excitement (*zaḥafa ʿan dastihi ṭaraban*). When [al-Khāzin] reached the part of the praise [where al-Ṣāḥib is eulogized as a highly eloquent and powerful leader adhering to Muʿtazilī principles], he began moving his head with approval. Then, when he recited:
>
> *Naʿam tajannaba lā yawma l-ʿaṭāʾi kamā*
> *Tajannaba bnu ʿAṭāʾin luthghata l-rāʾī*
>
> Yes, he avoided "no" on the day he awarded
> Just as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ avoided pronouncing *rāʾ* defectively[139]

> [al-Ṣāḥib] asked him to repeat it and clapped his hands. When he concluded the ode with these lines:
>
> *Uṭrī wa-uṭribu bi-l-ashʿāri unshiduhā*
> *Uḥsin bi-bahjati iṭrābī wa-iṭrāʾī*
>
> *Wa-min manāʾiḥi mawlānā madāʾiḥuhū*
> *Lianna min zandihī qadḥī wa-īrāʾī*
>
> *Fa-khudh ilayka bna ʿAbbādin muḥabbaratan*
> *Lā l-Buḥturiyyu yudānīhā wa-lā l-Ṭāʾī*
>
> I praise and excite with the poems I recite
> I do good with the splendor of my exciting and praising
>
> Among the grants given by our master are his [own] eulogies
> For it is from his piece of wood that I produce fire and kindle
>
> Take, O Ibn ʿAbbād, an adorned poem
> To which neither al-Buḥturī nor [Abū Tammām] al-Ṭāʾī measure up
>
> [Al-Ṣāḥib] said: You did very well! Divinely are you gifted (*li-llāh anta*)! He took the copy [of the text] and got engaged in examining it. Then, he bestowed on him a robe of honor, two camels, and a present.[140]

This informative report sheds light on the dynamics of verbal art performances at the court and reveals several important patterns.

(1) The narrator of the report, al-Ḥāmidī, who was also among the secondary members of the audience leaves no doubt that the attention of al-Ṣāḥib, the primary member of the audience, was given (almost) exclusively to the performer. The distinction between the “primary” and “secondary” members of the audience is significant because the performer addressed his artistic creation first and foremost to the patron and was dependent on his recognition for income and prestige. While peer recognition mattered for the poets’ career as well, compared to the patrons’ recognition, its significance was relatively marginal, given the dominance of the latter in the literary system of the time and the centrality of their financial sponsorship. As part of the audience, the narrator followed the performance of al-Khāzin, but at the same time his attention and that of the other secondary members of the audience was equally given to the vizier’s reactions to the performer. In contrast, there is no indication that the vizier paid attention to his courtiers, the secondary members of the audience, during the performance. Still, given the situation and similar accounts of performances, it should be assumed that to a limited degree he paid attention to them as well. We learn nothing about the attention paid by the performer to the audience. This was probably not as important for the narrator as the attention dynamics he explicitly


Performer
Primary Member of Audience (al-Ṣāḥib)
Secondary Members of Audience (courtiers)

The attention of each agent (or group) is marked by a different color (black for the performer, dark gray for the primary member of audience, and light gray for the secondary members of audience). Its intensity is signified by the width of the arrow's shaft. Arrows with dashed lines represent attention that is not explicitly mentioned in the report, although it is assumed to exist based on the context and accounts of similar performances.

Figure 2.1 Distribution of attention at al-Khāzin's performance.

mentioned. In contrast, when we have first person account by the performer, his attention to the patron's response is found relevant and given from his own point of view.[141] Al-Khāzin, therefore, must have paid close attention to the primary member of the audience while performing and to a lower degree to the secondary members. The described dynamics of attention are well encapsulated in "*I* saw *al-Ṣāḥib* gazing at [*the poet*] intently, listening carefully to his recitation, repeating most of the lines, and showing his admiration and thrill to an extent that *those present* were amazed." These dynamics, shaped by the realities of performance and the differences in power between the participants, are graphically displayed in Figure 2.1.

The report is very sensitive to the expression al-Ṣāḥib gave and gave off during the performance. In this case, there is plainly no discrepancy between the expression the vizier gave and gave off. During the performance, his gestures and actions (expression given off) indicated close attention and excitement as expressed by the following verbs followed by adjuncts and complements: gaze intently, listen carefully, repeat lines, show admiration and thrill, crawl away … in excitement, move his head with approval, ask the poet to repeat a line, clap hands. Following the performance, the vizier gave expression verbally and explicitly to his impression by saying "You did very well! Divinely are you gifted!" Given the intensity of the expression given off during the performance, this affirmation was hardly necessary for the courtiers. The match between his bodily and verbal reactions in this case made it easy for the courtiers—always on the lookout for signs of discrepancy between the expression given and given off by the vizier—to interpret him.

(2) Various ethnographic studies have shown that verbal art performers are extremely sensitive to the reactions of their audience, modifying accordingly their performances to elicit positive responses in a given situation, to counter a lack of interest or fatigue, to respond to a change in the composition of the audience (e.g., female audience members joining males), etc.[142] Therefore, within the context of the structured, conventional performance system in a given community, the text and event structure of particular performances are characterized by individuality defined as their emergent quality:

> The emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations.[143]

Unlike ethnographers who are able to observe closely performers and their audiences in real time, we are at the mercy of the written text at hand, which does not always include observations on the poet–audience interaction. We have no information on the interaction between the poet and the primary member of the audience from the point of view of the former; nor are we provided by the narrator with observations on the poet's reactions, and—more specifically—his reaction to the positive reception of the vizier. What is nonetheless evident is that the poet was successful at gaining control over the primary audience member through the rhetorical power of his performance. Richard Bauman considers the power to transform social structure the third kind of structure emergent in performance (in addition to text and event structure), which he explains here:

> There is, however, a distinctive potential in performance by its very nature which has implications for the creation of social structure in performance. It is part of the essence of performance that it offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication. Through his performance, the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience—prestige because of the demonstrated competence he has displayed, control because the determination of the flow of the interaction is in his hands.[144]

Al-Ḥāmidī's detailed description leaves no doubt that al-Ṣāḥib was completely captivated by the performance of al-Khāzin. The poet who extolled in the ode his own ability to excite, fill with joy, and bring to ecstasy—all meanings are captured in the verb *aṭraba* he used—did achieve that goal as can be judged by the vizier's ecstatic reactions. An interesting instance of al-Khāzin's (temporary) control over the vizier during the performance is seen in the latter's taking a cue from the poet. After the poet said "I let my hair appear and she lets her hair down *in excitement* (*ṭaraban*) and they put together dawn and evening," al-Ḥāmidī reported that the vizier "crawled away from his seat of honor *in excitement*" (*ṭaraban*). Indeed, the audience's reaching *ṭarab*, a psychological condition that stirs the body,[145] marks the success of the performer and the high moment of his control over it. It is a manifestation of the transformation of social structure achieved during a successful performance that an accomplished artist, despite his obvious hierarchical inferiority vis-à-vis the vizier, governs the latter's behavior by virtue of his rhetorical power. That the poet was aware of his power—and proud of it—we learn from his words: "I praise and excite (*uṭribu*) with the poems I recite, I do good with the splendor of my exciting (*iṭrābī*) and praising."

(3) The close attention of the courtiers to the vizier's expression was not merely driven by the existential need to assess the mood of a powerful superior. Since most, if not all, of his courtiers were professional or non-professional poets, they wished to establish or reinforce impressions regarding his preferred literary taste in order to meet success at the court. We will investigate the vizier's literary taste and the response of the courtiers in Chapter 4. Here, however, it should be briefly remarked that this report supports the observation made there about al-Ṣāḥib's preferred "natural" poetic style, being a perfected hybrid of the ancient Bedouin style and the "modern" urban style. The five lines of the *nasīb* starting the ode (omitted above) are plainly Bedouin in style and mention place names in Arabia (mostly) and Iraq common in ancient poetry. Still, it also contains refined rhetorical techniques typical of "modern" poetry. The line "I let my hair appear and she lets her hair down in excitement and they put together dawn and evening," for instance, features a hyperbolical metaphor ("put together dawn and evening") established on the intertwining of the lover's white hair with his beloved's black hair. This type of hyperbolical imagery is more typical of the "modern" style. The analogy between white hair and dawn on the one hand and black hair and youth on the other was a well-known motif during the ʿAbbāsid period.[146] The white hair of the poetic persona in al-Khāzin's line is not something he is brooding over, but rather boasting of as a telling mark of an experienced and mature man who was able to overcome hardships in his life. The positive value ascribed to white hair here is made evident by the excited reaction of the young beloved and the sexual union hinted by "they put together dawn and evening." The boasting of the poetic persona evokes pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry in which white hair is a boastful marker of manliness, unlike later ʿAbbāsid poetry that tended to associate it with opposite phenomena such as bodily decline and rejection by women.[147] Moreover, al-Ṣāḥib's enthusiasm about al-Khāzin's line "I let my hair appear…" should be considered in connection with his admiration for poems that showed white hair in a positive light, as remarked by al-Thaʿālibī.[148] The poet might have been aware of that and crafted the line accordingly.

The line, “I am called ʿAsmāʾ’ derogatorily among her tribesmen, as if Asmāʾ became one of my names,” is another remarkable example of al-Khāzin’s hybrid style. As shown above, the beloved’s name added derogatorily to al-Khāzin’s poetic persona evokes poets—not simply poetic personas—of early Islamic times who were called after their beloved women to mark their excessive love. Still, while evoking early poetry and poets in the mind of the connoisseur audience, al-Khāzin plays artfully with both meanings of the homonym *asmāʾ*, namely, Asmāʾ (a female proper name) and “names” (noun, pl. of *ism*) that form a “complete paronomasia” (*tajnīs tāmm*).[149] In addition, the first hemistich features *istikhdām*, a rhetorical figure employing both meanings of a homonym.[150] Hence, alongside “I am called ʿAsmāʾ’ derogatorily,” one reads “I am called names derogatorily.” In *Kitāb al-badīʿ*, Ibn al-Muʿtazz emphasizes and demonstrates that paronomasia (*tajnīs*), the second type of *badīʿ* according to his classification, was not invented by the “modern” poets, even if they expanded its use significantly.[151] However, the combination of paronomasia and *istikhdām* in this line adds up to artifice that is unmistakably typical of the “modern” style. At the same time, the homage to early poetry and poets by the evocation of the derogatory naming “tempers” this “modernity” to create the desired aesthetic experience of a mixed style.

Clearly, al-Khāzin infused his poetry with an ancient flavor, which was highly appreciated by the vizier as attested by his reaction. The stylistic hybridity illustrated here on the micro line level was pointed out by al-Thaʿālibī’s source, al-Ḥāmidī, on the macro ode level, while describing the vizier’s enthusiastic response to al-Khāzin’s creation: “an ode … bringing together the sweetness of civilization and the beauty of nomadism, while he [=al-Ṣāḥib] was worshipping it” (*qaṣīda … tajmaʿu ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra wa-ṭalāwat al-badāwa wa-huwa yatazahhadu la-hā*).[152] Al-Thaʿālibī rephrases here the same idea of praiseworthy stylistic hybridity championed by al-Ṣāḥib, which he expresses elsewhere as “bringing together” or “perfecting” “the eloquence (*faṣāḥa*) of nomadism with the sweetness of civilization.”[153] Thus, an important aspect of the report on al-Khāzin’s performance is that the contextual details delineating al-Ṣāḥib’s verbal and bodily reactions to al-Khāzin’s performance support the textual evidence, here and elsewhere, regarding the vizier’s poetic literary taste; namely, an optimal combination of ancient eloquence and “modern” refinement.

The poet’s thoughtfulness when it comes to creating in a style that would appeal to the aesthetic preferences of his patron is manifestly seen in the last line of the poem: “Take, O Ibn ʿAbbād, an adorned poem to which neither al-Buḥturī nor [Abū Tammām] al-Ṭāʾī measure up.” This line constitutes an illocutionary act with a directive point. As the poet bestows on the patron his creation using the imperative (“take!”), he determines its stylistic nature in a certain way that pleases al-Ṣāḥib. The poets al-Buḥturī and Abū Tammām signify respectively in an indexical way the “natural” versus the artful/artificial poetic style. By determining his creation as “an adorned poem to which neither al-Buḥturī nor [Abū Tammām] al-Ṭāʾī measure up,” al-Khāzin not only places himself above them; since the two poets were conceived as the two contrasting aesthetic poles of the contemporary poetic field, al-Khāzin's poem necessarily falls in between in terms of its style, given the specified range of possibilities. By undertaking this illocutionary act at the last line of the ode, al-Khāzin uses the control he gained over his primary (and secondary) audience as a successful performer to reinforce an impression of his poetry he has already projected by his aesthetic choices throughout the poem.

Despite the absence of the poet's point of view in this account, or at least a more detailed description of his delivery from the narrator's vantage point, the ode itself attests to al-Khāzin's careful consideration of the primary audience member while preparing the ode prior to the performance. The importance of careful thought for the performing poet, not only in respect to the text but also the context, was noted in medieval literary criticism. The critic Ibn Rashīq notes in connection with the saying "every occasion has an apt expression" (*li-kull maqām maqāl*) that poets must be very thoughtful of their poetic style, the manner of delivery, and level of preparedness based on the audience, genre, and event.[154] The critic's emphasis on the pragmatic nature of poetic production and performance according to social functions and cultural conventions reveals a systematic and objective point of view. To receive a more balanced and realistic picture of poetic performance at al-Ṣāḥib's court (and in general), we should read alongside the account on al-Khāzin's performance and Ibn Rashīq's comments another account that highlights the subjective point of view of the poet-performer. The account in question was narrated to al-Tawḥīdī by the secretary ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan:

> [Al-Ṣāḥib] abandoned me one day in a way that really harmed me and left me vulnerable. I was at my wits' end and could not contrive anything for my good. The Mihrajān festival came, and I entered to him among the multitude of people, and after they recited poetry in two rounds, I proceeded and recited. He was not delighted by me, nor did he look at me. I had incorporated (*ḍammantu*) in my lines one line of his from an ode in the same rhyme of mine, and when the line was delivered to him, he woke up from his sluggishness and looked at me as if finding fault with me. I lowered my head and said in a low voice: "Do not scold and do not expand my wound, for I cannot bear it. I only stole (*saraqtu*) this line from your poem to adorn mine with it. You—praise be to God—bestow liberally every valuable object and grant all hidden gems; would you really begrudge me this [small] amount and shame me in this assembly?" He raised his head and voice and said: "My dear boy, repeat this line!" I repeated it and he said: "By God, sounds great! Hey, return to the beginning of your ode, for we neglected you and our thought carried us away to another thing; we got absorbed by the world and this has become injustice to you without purpose on our part and no intent." I repeated it, delivered it fluently, moved [him] in its recitation, and articulated its verses clearly. When I reached its end, he said: "You did well. Adhere to this technique (*fann*), for it is stylistically elegant, and it is as if al-Buḥturī had appointed you as a successor! Amass wealth at our

> court and rise in our service! Do your utmost to obey us, and we will support your interests by paying you your due, setting you up, and raising your standing against your competitors."[155]

This report contributes greatly to our understanding of composition and performance practices at the court through the first person narrative that sheds light on the unique features of a performance and its particular background. While it focuses on one unique case, it shows the conventional features of performance practices at the court that provided opportunities for clever and competent courtiers to alter them for their own individual goals. The background for this performance, as the secretary ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan tells us, is the "abandonment" of al-Ṣāḥib that had an adverse effect on him and left him helpless and perplexed. The reasons for the vizier's step and its actual meaning are not specified but it would be safe to assume that the "abandonment" had severe economic and status consequences for the secretary who had probably lost his job. In this dire situation, he was finally able to strategize how to be reinstated. His strategy evidently entails familiarity with performance practices at the court and with the setting. Al-Ḥasan knew that in the big event of the Mihrajān, when numerous poets recite their praise odes before the vizier, he could easily get tired and distracted given the quantity of poetry (not necessarily of the highest quality). To attract his attention and stand out from the crowd, he realized he had to resort to a clever scheme, which eventually proved to be successful.

By incorporating in advance one line of al-Ṣāḥib's in his own poem, al-Ḥasan provoked the vizier who must have been initially shocked at the boldness of the secretary who plagiarized a line of his and delivered it before him as part of his ode. Once he was able to attract al-Ṣāḥib's attention, al-Ḥasan explained his strategic plagiarism in a way that flattered the vizier. The latter got interested and—finally—very appreciative of the poet and his work to the point of offering him a lucrative position. What concerns us most here is the way the performer changed the structure of his text, and consequently of the event itself by means of his scheme. Obviously, outright plagiarism before its powerful victim was not part of the acceptable performance practices at the court and hence a radical transgression on the part of the performer by which his performance stood out from the rest.[156] We saw that Richard Bauman referred to this uniqueness in an individual performance that set it apart from the conventions as its emergent quality. In our report, the emergent quality is observable in the text, the event (interruption for unusual reason), and even the social structure, as the performer succeeded at changing an adverse state of affairs in his favor, standing vis-à-vis the power holder as the inferior. And, indeed, for a while after the reported event, he prospered at the court, even if ultimately his reinstatement turned out to be temporary only. According to his words, quoted by al-Tawḥīdī, he was later incarcerated and had his books burned.[157] On the long term, then, the power structure has not changed, as the vizier for whatever reason was able to put him "back in his place." It should be still noted that through the performance, al-Ḥasan was able to have his own way, because he commanded the rules and could figure out a possible transgression, which, despite its boldness, would work out for him.

At the end of this section, I would like to shed some more light on one of the significant transformational powers of qualified performers of verbal art, namely, the power to affect their audience by inducing a mood change, and thus doing quite astonishing things with their words. When it comes to eulogy, we mostly talk about the eulogists' role and goal to excite their patrons with their magnifying praise and uplift them to a euphoric state. This was one of the cultural roles and responsibilities the poets of the pre-modern Islamic world were entrusted with. We saw above al-Ṣāḥib's ecstatic behavior while he was listening to al-Khāzin's ode in his praise. The poet himself referred boastingly to his own ability to bring about this mood change by means of his poetry, saying "I praise and excite with the poems I recite, I do good with the splendor of my exciting and praising." The natural competitor of the poet in this role was the musician; indeed, words expressing "excitement," often derived from the root *ṭ.r.b.*, have traditionally been associated with music at least ever since Bedouin camel drivers used to urge their animals with their singing.[158] It is for this "inferiority" of poetry vis-à-vis music that poets adopted an apologetic tone to place their art on the same footing as music, or even higher, when they sought to uplift the patron's mood. This was also an intended indirect message to the patron to the effect that the poet's verbal art was indispensable for him and that due reward was hoped for.

Still, the patron's favorable response was not expected to be shown merely financially; patrons were expected to respond to an effective eulogy behaviorally giving a visible form to their excitement and euphoria, and thus also indicating the poets' artistic mastery and recognizing their transformational powers. On top of delivering effective poetry, competent poets often included in their praise cues urging their patrons to give visible form to their excitement, in order to intensify their reaction. The following verse, displayed by al-Thaʿālibī,[159] illustrates well the poetics of mood change characteristic of ʿAbbāsid praise poetry:

i Abū Tammām, praising Mahdī b. Aṣram [*al-wāfir*]:

Wa-naghmatu muʿtafin taʾtīhi aḥlā
ʿAlā udhunayhi min naghmi l-samāʿī

The recitation sound of a favor-seeker reaching him is sweeter
To his ears than the sound of music[160]

ii Al-Buḥturī, praising Abū Ayyūb Aḥmad b. Shujāʿ [*al-kāmil*]:

Nashwāna yaṭrabu li-l-madīḥi kaʾannamā
Ghannāhu Māliku Ṭayyiʾin aw Maʿbadū

Intoxicated, he is transported with joy by the praise section of the ode as if
Mālik of Ṭayyiʾ or Maʿbad sang it[161]

iii Ibn al-Rūmī, praising al-Ḥasan b. ʿUbaydallāh [*al-basīṭ*]:

Kaʾannahū wa-hwa masʾūlun wa-mumtadaḥun
Ghannāhu isḥaqu wa-l-awtāru fī l-ṣakhabī

When asked for favor and praised, he looks as if
Isḥāq [al-Mawṣilī] sang to him while the [lute's] strings sending forth loud sounds[162]

iv Al-Qāḍī Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, praising al-Ṣāḥib [*al-kāmil*]:

Nashwāna yalqā l-muʿtafī mutahallilan
Yahtazzu min madḥin bi-hī ʿiṭfāhū

Wa-idhā aṣākha ilā l-madīḥi raʾaytahū
Wa-kaʾanna Māliku Ṭayyiʾin ghannāhū

Intoxicated, he receives the favor-seeker beaming with joy
His whole body sways for the praise to him

When he listens to the praise section of the ode, he looks
As if Mālik of Ṭayyiʾ sang it

v Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Mustahām al-Ḥalabī (a student of the poets al-Mutanabbī and al-Babaghāʾ), praising an unspecified *amīr* [*al-sarīʿ*]:

Tuṭribuhu l-ashʿāru fī madḥihī
Wa-lam yaṣugh[163] *qāʾiluhā laḥnā*

Fa-laysa yadrī in atā shāʿirun
Yunshiduhū anshada am ghannā

He is transported with joy by the odes in his praise
While their composer did not set them to music

For he does not know, when a poet comes
To recite [his poetry] to him, whether he recites or sings

Abū Tammām's line highlights the patron's generosity by delineating his joy when poets, hoping for his favor, praise him. To the patron, this joy even surpasses the one experienced by music.[164] Al-Buḥturī shifts the motif by amplifying the element of joy to describe it as intoxication and euphoria parallel only to great music, and as a result downplaying the generosity element. Ibn al-Rūmī, in contrast, reverts to the emphasis on the patron's generosity, and indeed in the line that follows in the *dīwān*, he says about the patron: "Hearing the praise, his whole body sways from the delightful sensation of magnanimity (*majd*), not from that of excitement (*ṭarab*)."[165] This "clarification" did not prevent al-Thaʿālibī from subsuming Ibn al-Rūmī's lines under the category Praise Odes that Fill with Joy (*al-madāʾiḥ al-muṭriba*) following the above line of Abū Tammām.[166] Benefiting from Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī (on that in more detail, see below), al-Qāḍī Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz gives the most forceful picture, compared to the others, of the intense joy with which his patron is transported. He combines a vivid depiction of al-Ṣāḥib's euphoric mental state ("intoxicated") and bodily reaction ("beaming with joy," "his whole body sways") when praised, while comparing them to the effect of music played by an illustrious musician. In contrast, al-Mustahām's employment of the motif, in two lines as well, makes no specific reference to the bodily reaction of the patron and draws no comparison to eminent musicians.

Generalizing and abstracting the verse we have read at the referential level, we see that all poets represent a certain state of affairs in the world (an assertive illocutionary act) to the effect that the patron is extremely welcoming and moved by eulogy. Yet, the chief message conveyed by all poets—save, perhaps, Ibn al-Rūmī—in the context of their delivery, is a non-referential, pragmatic one. By representing favorably the euphoric state of a generic overjoyed patron when eulogized, the poets urge their *particular* patron to respond equally to their performance. This is, therefore, a verbal cue to the primary audience that, given the control gained by competent poets over their audiences thanks to their skill, was likely to be followed. An emphatic response on the part of the addressed patron agreed with the cultural conventions related to the performance of praise poetry, conventions which the poet mediated and propagated in a non-disinterested way. All this does not suggest that patrons waited for such cues to express their excitement or that they were even a necessary part of the ode; in fact, the report recording al-Ṣāḥib's reactions when addressed by al-Khāzin (a quite unique report in its careful and detailed attention to the vizier's reception) shows that the vizier was transported with joy by the aesthetic pleasure he derived from the verse and by the flattering representation of his character and deeds. As their employment by various poets suggests, pragmatic cues of this sort were a rhetorical technique at the disposal of poets to intensify the audience's favorable reception, but such reception required first and foremost effective verse.

6 Competition

Speaking of "envy" (*ḥasad*) among literary people, al-Tawḥīdī once observed that it "rages in the souls of this group. Seldom does one take pains to get close to a leader or vizier, without finding every single person going out of their way to distance him from his goal."[167] The court was an institution in which individuals aspired ceaselessly to improve their standing. With reference to literary people, "standing" (*manzila*) meant their value as professionals and individuals, measured against their peers at the literary field of the court, based on the judgment of the patron (given the dominance of al-Ṣāḥib as the source of power, peer judgment meant little).[168] Courtiers wished to achieve a standing better than their peers' in order to benefit from a larger share of the financial resources made available by the patron, closer relationship with him, greater security, and higher prestige. The financial resources designated by al-Ṣāḥib for his expansive literary sponsorship enterprise were enormous,[169] albeit not infinite, and his informal time for recreation and intellectual activity was limited by the numerous engagements and responsibilities of a chief administrator. As a result, an improvement in one's standing came at the expense of another's, which yielded a strong spirit of competition among the courtiers.

A desire to outdo peers and thus attract the patron's attention and appreciation lurked behind all literary games and activities at the court. Indeed, these were established on sublimation of aggression toward rivals, transforming culturally-disapproved impulses into approved cultural manifestations, hence growing the literary output of the court, increasing its literary sophistication, and—most importantly—solidifying the institution's social cohesion and marking it as a civilized environment. For its constructive role as the key drive behind the success of the court institution, we may consider this variety as positive competition. This competitive spirit is encapsulated by equestrian terminology applied to al-Ṣāḥib's poets such as racing (*jary*) and hippodrome (*maydān*) in al-Thaʿālibī's heading for the Mansion Odes: "The Racing of the Poets in al-Ṣāḥib's Presence in the Hippodrome of His Prompting them [to Compose] the Mansion Odes." This terminology was applied also to other fourth/tenth-century courts, such as Sayf al-Dawla's, which was dubbed "the poets' racing course (*ḥalba*)."[170]

Existing alongside positive competition, negative competition seeking to undermine a fellow courtier's standing, and by extension, compromise his relationship with the patron (and possibly others, too), harm his reputation, and lead to his marginalization, or even banishment was all too common. I call it negative not because it necessarily had an adverse effect on cultural production; in fact, it stimulated it marginally. It is negative because it weakened social cohesion and interaction at the court by resorting to slanderous and deceitful strategies targeting peers instead of distinguishing oneself through positive competition. As a result, the court lost great talents such as Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī and Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, whose high standing made them a target of high priority for rivals. While positive competition is mostly inferred from the sources, its negative counterpart is explicitly raised; sometimes in comments made by anthologists like al-Thaʿālibī, but even more by the victims themselves when addressing the vizier in verse. In the poems in which they ask his permission to leave the court, they deplore the negative competition of courtiers who are often called "enviers" (*ḥussād*, *ḥasada*) and remain anonymous.[171]

Manifestations of negative competition at the court, found in the sources, are largely associated with: (i) the professional ethics of the courtier; and (ii) the religious belief of the vizier; (i) al-Ṣāḥib expressed his concerns about the phenomenon of plagiarism with its negative effect on the general literary system of his time, and, as a vizier and court patron, showed his strong opposition to it.[172] In addition, as any other patron, he would consider criticism coming from a protégé, *a fortiori* when it is rendered as a lampoon, to be a severe act of disloyalty; (ii) he made his religious and doctrinal positions, that is, his Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī sympathies, well known, and would not tolerate a protégé's attempt to engage actively in countering them. Since the vizier felt strongly about professional ethics and religious belief, these two realms were a fertile ground for negative competitors to discredit a peer and induce al-Ṣāḥib to lower his standing. Positive competition imbues courtly activities and practices discussed above (e.g., *tamlīṭ* as an improvised poetry competition) and in Chapter 3 (production of literature in certain genres); it is not in need of further explanation here. I would like to dwell now on negative competition, whose pronounced presence in the sources begs our careful consideration.

When the poet Ibn Bābak first came to the court in 372/982 or shortly after and recited odes in praise of the vizier, one of those present vilified him (*ṭaʿana ʿalayhi*) and said he was a plagiarist (*muntaḥil*), who recited odes by Ibn Nubāta al-Saʿdī. Al-Ṣāḥib wanted to test Ibn Bābak to find out whether he was a plagiarist incapable of original creation. He prompted him to describe the elephant captured from the Khorasani army in an ode and prescribed the meter and rhyme to be used. He, then, recited an ode which al-Ṣāḥib found excellent and censured the defamer (*ṭāʿin*) for his lie and false claim that Ibn Bābak was a plagiarist. The defamer's response that Ibn Bābak had memorized sixty ekphrastic poems on elephants in this meter, all by Ibn Nubāta, was found laughable by the vizier.[173] Al-Ṣāḥib was not reported to take any measures against the defamer. Al-Ābī, a literary man, historian, and courtier of al-Ṣāḥib's (later appointed a vizier in al-Rayy; d. 421/1030),[174] who witnessed this event, reported it in his *adab* encyclopedia in the chapter devoted to mendacity (*fī l-kadhib*) next to other humorous anecdotes featuring ridiculous lies and comments of mendacious figures. Neither in this case nor in others do we have evidence that slander of this type was taken as an offense meriting punishment that goes beyond a reproach. Rather, the manifestations of negative competition, even when they turned out unquestionably to be based on false allegations, were seen as a normal—albeit deplorable—part of courtly life.

Another type of unprofessional behavior was criticism and resistance to the patron coming from his protégé. When al-Tawḥīdī was asked to copy the thirty-volume epistle collection by al-Ṣāḥib, he suggested preparing an anthology instead so that readers not be bored and the vizier not be criticized. His tactless and unveiled criticism of al-Ṣāḥib's skills, let alone his reluctance to comply with his wish, was a boon for his competitors. As he quickly found out, "that was raised to him [=al-Ṣāḥib] in an offensive way without my knowledge." Consequently, al-Ṣāḥib was furious and vowed to make him pay dearly for what he said.[175] In contrast to the competitor of Ibn Bābak, those who informed on al-Tawḥīdī did not create it out of whole cloth, even if they made him look even worse. This evidential basis, unlike the ludicrous plagiarism claims against Ibn Bābak, facilitated the retaliatory response of al-Ṣāḥib. Obviously, when a manifestation of negative competition has some evidential basis, the victim's chances of preserving his challenged standing become grimmer.

We saw in Chapter 1 that adherence to the Shīʿa and Muʿtazila was not an absolute requirement at the literary field of the court, even if it was much encouraged. It was unacceptable, however, for courtiers in the literary field to engage actively in countering religious and doctrinal positions held by al-Ṣāḥib. Therefore, manifestations of negative competition in the realm of religious belief involved accusations to the effect that certain courtiers criticized openly Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī tenets. The high standing acquired by the young brilliant poet al-Maʾmūnī immediately following his arrival at the court deeply concerned some of his fellow courtiers. Although he was charged as a plagiarist, and even as a defamer of the vizier, in his case, as a descendant of Caliph al-Maʾmūn, it was almost unavoidable that the religious and political cards be used against him. After all, the Shīʿī Būyids were successful at having the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, the legitimate leaders of Sunnī Muslims, under their control, and any sign of pro-ʿAbbāsid Sunnī activism would be taken as threatening this control. Al-Thaʿālibī's account of al-Maʾmūnī's time at the court paints a vivid picture of negative competition:

> [Al-Maʾmūnī was] among the descendants of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn. He was one—rather, a unique one!—of the peerless people of his time in terms of noble spirit and pedigree, accomplishment in excellence, and *adab*. His mind overflowing with poetry of *badīʿ* artifice, of beautiful molding, cast in the mold of beauty and excellence. After he left his hometown, Baghdad, because of some desire in his soul, as a youth whose face had not put forth its beard, he arrived in al-Rayy and praised al-Ṣāḥib with singular poems that amazed him, and by which he was dazzled with astonishment. He treated him honorably upon his arrival and during his stay, received him with good hospitality, made promises to him and raised hopes in him. Then, the scorpions of enviers among the courtiers and poets of al-Ṣāḥib crawled about him, and started at once acting without caution or care, calumniating him for baseless things, and fabricating against him the ugliest lies: sometimes, they would charge him with spreading propaganda for the ʿAbbāsids; at other times, they would describe him as engaged in excessive disparagement of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his two sons (*al-naṣb*), and as believing firmly in accusing Shīʿīs and Muʿtazilīs of infidelity; on other occasions, they would attribute to him a lampoon against al-Ṣāḥib giving expression to abominable calumny, and would swear on his plagiarizing his praise poetry [from others]. It reached the point that undermining his standing (*isqāṭ manzilatihi*) in al-Ṣāḥib's view was accomplished, his livelihood was disrupted, and al-Ṣāḥib became angry with him. Al-Maʾmūnī composed an ode about this, asking his permission to leave.... He then left al-Rayy and came to Nīshāpūr.[176]

Al-Thaʿālibī leaves no doubt that the aggressive negative campaign of al-Maʾmūnī's competitors was effective. The poet lost his source of income as a courtier, and was practically shown the way out. In these circumstances, a courtier would not leave independently, but rather had to ask the patron for permission to do so in an ode that while showing gratitude and promising continued loyalty, decried the injustice that was done to him at the court. Despite the bitterness of the courtier, he was prudent enough to blame only his competitors for the defamation that irrevocably tarnished his name, while the patron was portrayed respectfully as misled by it. Applying famous Qurʾānic imagery (based on Q 12:18) and speaking of the patron–protégé relationship as the one between father and child, al-Maʾmūnī says: "I was Joseph, they were the Children of Israel, the father of the children was you, and their claim was false blood." Hence, al-Ṣāḥib-Jacob, whose love for al-Maʾmūnī-Joseph was the reason for the bloody lie of his envious fellow courtiers-brothers, was also a victim. Al-Maʾmūnī proceeds to point out courtly competition and mentions proudly that his initial high standing came at the expense of (unidentified) others: "There is a group of people in which wrath was set ablaze since you erected for me standing positions (*rutab*) over the enemies' necks."[177] Those frustrated others would later craftily bring about his fall, making the most of his descent and resorting to conventional accusations as well.

If we are to believe a certain anecdote, the short, albeit brilliant, period of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī at al-Ṣāḥib's court ended because of a fart. Supposedly, he broke wind at the session of al-Ṣāḥib and felt embarrassed. He tried to explain it away as "the squeak of the seat" (*ṣarīr al-takht*), to which al-Ṣāḥib rejoined "I am afraid it is the squeak of the bottom" (*ṣarīr al-taḥt*). Al-Thaʿālibī adds with noticeable doubt: "It is said that this embarrassing incident was the reason for his departure from the court and moving out to Khorasan."[178] Indeed, al-Ābī includes this very story in his *adab* encyclopedia in the chapter dedicated to farting, but the victim is not al-Hamadhānī but rather "a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib" (*baʿḍ julasāʾ al-Ṣāḥib*).[179] To be sure, accidental farting in his presence was not conceived by al-Ṣāḥib as improper behavior. Al-Hamadhānī himself told al-Thaʿālibī about the jurisprudent Ibn al-Khuḍayrī who used to attend al-Ṣāḥib's nightly theological sessions and once broke wind noisily after falling asleep. Out of embarrassment, he did not return to the session, but al-Ṣāḥib sent him a message in verse to let him know there was nothing to feel embarrassed or be concerned about: "O Ibn al-Khuḍayrī, do not leave embarrassed for something that came out of you as it comes out of the flute and the lute/It is the wind; you cannot withhold it, for you are not Solomon son of David."[180] Unsurprisingly, later authors present versions that are the product of elaboration and conflation of these two related anecdotes brought by al-Thaʿālibī.[181] Therefore, given the emphasized doubt of al-Thaʿālibī, the varying identification of the victim, al-Ṣāḥib's tolerance toward accidental farting at his sessions, and—most importantly—indications (soon to be discussed) that al-Hamadhānī departed because of a different reason, we cannot really believe that he left his distinguished position for a fart.

In his study of al-Hamadhānī's life within its political and religious environment, Everett Rowson comments that the reason for Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's departure from al-Ṣāḥib's court is not clear.[182] It is true that a direct and clear-cut statement regarding the reason is not found in the sources, but information gleaned from al-Hamadhānī's *dīwān* sheds some light on this question. In a poem in which he apologizes to al-Ṣāḥib and praises him, there are some essential hints to consider.[183] Based on the poem, this exceptional literary man was on the run having learned that al-Ṣāḥib made threats against him. He was terrified and restless fearing his punishment, while apparently unsure about the reason behind the vizier's wrath, despite his dedicated and remarkable service to him: "Then, what falsehoods did the slanderers possibly say against me?[184] And from which direction did every calamity rise against me?/Which fire was kindled by which arsonist? And which disaster was provoked by whichever frivolous play?"

Another poem from al-Hamadhānī's *dīwān* is likely to provide the reason. Accused of being a *nāṣibī*, an extremist Sunnī who declared hostility to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Hamadhānī polemicizes with the anonymous accuser and defends himself forcefully against the accusations. He presents himself as a Sunnī who acknowledges the special place of ʿAlī and the Prophet's family, while being devoted to the Prophet's Companions (in this context, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, whose leadership and religious authority were rejected by *rāfiḍī* Shīʿīs) as well. He rebels against the slander (*buhtān*) and against the slanderer who, he says, cursed the Companions yet sought intercession (*a-yarjū l-shafāʿa man sabbahum*). He then says [*al-mutaqārib*]:

Uʿizzu l-nabiyya wa-aṣḥābahū
Fa-mā l-marʾu illā maʿa l-Ṣāḥibī

Ḥanānayka min ṭamaʿin bāridin
Wa-labbayka min amalin khāʾibī

Tamannaw ʿalā llāhi maʾmūlakum
Wa-khuṭṭūhu fī l-jamadi l-dhāʾibī

I love the Prophet and his Companions
And one is only [in line] with al-Ṣāḥib

"Be merciful" of a frustrated aspiration
And "at your service" of a dashed hope

Ask God for what you hope for
And write it on melting ice![185]

The accusation that al-Hamadhānī is hostile to ʿAlī, and his passionate apologetic response aimed at showing his special love for the Prophet's family as congruent with his devotion to the Prophet's Companions are imaginable only in a milieu dominated by a Shīʿī. This applies to the short phase in al-Hamadhānī's career when he was a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib, before he moved to the Sunnī lands of the east.[186] In addition, the occurrence of *al-Ṣāḥibī* at the end of the first quoted line (and the poem's rhyme word *bī*) could hardly be accidental; they convey the message to al-Ṣāḥib that al-Hamadhānī does not exceed the boundaries of sectarian positions accepted by the patron as legitimate. The line to follow ("'Be merciful' ...") expresses al-Hamadhānī's wish that al-Ṣāḥib thwart the attempt of the competitor, who pleads for the patron's support and promises his loyalty,[187] to portray him as an extremist Sunnī in order to harm his standing. Defying his anonymous competitor and his hope to harm him, al-Hamadhānī dismisses his chances to succeed by comparing the attempt to a vanishing inscription on melting ice. It, therefore, seems very plausible that al-Hamadhānī had to defend himself with this poem against accusations in the realm of religion (similar to those directed against al-Maʾmūnī) made by some Shīʿī competitor at the court.

Given the famous rivalry between al-Hamadhānī and al-Khwārazmī, it is tempting to guess that the anonymous competitor was the latter, especially since he was a staunch Shīʿī and a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib. This, however, is not conceivable, since al-Hamadhānī did not meet al-Khwārazmī during the period he spent at the court. Their first meeting was, rather, in 382/992, some time after he left the court, choosing Nīshāpūr as his destination in order to meet al-Khwārazmī whom he esteemed then, and for whose warm reception he had hoped.[188] Although the *dīwān* says nothing of the addressee or referent of al-Hamadhānī's poem, Abū Isḥāq al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022) comments that it was composed in reaction to al-Khwārazmī's charges that al-Hamadhānī hated ʿAlī—charges meant to set the Ṭālibids (descendants of Abū Ṭālib) on him—and hence al-Ḥuṣrī considers it to be a product of their heated rivalry in Nīshāpūr.[189] In fact, at that very period, al-Hamadhānī responded in verse to al-Khwārazmī's attack on the Companions, praising them and lampooning al-Khwārazmī.[190] It is possible that this evidence of sectarian polemics between the two led al-Ḥuṣrī to consider the former poem as another product of their rivalry. Nonetheless, the former poem has an undeniable apologetic tone that strives to establish al-Hamadhānī's love for ʿAlī and the Prophet's family, whereas in the latter, composed in a Sunnī environment, the poet speaks in a very confident Sunnī voice that focuses on the merits of the Companions and does not attempt to emphasize the author's love for ʿAlī. Furthermore, the mention of al-Ṣāḥib in the former poem is a clear sign that it was composed in reaction to an anonymous competitor's attack at the Shīʿī dominated environment of the court. Despite the belief of al-Hamadhānī that the competitor's hope was vain, all signs show that his period at the court ended involuntarily, as he found himself running away because of negative competition.

Positive competition was the major stimulating force behind literary production at the court, while it was self-evident to the degree that it was seldom raised in the sources. Things were quite different with negative competition; even if we take into consideration the poems of the victims protesting against it, as in the case of al-Maʾmūnī and al-Hamadhānī, and others composed by newcomers, such as Ibn Bābak, to prove genuine poetic skills, negative competition was a marginal stimulating force. Nevertheless, despite this marginality, the victims (through their verse) and the literary anthologists (through their comments and anecdotes) gave us a glimpse of it. Although manifestations of negative competition at the court are largely associated with professional ethics and religious belief, there exists evidence that some courtiers came up with different ones. Al-Ābī tells us about the arrival of a destitute secretary, whom al-Ṣāḥib had known from his visit to Baghdad as a young man. Al-Ṣāḥib assigned him a position with a 500-dirham-monthly salary in his written payment order (*ṣakk*). One of the men present envied the secretary (*ḥasadahu*) and told al-Ṣāḥib he was a catamite (*maʾbūn*), who would spend all his salary on the partner "committing with him the shameful act." He dispraised the secretary and his alleged vices excessively until he was sure he ruined him (*afsada ḥālahu*). At that point, the slanderer (*al-sāʿī*) had no doubt the vizier would cancel the order once it was returned for his signature. Instead, however, al-Ṣāḥib added to the secretary's allotted monthly salary "fifty dirhams for a boy serving and assisting him," and signed the order.[191] This story shows that negative competitors seeking to undermine the standing of peers might opt for whatever way they deemed likely to be effective, in this case, an accusation of "dishonorable" sexual behavior. It also demonstrates that the vizier was well aware of negative competition as a pattern of courtly conduct and did not always fall prey to it. In the present case, he indicated humorously by raising the secretary's salary for that "shameful" purpose that he grasped the competitor's intent and thwarted his attempt. We, again, have no indication of a punitive measure against the competitor, which suggests that this type of slander was seen as a normal—albeit deplorable—part of courtly life.

Notes

1 Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, ed. and French tr. S. Munk (Paris: A. Franck, 1866), III, 129b.

2 La Bruyère, *Les Caractères* (Paris: Hachette, 1894), 198.

3 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, 146, 147–8. The author goes on to extol the healing and stimulating effects of music on kings and their demand for musicians since pre-Islamic times.

4 Cf. Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 71–4 (composed after the middle of the third/ninth century); Kushājim (d. 360/970), *Adab al-nadīm*, ed. Nabīl al-ʿAṭiyya (Baghdad: Dār al-Shuʾūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-ʿĀmma, 1990), 35–41; Kaykāwūs, *Qābūs-nāma*, 203–6/*A Mirror for Princes*, 196–200; Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma yā Siyar al-mulūk*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khalkhālī (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Kāwah, 1931), 64–5. In English translation: *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama*, tr. Hubert Darke, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 89–91 (composed in 484–85/1091–92).

5 Al-Ghazālī, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (Persian), ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī (Tehran: Bābak, 1361/1972), 136. In English translation: *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (naṣīḥat al-mulūk)*, tr. F.R.C. Bagley (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 80; Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 151; cf. Kaykāwūs, *Qābūs-nāma*, 91/*A Mirror for*

Princes, 81; for a broader discussion of model royal schedules during early ʿAbbāsid times, see Sadan, "The Division of the Day," 255–73.

6 Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*, 64/*The Book of Government*, 89; Kaykāwūs advises his son, in case he becomes an office holder in the service of kings, to evade familiarity with them, but not his formal service. For familiarity leads to estrangement, whereas service yields familiarity: *Qābūs-nāma*, 198/*A Mirror for Princes*, 191.

7 ʿAbdallāh b. Buluqqīn, *Mudhakkirāt al-amīr ʿAbdallāh al-musammā bi-kitāb al-tibyān*, ed. É. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1955), 202–3.

8 Jaʿfar al-Barmakī (d. 186/803), Hārūn al-Rashīd's vizier and close friend, is a famous example. Ibn ʿAmmār (d. 477/1084), the vizier and intimate of al-Muʿtamid b. ʿAbbād, king of Seville, is another: al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, 4th ed. (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1964), III, 384–9; ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-maghrib*, ed. R. Dozy, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1881), 77–90; the two viziers were paired in medieval times for their similar story of intimacy with their patrons that ended violently by their execution: ibid., 83.

9 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 128–9, 136–9.

10 Y, IV, 148.

11 Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 67–70, 197–200 (the citation above is from p. 200); to Goffman (ibid., 22), front means

> that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance.

12 Algazi and Drory, "L'amour à la cour des Abbasides," 1255–6.

13 Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*, 64/*The Book of Government*, 89 (the translation above is Hubert Darke's, except for my replacing "boon-companions" with "courtiers"); the same message is conveyed in Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 34–5; Kushājim, *Adab al-nadīm*, 38–9; and al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 663–4.

14 Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 28–45; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 663–4; Ibn Khaldūn discusses the *ḥijāb* in the sense of "entrance restriction" (as translated by Rosenthal) in relation to his three-generation dynasty paradigm. However, he examines the increasing seclusion of the ruler each generation from the aspect of politics (access to the power holder for political aims). His interest here is, therefore, in the formal—not the informal—part of the ruler's schedule: *Muqaddima*, ed. M. Quatremère (Paris: Institut impérial de France, 1858), II, 100–3; Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), II, 111–13.

15 Y, IV, 162.

16 Y, IV, 160–4.

17 Y, III, 38 (*naḥnu bi-l-nahār sulṭān wa-bi-l-layl ikhwān*).

18 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, III, 26. The text reads "(Abū) ʿAbbād" without any editorial explanation for the parentheses and the parenthesized expression. Apart from the manifest similarity to the motto of al-Ṣāḥib *Ibn* ʿAbbād, there are other reasons suggesting that "Ibn ʿAbbād" is the correct reading: Abū Bakr al-Muqriʾ seems to be no other than the celebrated Ḥanbalī traditionist Abū Bakr *Ibn* al-Muqriʾ (d. 381/991 at 96), who was also the librarian of al-Ṣāḥib, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The earliest biographical source on Abū Bakr is al-Ṣāḥib's contemporary Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī (336–430/948–1038), *Dhikr akhbār Iṣbahān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), II, 297, where he is called Abū Bakr al-Muqriʾ (without Ibn). Later writers added Ibn to his name, but this contemporary biographer had not. Al-Rāghib was alive in or before the year 409/1018, was in contact with courtiers of

al-Ṣāḥib (see Alexander Key, “A Linguistic Frame of Mind: ar-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī and what it meant to be ambiguous” (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2012), 32–40, and ʿUmar al-Sārīsī, *al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī wa-juhūduhu fī l-lugha wa-l-adab* (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1987), 35–7, 44–5), and, just like Abū Nuʿaym, to him the traditionist’s name was known as al-Muqriʾ. The content of the statement refers to someone who was in friendly relations with al-Ṣāḥib, just as this librarian (see Ibn al-Muqriʾ’s biographies: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Akram al-Būshī [Beirut: Dār al-Risāla, 1984] XVI, 398–402; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, III, 973–5).

19 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 690–4 (citing from al-Ābī’s lost *History of al-Rayy*); Y, III, 261 (translated in Chapter 1).

20 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 82 (this report was narrated to al-Thaʿālibī by Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāmidī, a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib’s, who had heard it directly from the vizier); Y, III, 38 (a shorter version was narrated to al-Thaʿālibī by Abū Saʿd Naṣr b. Yaʿqūb, the transmitter of the vizier’s motto “we are sovereigns during the day, but friends at night,” which is produced immediately before this report); later authors present significantly different versions: Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ (d. 480/1087), *al-Hafawāt al-nādira*, ed. Ṣāliḥ al-Ashtar (Damascus: Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya, 1967), 342 (the food in question is *maḍīra*, a stew made of meat and sour milk, and the narrator who takes pride of silencing the vizier is Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (!) Al-Ṣābiʾ’s version is quoted by Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1925); al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, XVIII, 32 (the food in question is cheese, and the one who “offended” al-Ṣāḥib is said to be Abū Isḥāq al-Naṣībī). The earliest and fullest version is al-Thaʿālibī’s in *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ* and it is the one on which I relied above. The later versions feature figures that are known to have clashed with al-Ṣāḥib, and hence intensify his reaction to the rejoinder. In contrast, the *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ* version demonstrates that al-Ṣāḥib, although left speechless, was pleased by the rejoinders.

21 Abū ʿAlī l-Ḥusayn b. Sīnā, *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḍannāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999), I, 572; from a different point of view, the Raffinés (*ẓurafāʾ*), an elite social group committed to elegance and refinement, refrained from eating anything with stones, including apricots (Geert Jan van Gelder, *God’s Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2000], 101). Hence, al-Badīhī, who showed his unabashed appetite for apricots, could not be counted among those adhering to the restrictive lifestyle of the *ẓurafāʾ*. His description as the first among the *ẓurafāʾ* poets who silenced al-Ṣāḥib should be understood as merely referring to his being a witty person, as translated above.

22 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 82–3; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Munajjim should not be confused with Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Abī Manṣūr al-Munajjim (d. 275/888; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 2008–22). Nor could he be identified with Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Hārūn b. al-Munajjim (276–352/889–963), whom al-Ṣāḥib met in Baghdad in 347/958 (ibid., V, 1991–6). Rather, it was probably another, younger, member of this notable family, whose name is mentioned in a fuller way by al-Thaʿālibī elsewhere (*Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 220) as Abū l-Ḥasan b. al-Munajjim al-Aṣghar right after mentioning his older relative Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Hārūn (b.) al-Munajjim.

23 As often happens in the vocative, *yā* (in تنيك يأخِ) is written defectively and the first person suffix *–ī* is shortened to *-i*: W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), I, 295 and II, 87; this interaction and *taṣḥīf* (*kashkiyya* only) seems to be inspired by an earlier model involving the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 227–32/842–47) and the legal scholar and courtier Yaḥyā b. Aktham (d. 242/857: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, VI, 147–65): Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā*, ed. Khālid al-ʿAlamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), 136. Van Gelder has already linked between the two accounts (*God’s Banquet*, 115, 152), and

although he did not “solve the riddle”—as he put it—of the *taṣḥīf* exchange between al-Ṣāḥib and al-Munajjim, his reference to *Dhamm al-hawā* and comments proved to be helpful in my attempt to do so; al-Ābī collected many examples of intentional *taṣḥīf*, including *sikbāj* and *kishkiyya* (without the above account). The former expression is deciphered as *thinyuka bākha* (ثنيك باخ), “your strength decreased,” and the latter *kuntu niktuhu* (in the edited text: كنت نكتة), “I have (already) fucked him”: *Nathr al-durr*, V, 263. Whereas the latter (with the requisite change of the ة to ه) fits within our account, the former—probably a corruption—does not. This is especially because of the obvious use of the root *n.y.k.* within the context and the fact that the exchange would lose much of its pungency and wit if we follow the readings presented in al-Ābī’s edited text.

24 As in Dominic P. Brookshaw, “Palaces, Pavilions and Pleasure-gardens: The context and setting of the medieval *majlis*,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6: 2 (2003): 200, and Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 16–18.

25 Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1986 [first publ. 1974]), 10–11.

26 Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1977), 15–24 (The Keying of Performance). “Key,” a term Bauman uses after Goffman (*Frame Analysis*, 43–4), is the set of conventions by which a certain activity, already meaningful, is transformed into something patterned on this activity, but seen by the participants to be something else. The process of transcription is dubbed by Goffman “keying.” Hence, for instance, a stage play may key a fight between two actors, who are not really fighting.

27 Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 308–21, 444–5.

28 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, 55; Y, III, 107; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 498; see also Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 61; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 384.

29 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, II, 101; the translation of quotations is by Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, II, 112.

30 Pierre Bourdieu’s formal definition of habitus is “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them”: *The Logic of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53; for beneficial discussions of this concept, see Randal Johnson’s introduction to Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 5–6; Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 103–10; and Niilo Kauppi, *The Politics of Embodiment: Habits, Power, and Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 31–47.

31 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, tr. Edmund Jephcott, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000 [first published 1939 in German]), 363–447.

32 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 366–9; Bourdieu’s concept of habitus shows a synthesis of Elias’s more psychological theory of habitus and Marcel Mauss’s theory of bodily habits and habitus: Reed-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu*, 104–5.

33 My forthcoming articles, “Nurture over Nature: Habitus from al-Fārābī through Ibn Khaldūn to ʿAbduh,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137, 1 (2017), and “Maimonides and the Habitus Concept,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137, 2 (2017), focus on the history of the concept in the Islamic world from the third/ninth century to the thirteenth/nineteenth century; on habitus in the West and the theoretical debate provoked by its late twentieth-century application, see Kauppi, *The Politics of Embodiment*, 47–59 and *passim*; discussing habitus, Bonnie Kent makes the right point that the common English translation, “habit,” is misleading,

for it may denote any routine performance or action. "A *hexis* or *habitus*, in contrast, is a durable characteristic of the agent inclining to certain kinds of actions and emotional reactions, not the actions and reactions themselves": "Habits and Virtues," in Brian Davies (ed.), *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 224.

34 Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforward: *NE*), tr. Christopher Rowe, intr. and comm. Sarah Broadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111–13 (Book II. 1–2, 1103a14–1104b3), 203 (Book VII. 10, 1152a30–34); idem, *Eudemian Ethics: Books I, II, and VIII*, tr. and comm. Michael Woods, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 15–16 (Book II. 2, 1120a36–b5).

35 *Aristotle's* Categories *and* De Interpretatione, tr. J.L. Ackrill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963 [1974 cor. repr.]), 24–5 (Chapter 8), 31–8 (Chapter 10). In Chapter 8, Ackrill translated *hexis* as "state," while in Chapter 10 he opted for "possession" (as opposed to "privation").

36 Aristotle, *The Metaphysics: Books I–IX*, tr. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989 [first publ. 1933]), 271–3.

37 Aristotle, *NE*, 99 (1096a25), 103–4 (1098b32–1099a5), 111–13 (1103a14–1104b3), 115–18 (1105b19–1107a27).

38 A.I. Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement," *History of Science* 25 (1987): 223–43; See also Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

39 *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Kuwait: Wikālat al-Maṭbūʿāt, 1980), I, 55–6, 64–9, 75 (*kitāb al-maqūlāt* [*Categories*], tr. Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn); *The Arabic Version of the* Nicomachean Ethics, eds Anna A. Akasoy and Alexander Fidora, intr. and tr. Douglas M. Dunlop (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 598 (occurrences of *hexis* listed in the Graeco-Arabic Glossary). This is probably Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn's translation; Averroès, *Tafsīr mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*, ed. Maurice Bouyges, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1967), II, 638–40. The greater part of the lemmata appearing in Averroes's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, including this one (1022b4–14), was made by Usṭāth: idem, *Tafsīr mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*, v. Notice, LVI, CXIX; Usṭāth's translation of the *Metaphysics* was commissioned by the philosopher al-Kindī (*c.*185–252/801–66): Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 119.

40 Joel Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), x, 24–5; Gerhard Endress, "Mattā b. Yūnus," *EI2*.

41 Note that Aristotle's discussion in *NE* connects the excellences with his logical classification of things in *Categories*: The excellences are in the category of quality (*NE* 1096a25), and of the four subdivisions of this category (Categories 8b25–10a16), Aristotle shows that they must be habitus (*hexeis*) (*NE* 1105b19–1106a13).

42 To convey *hexis*, the translator of *NE*, for one, opted for *ḥāl*, *malaka*, and *hayʾa*: *The Arabic version*, 598 (*hexis* in the Graeco-Arabic Glossary); Usṭāth, the translator of the *Metaphysics*, employed *hayʾa*: Averroès, *Tafsīr mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*, II, 638–40 (1022b4–14); Walzer provides beneficial comments on *hexis* as *malaka*, *hayʾa*, and *ḥāl lāzima*: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, ed. and tr. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 371 (n. 223), 413; on *hayʾa* as habitus (*hexis*) and its interchangeability with *malaka*, see R. Arnaldez, "Hayʾa," *EI2*; *ḥāl* may cause some confusion. In the Arabic text of *Categories* (including al-Fārābī's *Paraphrase* discussed below), *ḥāl* means the transitory "condition" as differentiated from *malaka*: *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, 55–6.

43 Aside from my replacing "acquisition and possession" with "acquired disposition and habitus" (for *al-qunya wa-l-malaka*) and "possession" (for *malaka*) with "habitus," the translation from Arabic is Dunlop's: *The Arabic Version*, 138

(1098b32–1099a2); Dunlop indicates that the “Arabic *malkah*” in this passage renders the Greek *hexis*. Although *malka* (ملكة) appears in the medieval Arabic dictionaries, it is less prevalent than *malaka*, as one may learn from Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, ed. ʿAlī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), XIII, 646–54 (*m.l.k.*); considering the two pairs of synonyms, Dunlop remarks (*The Arabic Version*, 138, n. 75) that the Greek offers two pairs of contrasting terms which were rearranged in the Arabic; cf. *NE*, tr. Rowe, 103.

44 R. Walzer, “al-Fārābī,” *EI2*.

45 *Al-Fārābī’s Paraphrase of the* Categories *of Aristotle*, ed. and tr. D.M. Dunlop, *The Islamic Quarterly* IV, 4 (1958): 176–7, 190-1 (the quoted translation is Dunlop’s; I replaced “the state” and “form” with “habitus” and “disposition”); al-Fārābī stresses that arts, crafts, and skills (*ṣināʿāt*) are habitus and conditions, as long as we speak of what was acquired in them through habituation, and *not* of the natural aptitudes enabling certain people to do well some actions related to them. Hence, for example, the natural disposition (*al-istiʿdād al-ṭabīʿī*) existing in a person’s body to wrestle is a natural power (*quwwa ṭabīʿiyya*, which together with the absence of natural power—*lā quwwa ṭabīʿiyya*—forms the second intermediary genus of quality), but the skill in wrestling acquired by habituation is subsumed under habitus and condition: ibid., 177, 191.

46 Al-Fārābī, *al-Aʿmāl al-falsafiyya*, I, ed. Jaʿfar Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-Manāhil, 1992), 235–7 (from *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā sabīl al-saʿāda*). In my translation, I preferred “[a disposition]” to the editorial interpolation “[*al-ṣawāb*]” which is not meaningful or warranted by the context. In another case, I opted for a more fitting variant presented in the critical apparatus; cf. idem, *On the Perfect State*, 260–3, 462–3.

47 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 233–41; Everett Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: Al-ʿĀmirī’s Kitāb al-Amad ʿalā l-abad* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1988), 1–7 (editor’s introduction).

48 For a list of Arabic commentaries, epitomes, and works on *Categories*, see J.N. Mattock, “al-Maḳūlāt,” *EI2*.

49 *Rasāʾil Abī l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī wa-shadharātuhu al-falsafiyya*, ed. Saḥbān Khalīfāt (Amman: al-Jāmiʿa al-Urduniyya, 1988), 441–67; Endress, “Mattā b. Yūnus,” *EI2*.

50 Al-ʿĀmirī, *Rasāʾil*, 519–20.

51 Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida: jāvīdān khirad*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1952), 365; the translation is by Everett Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher*, 327. I modified “an engrained habit” to “habitus.”

52 Al-ʿĀmirī, *al-Saʿāda wa-l-isʿād fī l-sīra l-insāniyya*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAṭiyya (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1991), 159–61; Aristotle’s definition, as produced by al-ʿĀmirī, differs in phrasing from the one in the Arabic *NE* available to us: *The Arabic Version*, 173 (*fa-l-faḍīla idhan ḥāl mukhtāra mawjūda fī l-tawassuṭ alladhī huwa ʿindanā mutawassiṭ maḥdūd bi-l-qawl*); cf. *NE*, tr. Rowe, 117, 306 (1106b36–1107a2; “by rational prescription” [*orthos logos*] appears where the Arabic shows “in word” [*bi-l-qawl*]).

53 Al-ʿĀmirī, *al-Saʿāda*, 120–1 (on obtaining happiness as dependent on acquiring good habitus [*hayʾāt*]); 288–9 (the people in the happy city obtain wisdom *inter alia* by acquiring excellent habitus [*hayʾāt*] of the soul, namely, good moral traits).

54 *Maqālāt Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī l-falsafiyya*, ed. Saḥbān Khalīfāt (Amman: Al-Jāmiʿa al-Urduniyya, 1988), 171, 187 (in the 7th epistle: *Taʿālīq ʿidda fī maʿānin kathīra*); for an annotated summary of this epistle, see also Gerhard Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī: An Analytical Inventory* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1977), 87–98 (on habitus, see pp. 88, 92).

55 Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, ed. Jād Ḥātim (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1985), 46; the work has also appeared in a bilingual Arabic–English edition: *The Reformation of Morals*, tr. Sydney H. Griffith (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press,

2002); according to the very detailed and informative index in Ḥātim's edition, Ibn ʿAdī repeats *ʿāda* thirty-seven times in this relatively short treatise. Most of the uses have the meaning of a routine performance or action, but some (like the one cited above and ibid., 53, 72) denote a durable characteristic of the person inclining to certain kinds of actions.

56 Ibn ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb* (ed. Ḥātim), 53–4, 87; virtues' acquisition (*iktisāb*, *iqtināʾ*) is also mentioned ibid., 74, 77.

57 Joyce Åkesson, *Arabic Morphology and Phonology: Based on the Marāḥ al-arwāḥ by Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Masʿūd* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 118; Sībawayh explains the idea of endeavoring to acquire a quality found in Form V, and gives examples like *taḥallama*, "he endeavored to acquire forbearance" and *tamarraʾa*, "he endeavored to acquire virtue." *Taʿammaqa*, "he dived deeply," is among the instances he produces for the idea of gradual progress in an activity found in the very Form; *taʿammaqa* is counted among those verbs understood as occurring "one action after another, a little by little" (*ʿamal baʿd ʿamal fī muhla*): Abū Bishr ʿAmr Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-Kitāb, 1975), IV, 71–3.

58 Ibn ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb* (ed. Ḥātim), 53, (for *takhalluq*, see also pp. 58, 67).

59 Ibid., 54.

60 Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, ed. Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1966), 29–30; idem, *The Refinement of Character: A Translation from the Arabic of Aḥmad ibn-Muḥammad Miskawayh's Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, tr. Constantine K. Zurayk (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1968), 25–6; the English translation of Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb* in the following is Zurayk's with my replacing "aptitude" by "habitus" for *malaka*. In each reference to this work, page numbers in Arabic and English will be given; *NE* (and Aristotle in general) contributed significantly to Miskawayh's thought, as displayed in *Tahdhīb*, despite his mentioning *NE* explicitly only once: *Tahdhīb*, 116/*The Refinement*, 103; on Miskawayh's familiarity with *NE* and its commentaries and his use of them in *Tahdhīb*, see Dunlop's remarks in *The Arabic Version*, 28–31.

61 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 31/*The Refinement*, 29 (the translation above is Zurayk's. For *ʿāda*, I changed "habit" into "custom"); Miskawayh uses *malaka* also in *Tahdhīb*, 29/*The Refinement*, 26, averring that he who does not mingle with others cannot show excellences as "all the faculties (*quwan*) and habitus (*malakāt*) with which he is equipped are nullified, since they are not directed towards either good or evil"; among Aristotle's various divisions of the good he mentions that "some are like faculties and habitus" (*al-quwā wa-l-malakāt*): *Tahdhīb* 77–8/*The Refinement* 71; in another place he uses *iktisāb*, "acquisition," when he speaks about the proper education of the young, which ends with their learning through philosophy how to acquire the virtues: *Tahdhīb*, 35/*The Refinement*, 32; in a similar fashion *iqtināʾ*, "acquisition" (of good traits of character), is used: *Tahdhīb*, 167/*The Refinement*, 149 (the quotations from Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb* in this note are in Zurayk's translation).

62 Al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil wa-l-shawāmil*, eds Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʾlīf, 1951), 262.

63 Al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil*, 145–7 (the relevant part of the answer is quoted above); note that Miskawayh gives the education of boys as an example for the validity of the habituation process he delineates. In *Tahdhīb* he gives a special emphasis to the education of boys in a section adapted from the first-century Greek neo-Pythagorean Bryson. He makes the point that while the dos and don'ts he prescribes in the name of philosophy and Islamic Law are valid for older people as well, they are of even higher importance for boys in order to adapt themselves to the right way from the beginning of their growing up: *Tahdhīb*, 55–64/*The Refinement*, 50–7; apart from the paragraph translated above, *malaka* is used elsewhere in *al-Hawāmil* in exactly the same sense of habitus: (1) al-Tawḥīdī asks about envy among the learned, who know it

is disgraceful and distressing. In his reply, Miskawayh explains what envy exactly is and what may seem to be envy but is actually not. Envy is of the affections (*infiʿālāt*) one should do away with to refine one's character. This could be done by attaining good character traits and manners through the education of the parents, the government of the ruler, and the Law. "Through these things, a person receives forms (*ṣuwar*) and conditions (*aḥwāl*) that subsequently become an acquired disposition (*qunya*) and a habitus (*malaka*), and are named virtues and good manners": *al-Hawāmil*, 70–2; (2) Why is it, asks al-Tawḥīdī, that we feel attached to places and people after we know them for some time? Miskawayh answers that

> attachment (*ilf)* is the recurrence of one form to the soul or to the nature (*ṭabīʿa*) many times. The recurrence to the soul originates either in the senses or the intellect.... The soul sets up syllogisms of what it takes from the intellect, and draws from them forms that are ... foreign. Then, after the recurrence, impression is left [on the soul] and familiarity (*uns*) takes place, although in this case it is not called attachment (*ilf)*, but rather knowledge and habitus (*ʿilm wa-malaka*). This is why the sciences require much study, for initially the thing called condition (*ḥāl*) is caused by it, which is like a weak trace. Subsequently, through recurrence, it becomes an acquired disposition (*qunya*) and a habitus (*malaka*), and the union [between the form and its receiver] we have mentioned occurs
>
> (ibid., 110–12)

(3) when al-Tawḥīdī asks Miskawayh about the good and bad effects of one's companion on oneself, the latter carefully explains how this influence takes shape, and comments on the habituation process:

> Since the soul within us is of primary matter (*hayūlāniyya*), the bad is innate nature (*ṭibāʿ*) for it, while the good [requires] affectation and learning. We, mankind, are therefore in need of toiling with the good until we benefit from it and acquire it (*naqtaniyahu*). Then, it is not sufficient for us to attain its form (*ṣūra*) in order to become used and accustomed to it. We repeat to our souls for a long time the state attained from it [= the good], so that it become a habitus (*malaka*) and a quality firmly rooted in the mind (*sajiyya*), after it was a condition (*ḥāl*)
>
> (ibid., 177)

(4) Miskawayh says that in respect to many arithmetic, geometrical, and other problems, the philosophers had no intention that the supreme goal of deriving their specific benefits be achieved; rather, they wished to make the soul exercise through speculation to become habituated to enduring deliberation and reflection, "and so that the soul has a habitus (*malaka*) and an acquired disposition (*qunya*) for long reflection, and disengage itself from the senses and corporeal things": ibid., 331.

64 Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*.

65 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, 299–300 (*muqābasa* no. 72).

66 Y, III, 44.

67 Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, eds ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Riḍwān and Muḥammad al-Makkī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Mawsūʿāt, 1903), 38. The dimeter *kāmil* here is *muraffal*, "having a train" (on that, see Wright, *A Grammar*, II, 363).

68 Everett Rowson ("Religion and Politics," 654, and "Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī," *EAL*) establishes al-Hamadhānī's age when seeking al-Ṣāḥib's patronage as twenty-two years old, according to reports on his birth in 358/968 and arrival at al-Ṣāḥib's court in 380/990 (Y, IV, 168–9; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 235–6). Unless he was first introduced to the vizier at age twelve, went back to his hometown, and then arrived again ten years later—an assumption that finds no support in the sources—he must have been admitted to the court in 370/980 as a twelve-year-old lad *or* in 380/990 as a twenty-two-year-old young man. Both al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, 38 (of which

Rowson is aware), and ʿAwfī, *Lubāb al-albāb*, 255, describe al-Hamadhānī explicitly as a twelve year old when reaching the court. Al-Thaʿālibī's report on the authority of al-Hamadhānī himself (Y, III, 36) that his father took him to al-Ṣāḥib suggests that he was still very young and supports this possibility. Al-Thaʿālibī's depiction of al-Hamadhānī (Y, IV, 168; quoted by Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 235), when he left his hometown for the court in 380/990 is rather vague, "he was in the prime of his youth and young of age" (*wa-huwa muqtabal al-shabība ghaḍḍ al-ḥadātha*). According to Lane (*sh.b.b.*), *shabāb*, *shabība*, and the synonymous *ḥadātha* refer to the age ranges of puberty to thirty years old, or sixteen to thirty-two. In fact, al-Hamadhānī was not the only courtier described as arriving at the court at that young age; the arrival of al-Maʾmūnī, another brilliant talent, at the court is described by al-Thaʿālibī thus:

> After he left his hometown, Baghdad, because of some desire in his soul, *as a youth whose face had not put forth its beard* (*ḥadath lam yabqul wajhuhu*), he arrived in al-Rayy and praised al-Ṣāḥib with singular poems that amazed him, and by which he was dazzled with astonishment.
>
> (Y, IV, 84; instead of *lam yanqul*, I read *lam yabqul* as appearing in Y, A, IV, 161)

Therefore, while on the basis of the evidence a case could be made for either twelve or twenty-two years old, I believe the younger age is likelier for its explicit mention in the *Dīwān* (in the first person, supposedly by al-Hamadhānī himself) and *Lubāb al-albāb*, and based on al-Hamadhānī's reference to his father's escorting him to the court. In this case, the wonder of The Wonder of [his] Time (Badīʿ al-Zamān) is even greater.

69 ʿAwfī, *Lubāb al-albāb*, 255. Manṭiqī's Persian *ghazal* and al-Hamadhānī's Arabic version are produced in *Lubāb al-albāb* by the anthologist; for translations of both versions, see Edward Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), I, 463–4.

70 Y, IV, 167–9; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 234–6.

71 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, IV, 401.

72 "There is a secretary who brought us a blind man, having neither knowledge nor penetration/So, I said to those present 'give it up! The heart of this [secretary] is like the eye[s] of that [poet]'." The heart was considered the human instrument of understanding and its perceptive faculty was compared to the eyes', as seen in Q 7:179 ("they have hearts with which they fail to understand and eyes with which they fail to see") and Q 22:46 ("Have they not traveled in the land to have hearts to understand with or ears to hear with? Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts in the breasts"). The witty vizier, underwhelmed by his intermediary's perceptiveness as by that of the man he was auditioning, alluded to this Qurʾānic usage.

73 Y, III, 206–7.

74 *Akhlāq*, 193; for the duties of al-Ṣāḥib's chamberlains, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 690–3.

75 T, II, 26–9 (the poem is presented on p. 29); ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-qaṣr wa-ʿuṣrat ahl al-ʿaṣr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnjī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), II, 1356–7.

76 Y, II, 219; his passion for theological disputation is recurrently visible in *Akhlāq* (often shown in a negative light), for example, ibid., 127ff., where he is reported to hold a disputation session (*majlis jadal*).

77 *Akhlāq*, 180–2; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 681 (the Mihrajān, festival of the autumn equinox); Y, III, 197 (the Nawrūz, festival of the vernal equinox—the Persian New Year's Day, and ʿĪd al-aḍḥā); *Akhlāq*, 161 (the Nawrūz and Mihrajān); Y, III, 44–55 (the inauguration of al-Ṣāḥib's new mansion in Esfahan); Y, III, 68–74 (the victory over the army of Khorasan in the Battle of Jurjān in 372/982); Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 695 (an official visit to al-Ahwāz).

78 Y, III, 44; several brief selections from the Mansion Odes, but without any details on the event, are also presented by Abū l-Faḍl ʿUbaydallāh al-Mīkālī, *Kitāb al-muntakhal*, ed. Yaḥyā al-Jubūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2000), I, 117–20.

79 Wideness of chest (*ruḥb al-ṣadr*) means that its possessor is “free from distress of mind” or “munificent”: Lane, *r.ḥ.b.* (see under *raḥb*); the poet took the metaphor literally.

80 Al-Jurjānī alludes to Q 44:19 “and do not exalt yourselves against God; indeed, I come to you with a manifest authority” (*wa-an lā taʿlū ʿalā llāhi innī ātīkum bi-sulṭānin mubīnin*). In doing so, he elevates the praised al-Ṣāḥib, who is compared to God by means of this paraphrase.

81 Y, III, 48–9.

82 Ibid., 51.

83 Ibid., 53.

84 For a discussion and examples of similar humorous tautological poetry, see Geert Jan van Gelder, “Amphigory and Other Nonsense in Classical Arabic Literature,” in Dominic P. Brookshaw (ed.), *Ruse and Wit: The Humorous in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Narrative* (Boston, MA: Ilex Foundation, 2012), 23–5.

85 Y, III, 44–54.

86 *Akhlāq*, 180; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 681

87 Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 159–63; Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*, 30–1/*The Book of Government*, 42–4; al-Ghazālī, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (Persian), 167–170/*Ghazālī’s Book of Counsel for Kings*, 102–4.

88 *Al-uns fī l-majlis al-khāṣṣ lā fī l-maḥfil al-ghāṣṣ*: Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha wa-sirr al-barāʿa*, ed. Aḥmad ʿUbayd (Damascus: al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.), 201.

89 J.E. Montgomery, “Ẓarīf,” *EI2*; L.A. Giffen, “*ẓarf*,” *EAL*.

90 Y, III, 80–2; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 293–4; cf. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣri, *Zahr al-ādāb wa-thamr al-albāb*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Hawārī (Sidon: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2008), II, 190.

91 Al-Ḥuṣri, *Zahr al-ādāb*, ed. al-Hawārī, II, 190ff.

92 Y, III, 44 (translated in Chapter 3).

93 To my knowledge, the *ijāza* has not been well studied. This is somewhat surprising, since it is at the center of many *adab* anecdotes and was also described in medieval literary criticism. The discussion of the term by I. Goldziher and S.A. Bonebakker, “*ijāza*,” *EI2*, is a bit sketchy. Ibn Ẓāfir dedicated a substantial part of *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih* (pp. 61–163) to *ijāza*, describing it and providing numerous examples. One of the sources of Ibn Ẓāfir, Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī defined it, offered possible etymologies for the term, and presented examples in *al-ʿUmda fī maḥāsin al-shiʿr wa-ādābihi wa-naqdihi*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1981), II, 89–91; see also Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988), III, 607–8, 612, 616–17.

94 Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 100.

95 *Mālaṭa fulānun fulānan: ḍaraba hādha l-niṣf min al-bayt wa-atammahu l-ākhar wa-qad amlaṭa imlāṭan*: al-Ṣāḥib Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī l-lugha*, ed. Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1994), IX, 184 (*m.l.ṭ.*)

96 Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, II, 91; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 167–8.

97 Y, III, 21; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 233–4.

98 Y, III, 21–2.

99 Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 223–4; ʿUmar b. ʿAlī l-Muṭawwiʿī, *Darj al-ghurar wa-durj al-durar*, ed. Jalīl al-ʿAṭiyya (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1986), 109–10; al-Muṭawwiʿī was a protégé of Abū l-Faḍl al-Mīkālī and finished *Darj al-ghurar* (not *Dark al-ghurar* as the title appears in *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*) in 398/1007; compared to the text of *Badāʾiʿ* used in the above translation, *Darj*’s contains a few minor

variants, none of which is significant except “After he disappeared” (referring to the slave-boy), which is absent from *Badāʾiʿ* and is integrated above.

100 Y, IV, 247–68; *GAS*, II, 70, 77–8, 642–3; al-Mīkālī, *Kitāb al-muntakhal*, I, 11–18 (editor Yaḥyā al-Jubūrī’s introduction); Abū al-Faḍl al-Mīkālī was the friend and patron of al-Thaʿālibī: Y, IV, 262–3; *GAS*, II, 642; on the Mīkālīs, a notable Persian family of Khorasan, see C.E. Bosworth, “Mīkālīs,” *EI2*.

101 Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 147–63.

102 Y, IV, 279; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 157.

103 Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-Ṭībī (d. 743/1342), *Kitāb al-tibyān fī ʿilm al-maʿānī wa-l-badīʿ wa-l-bayān*, ed. Hādī l-Hilālī (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987), 202; this composition and anecdote was presented earlier in a slightly different version by Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*, ed. Naʿīm Zarzūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), 345–6; and al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), *al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿulūm al-balāgha*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), 184.

104 Al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm*, 345–6; al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī, *al-Īḍāḥ*, 184; al-Ṭībī, *Kitāb al-tibyān*, 202.

105 Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 177–8; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 703–4; al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 136; al-Thaʿālibī, who had a high opinion of Abū l-Qāsim, included his entry among the poets of Esfahan (Y, III, 146–7) and complemented it later with another (T, I, 119–20).

106 For additional instances of collaborative–interactive composition at al-Ṣāḥib’s court, see Y, IV, 279 (also cited by Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 99), and *Akhlāq*, 186. Both are translated in Chapter 3.

107 Y, III, 112; T, I, 120.

108 Browne, *A Literary History*, I, 464.

109 The Persian poetry composed at al-Ṣāḥib’s court is discussed in Chapter 3; al-Hamadhānī’s *Dīwān* (21, 56, and elsewhere) presents some poems of his, in which he translated to Arabic “a Persian motif” (*maʿnā fārisī*), without including the original; for a rare case in which al-Thaʿālibī displays the original Persian poem alongside the Arabic translation (by the Khorasani secretary Abū Manṣūr b. Abī ʿAlī), see T, II, 25. Elsewhere, al-Thaʿālibī cites a line in Persian by al-Maʿrūfī (without Arabic translation) pointing to the poet’s use of a motif existing in Arabic verse presented before: Y, III, 164.

110 For example, al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-qaṣr*, I, 104–5; *Akhlāq*, 180; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 681, 695.

111 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 695.

112 Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 55–7; al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīs*, IV, 118–19; G.J.H. van Gelder, “*naqāʾiḍ*,” *EAL*.

113 T, I, 119.

114 Y, II, 13–14; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 293–4.

115 Y, III, 44.

116 G.J.H. van Gelder, “*muʿāraḍa*,” *EAL*.

117 Y, III, 54–5 (al-Khwārazmī’s “emulation”); Y, III, 46–8 (al-Rustamī’s model poem).

118 Y, III, 223–4; discussed again in Chapter 4 in the context of style.

119 Y, III, 91; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 717.

120 On his proverbial memory of poetry, see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, IV, 401 and Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, VI, 2543.

121 Al-Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥasan al-Ṣīrafī (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1963), I, 78.

122 Wolfhart Heinrichs, “An Evaluation of *Sariqa*,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (1987–88): 360–1; idem, “Sariḳa,” *EI2*; the legitimacy and even praiseworthiness of developing existent poetic ideas (either by transferring them to another genre or not) was made evident by the following critics, who wrote during al-Ṣāḥib’s lifetime or not long thereafter: al-Thaʿālibī (Y, II, 285); al-Qāḍī ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa bayn al-Mutanabbī wa-khuṣūmihi*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm and ʿAlī

l-Bijāwī (Sidon: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006), 163–7, 177–9; Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn: al-kitāba wa-l-shiʿr*, eds ʿAlī l-Bijāwī and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed. (Cairo: ʿĪsā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, [1971]), 202–5; Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, II, 290–3.

123 Al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-qaṣr*, I, 104–5; I was not successful at finding more details on the poet al-Awsī Kadī beyond al-Bākharzī's entry, which includes this report only.

124 Y, I, 22; al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 82.

125 Y, I, 22.

126 On Abū Firās, see *GAS*, II, 480–3; J.S. Meisami, "Ḥamdānids," *EAL*; J.E. Montgomery, "Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī," *EAL*.

127 Y, I, 60–1; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 244; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 353; al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, XII, 53; al-Hamadhānī's forgery is not included in his *Dīwān*.

128 On the question of literary influence in connection to al-Ṣāḥib in his various capacities, see my article "*Sariqa* in Practice: The Case of al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 14: 3 (2011): 271–85.

129 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 177. Only the first hemistich of the first line is presented by al-Rāghib (as he does, ibid., II, 700), but he does quote the whole two line monothematic poem in this work (ibid., 648; with few minor variations compared to the text above). I completed the missing hemistich and line from al-Thaʿālibī, *Aḥsan mā samiʿtu min al-nathr wa-l-naẓm*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynahum (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Thaqāfiyya, 2006), 36; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 283 (the poem only with the comment: "By al-Ṣāḥib, and it is [also] said to be by Abū Nuwās").

130 Here, *sariqa* does not denote a legitimate literary borrowing (e.g., allusion or quotation), but rather outright plagiarism, because the question of authorship is clearly at stake. In fact, al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, quotes the poem elsewhere under the heading "Describing the Clarity of the Goblet and Wine together" (*Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 648), attributing it to al-Ṣāḥib while adding "and it was said that the two lines were by Abū Nuwās." Abū Nuwās's *Dīwān*, eds Ewald Wagner and Gregor Schoeler (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1958–2006), does not contain the lines. What might have caused the attribution of al-Ṣāḥib's poem to Abū Nuwās—apart from his reputation as a composer of fine wine poetry—are two lines of the latter featuring a related motif, collected under the category "…on [the Wine's] Clearness and That of the Cup Containing It" by al-Sarī l-Raffāʾ (d. 362/972) in his topically-arranged verse anthology (*al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mashmūm wa-l-mashrūb*, eds Miṣbāḥ Ghalāwanjī and Mājid al-Dhahabī [Damascus: Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya, 1986], IV, 180–1; Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, III, 34): The poetic persona in Abū Nuwās's poem feigns ignorance claiming he cannot distinguish between the white wine, metaphorized as gold for its yellowish color, and the golden wine vessel for their similarity, only to end up establishing the difference as between liquid and solid gold. At any rate, the motif of the clear glass goblet as indistinguishable from the clear white wine was traced back to "modern" poets earlier than al-Ṣāḥib: Al-Rāghib quotes (*Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 648) an earlier poetic fragment with this motif by al-Buḥturī (206–84/821–97), and in another place (*Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 700) by al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 334/945). Al-Thaʿālibī (*Aḥsan mā samiʿtu*, 36) displays another poem by a contemporary of al-Ṣāḥib, Abū ʿUthmān al-Khālidī (d. *c*.400/1010), who employs this very motif. Aside from Abū Nuwās's mentioned fragment, al-Sarī quotes sufficient fragments with the motif in question composed by "modern" poets (*al-Muḥibb*, IV, 174–86, nos. 371, 374, 375, 381, 382, 385). In sum, there exists no available evidence to suggest that al-Ṣāḥib committed a real plagiary and attributed to himself a poem by Abū Nuwās. It is evident, though, that the vizier was not the first to employ this motif, even if with a different wording, which would make it a *sariqa* in the sense of legitimate borrowing; for this motif's influence on Persian verse, see Umar

Daudpota, *The Influence of Arabic Poetry on the Development of Persian Poetry* (Bombay: The Fort Printing Press, 1934), 138–40.

131 Y, III, 108; Y, I, 92; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 224.

132 Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 2–6 and *passim*.

133 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 186–7; the first two sayings are also cited in Y, III, 77.

134 Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj*, 22, 52.

135 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 397–8.

136 Kushājim, *Adab al-nadīm*, 35.

137 The poetic persona is called by his beloved's name, Asmāʾ, similarly to the poet ʿUbayd Allāh b. Qays (*c.*10–80/*c.*631–99), who became known as Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt for composing love poetry on three women, each called Ruqayya: Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shīʿr wa-l-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1958), I, 539–40; ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1984), VII, 278–89; *GAS*, II, 418–19; adding the beloved's name to the lover's in the construct state was also characteristic of other early Islamic poets, who—unlike Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt—composed chaste love poetry often subsumed under the category "ʿUdhrī poetry" for its association with the Banū ʿUdhra Bedouin tribe of the Ḥijāz. Hence, the poet Kuthayyir ʿAzza (d. 105/723) carried the name of his beloved (Kuthayyir [the lover] of ʿAzza): Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1927–1974), XV, 284; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, IV, 106–13; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab*, V, 221; *GAS*, II, 408–9; likewise, the ʿUdhrī poet Jamīl was called Jamīl Buthayna (d. *c.*82/701; *GAS*, II, 406–8), and al-Majnūn al-ʿĀmirī was known as Majnūn Laylā (first/seventh century; *GAS*, II, 389–93); discussing Q 6:74, the exegete and philologist al-Zamakhsharī (467–538/1075–1144) adduces this line of al-Khāzin (identified only as "one of the 'modern' poets") as poetic evidence while drawing a parallel between "I am called 'Asmāʾ' derogatorily" and the naming of Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt after his beloved women. One reading of the Qurʾānic verse takes Āzar, usually understood as the name of Abraham's father, as a name of an idol the father worshipped devotedly to the point it became a derogatory name of his. This interpretation, al-Zamakhsharī suggests, may be supported by the derogatory naming "al-Ruqayyāt" and "Asmāʾ," for Ibn Qays's and al-Khāzin's personas' devotion to their beloved women: *al-Kashshāf*, eds ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mawjūd *et al.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 1998), II, 365.

138 The hair of al-Khāzin's aging poetic persona is associated with the shining whiteness of dawn. In contrast, the hair of his youthful beloved is associated with the blackness of evening.

139 The theologian Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (80–181/699–797), who established the Muʿtazila, shunned the letter *rāʾ* in his expression due to a speech impediment. This avoidance did not affect his speech, nor was it felt by the audience, for his astounding command of the language, thanks to which he easily replaced words including *rāʾ* by others: al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1998), I, 16–17, 21–4; Abū l-ʿAbbās Muḥammad al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil fī l-lugha wa-l-adab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2012), III, 34–5; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, VI, 7–11.

140 Y, III, 34–5 (the version followed above); al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīs*, IV, 114–15 (presenting al-Thaʿālibī's full version with minor variations); Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 702–3 (the greater part of al-Thaʿālibī's version with a few minor changes); al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb zād safar al-mulūk*, eds Ramzi Baalbaki and Bilal Orfali (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2011), 77 (first five lines of al-Thaʿālibī's [*Yatīma*] version, plus a sixth line not in *al-Yatīma*; the poem is ascribed to al-Ḥārithī); al-Mīkālī, *Kitāb al-muntakhal*, II, 790–1 (third to fifth lines of al-Thaʿālibī's version only); al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, XXVII, 96–7 (only *nasīb* lines are presented, two of which are not in

al-Thaʿālibī's version or elsewhere found); for another crawling response in poetry performance coming from an ecstatic prince, see Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons*, 29.

141 Cf. *Akhlāq*, 180–1.

142 Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 16–17; Bauman, *Verbal Art*, 38–40; Dwight Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 184–5, 190–206.

143 Bauman, *Verbal Art*, 38.

144 Ibid., 43–4.

145 See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, IV, 2649 (*ṭ.r.b.*); J. Lambert, "Ṭarab," *EI2*.

146 As in Ibn al-Muʿtazz's line, "To the point that dawn appeared in respect to the curtain [of night] as white hair that befell youth": Ibn Abī ʿAwn, *Kitāb al-tashbīhāt*, ed. Muḥammad Khān (London: Luzac, 1950), 17.

147 See A. Arazi, "al-Shayb wa ʾl-Shabāb," *EI2*.

148 *Taḥsīn al-qabīḥ wa-taqbīḥ al-ḥasan*, ed. Shākir al-ʿĀshūr (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1981), 69–70.

149 On *tajnīs* and its varieties, see W.P. Heinrichs, "Tad̲j̲nīs," *EI2*.

150 W.P. Heinrichs, "Rhetorical figures," *EAL* (*istikhdām* is defined and illustrated under "Figures of the meaning").

151 *Kitāb al-badīʿ*, ed. Ignatius Kratchkovsky (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1935), 1–2, 25–35; presenting *tajnīs*, Ibn Rashīq illustrates "modern" varieties and distinguishes them from the ancient ones, while at times showing disapproval of the affectation characteristic of the former: *al-ʿUmda*, I, 321–32.

152 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb zād*, 77.

153 Y, I, 7; Y, III, 129.

154 Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, I, 199; cf. al-Jāḥiẓ's use of "every occasion has an apt expression" regarding taboo words (*Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn [Cairo: Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1965], III, 43), discussed in Erez Naaman, "Eating Figs and Pomegranates: Taboos and Language in the *Thousand and One Nights*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44: 3 (2013): 337–8.

155 *Akhlāq*, 180–2; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 681. I preferred the readings found in *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ* in three places (indicated by footnotes in the *Akhlāq* text).

156 For al-Ṣāḥib's alertness to infringements of intellectual property (poetry and prose) in his capacity as a vizier and court patron, see Naaman, "*Sariqa* in Practice," 281–4, and al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 177.

157 *Akhlāq*, 182.

158 See Lane, *ṭ.r.b.*

159 T, I, 11–12.

160 *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbduh ʿAzzām (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957), II, 339. The text of the *Dīwān* shows the slightly different reading *yarjūhu* ("hoping for his [reward]") instead of *taʾtīhi*.

161 Al-Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, I, 629; Mālik b. Abī l-Ṣamḥ al-Ṭāʾī (d. *c.*136/754) was one of the great musicians of the first/seventh century, counted among the four finest singers by Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (see below). He was not considered by himself and others as a creative artist, but concentrated on the refinement of others' melodies and the beauty of their execution: A. Shiloah, "Mālik b. Abī l-Ṣamḥ ʾl-Ṭāʾī," *EI2*; Maʿbad b. Wahb (d. 125 or 126/743 or 744) was one of the great singers and composers in Umayyad times. The leading musician of the Medinan school, from his lifetime on, Maʿbad figures in Arabic poetry as the musician par excellence. Among his students was Mālik b. Abī l-Ṣamḥ: H.G. Farmer and E. Neubauer, "Maʿbad b. Wahb, Abū ʿAbbād," *EI2*.

162 Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 2003), I, 194; Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-ʿAbbās, known as Ibn al-Rūmī (221–83/836–96), was one of the great poets of the ʿAbbāsid period, whose strong Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī opinions stood in

his way to become a court poet for the ʿAbbāsids: G.J.H. van Gelder, "Ibn al-Rūmī," *EAL*; Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (150–235/767–850) was like his father Ibrāhīm, the greatest musician of his time. He had a magnificent voice, was an excellent composer and was highly appreciated by the caliphs from al-Rashīd to al-Mutawakkil: J.W. Fück, "Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī," *EI2*.

163 In al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 243, we read *yaḍaʿ* instead of *yaṣugh*. The meaning, however, is the same ("to compose [music]").

164 Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī (d. *c.*335/946) traces back the origin of this motif to an older one, featured in a celebrated panegyric line by the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā (d. 609 CE) that lauds the patron's generosity: "When you approach him, you see him beaming with joy, as if you gave him what you asked for." Here, the extraordinary delight of the patron at the opportunity to give a reward is acclaimed, but no comparison to music is drawn. According to al-Ṣūlī, the comparison, to the effect that music was found less enjoyable by the patron than the voice of the favor-seeking panegyrist, was "extracted" (*walladūhu*) from Zuhayr's older motif: *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, eds Khalīl ʿAsākir *et al.* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1980), 81; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shīʿr wa-l-shuʿarāʾ*, I, 139; in addition to the above line by Abū Tammām elevating praise poetry over music, another pertinent example is by the poet al-Sarī l-Raffāʾ (d. 362/972) addressing his patron: "Beautiful praise odes have diverted you from the beauty of music, as they keep transporting a listener with joy": Y, I, 470.

165 Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, I, 194.

166 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 165 (the first hemistich's text differs from the *Dīwān*'s version).

167 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, II, 1.

168 Y, IV, 84; Y, II, 162; cf. Elias's use of "value": *The Civilizing Process*, 398.

169 Y, III, 31–3.

170 Y, III, 44; Y, I, 9; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, II, 136.

171 For example, Y, III, 194; and Y, IV, 84.

172 Naaman, "*Sariqa* in Practice," 281–4.

173 Al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, VI, Pt. 2, 535–6; al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, I, 68–70; Y, III, 68–9; Ibn Nubāta al-Saʿdī (327–405/939–1015) was an acclaimed contemporary Baghdadi poet, who praised many notable figures of the time, such as Sayf al-Dawla and al-Muhallabī. He also praised al-Ṣāḥib, albeit in writing only, and in terms of his quality as a poet was placed by al-Thaʿālibī on the same footing with his fellow Iraqi, Ibn Bābak: Y, II, 143–57; Y, III, 33; T, I, 20; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 136–7; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, III, 190–3; *GAS*, II, 594–5.

174 T, I, 100–7; U. Marzolph, "al-Ābī," *EAL*; *GAS*, II, 646.

175 *Akhlāq*, 492–3.

176 Y, IV, 84–5; I read *sharaf nafs wa-nasab* ("in terms of noble spirit and pedigree") and *lam yabqul* ("had not put forth its beard"), as in Y, A, IV, 161, instead of *sharīf nafs wa-nasab* and *lam yanqul*; this paragraph is paraphrased in the biography of al-Maʾmūnī found in Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt wa-l-dhayl ʿalayhā*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, [1973]), II, 320; al-Thaʿālibī, who met al-Maʾmūnī afterwards in Bukhara in 382/992, comments that al-Maʾmūnī aspired to becoming the caliph and indulged in the hope of occupying Baghdad aided by Khorasani armies. He died, however, before he could realize his wish: Y, IV, 94.

177 Y, IV, 85; all three surviving selections from the ode are translated in Chapter 4.

178 Y, III, 40; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 244.

179 Al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, VI, Pt. 2, 554; similarly, the victim is "one of those present at [al-Ṣāḥib's] session" in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 415.

180 Y, III, 40; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, III, 540 (the jurisprudent addressed in the poem is Ibn Dūshāb, but an additional poem with the same message is addressed

to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Khuḍayrī); Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ*, 353–4 (a slightly different version); Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 415; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 718 (addressed to Ibn al-Ḥaṣīrī); Solomon's divinely-given power over the wind is mentioned in Q 21:81 and 38:36; for other accounts featuring al-Ṣāḥib's tolerant and witty response to accidental farting at his sessions, see al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, VI, Pt. 2, 554, and al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, IX, 131.

181 Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696–764/1297–1363), *al-Ghayth al-musajjam fī sharḥ lāmiyyat al-ʿajam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1975), II, 106 (al-Hamadhānī, as in Y, III, 40, tries to blame the seat for the fart sound and leaves embarrassed after al-Ṣāḥib's rejoinder. Consequently, al-Hamadhānī departs from the court, and al-Ṣāḥib sends him the poem said to be addressed to Ibn al-Khuḍayri in Y, III, 40); al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, IX, 131–2 (Ibn Abī l-Ḥuẓayri [sic], not al-Hamadhānī as in Y, III, 40, tries to blame the seat for the sound and leaves embarrassed. Al-Ṣāḥib sends the poem to him); al-ʿAbbāsī (869–963/1463–1556), *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 117 (the same account appearing in *Kitāb al-wāfī*, although the victim is named Ibn al-Khuṭayrī).

182 Rowson, "Religion and Politics," 654.

183 Al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, 21–3.

184 *Fa-mādhā ʿasā l-wāshūna khāḍū ʿalā damī*: *ʿasā* ("possibly", "perhaps") is followed by the perfect, not—as it is by far more common—the imperfect. It is the verb that follows *ʿasā* that determines the tense of the whole sentence—in this case, the past. See Manfred Ullmann, *Arabisch* ʿasā *"vielleicht": Syntax und Wortart* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 40–1, 54–5, 76–7; al-Hamadhānī's hemistich evokes Majnūn Laylā's line *wa-mādhā ʿasā l-wāshūna an yataḥaddathū siwā an yaqūlū innanī laki ʿāshiqū* ("And what could the slanderers possibly say except that I love you?!") from a poem in which he defiantly and unapologetically expresses his love for Laylā (Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, II, 61). In the context of al-Hamadhānī's apologetic poem, this allusion could be seen as expressing ardent love for his patron, al-Ṣāḥib, standing in the place of Layla, Majnūn's beloved. Approximately 100 years later, al-Muʿtamid b. ʿAbbād's former vizier Ibn ʿAmmār pleaded for the king's mercy in a poem of apology after betraying him and evoked the same line (Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Bassām, *al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsin ahl al-jazīra*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās [Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1997], III, 421–2): *wa-mādhā ʿasā l-wāshūna an yatazayyadū siwā anna dhanbī thābitun mutaṣaḥḥiḥū* ("And what could the slanderers possibly fabricate except that my offense is proven and attested?!") The meter in the mentioned poems of Majnūn, al-Hamadhānī, and Ibn ʿAmmār is the same (*al-ṭawīl*).

185 Al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, 8; Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣrī, *Nūr al-ṭarf wa-nawr al-ẓarf*, ed. Līna Abū Ṣāliḥ (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996), 160–1; idem, *Jamʿ al-jawāhir*, 255; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, V, 307–8.

186 On the sectarian affiliation of al-Hamadhānī's patrons, see Rowson, "Religion and Politics," 670–3.

187 Al-Hamadhānī refers to the competitor's use of the formula *ḥanānayka … wa-labbayka* addressed to the patron. Cf. *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1938), I, 199 (*ḥanānayka masʾūlan wa-labbayka dāʿiyan*).

188 Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, *Kashf al-maʿānī wa-l-bayān ʿan rasāʾil Badīʿ al-Zamān*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭarābulsī (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlikiyya, 1890), 30; al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-ādāb*, ed. al-Hawārī, II, 197–8; idem, *Nūr al-ṭarf*, 188; idem, *Jamʿ al-jawāhir*, 260–1; Rowson, "Religion and Politics," 658–9.

189 Al-Ḥuṣrī, *Nūr al-ṭarf*, 159–60; idem, *Jamʿ al-jawāhir*, 255.

190 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, I, 249–51.

191 Al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, V, 305.

3 The literary field of the court

Representative genres

I The generic repertoire of the literary field

Literary activity and production are never random practices; rather, they are characterized by a certain logic, with which one must come to terms in order to understand the literary products themselves. That is because a set of certain conditions of production always marks the final product.

Pierre Bourdieu's field concept constitutes—with some necessary modifications and adaptations—a valuable theoretical basis for the description and analysis of the literary activity at al-Ṣāḥib's court. He defines the literary field thus:

> The literary field … is an independent social universe with its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated, and so forth. Put another way, to speak of "field" is to recall that literary works are produced in a particular social universe endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws.… It is a veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted. This universe is the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe, who is a real writer and who is not.[1]

The literary field (similarly to all other fields, for instance, the field of politics, economics, religion) is structured by the distribution of available positions (e.g., genres, schools, etc.), occupied by agents that compete for the interests and resources specific to the field. Bourdieu calls the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field (i.e., the literary works but also political acts or polemics) position-takings. Just like the positions themselves, every position-taking is defined *in relation* to other possible position-takings, past and present, and receives "its distinctive *value* from its negative relationship with the coexistent position-takings to which it is objectively related and which determine it by delimiting it."[2]

This, in short, is Bourdieu's literary field concept. The evidence in our particular case, however, makes it necessary for us to adopt some modifications and adaptations to this theoretical framework: Bourdieu's conceptualization of the field refers primarily to the modern West, when artistic and intellectual life has already released itself progressively from the direct tutelage of aristocrats and ecclesiastics; yet, in our case, al-Ṣāḥib was an involved patron who exerted strong influence (albeit not exclusive) on the literary field, and therefore we cannot ascribe to it independence.[3] The dominance of the field of power—embodied mostly by al-Ṣāḥib—was strong (but not absolute), and thus the autonomy of the literary field was rather low. Second, one cannot really observe any solid positions in al-Ṣāḥib's court in terms of literary schools or genres to which literary agents pertained exclusively. The struggles, in which they took part, were not undertaken under flags like those of the *ancients* and the *modernes*. Rather, many of them composed poetry in various genres at the same time and usually not in a clearly distinct style (e.g., *maṭbūʿ* or *maṣnūʿ*).[4] Therefore, in our case, the struggles were not organized strictly, as Bourdieu's notion of position suggests, but in a loose and more individualistic competitive fashion.[5]

It seems right, then—given the conditions of our field—to dispense with the unfitting concept of positions, and focus instead on the possible genres as the field's primary features. These made up the available molds for the agents (as poets and prose writers), in which they could cast their products making use of their cultural capital, and consequently compete with their peers for standing and benefits. This process necessitates that we conceive of genres as an interface between the composer and the audience, whose specific configurations and variety are determined by tradition in addition to the specific conditions of the field. In this chapter, I will attempt to portray representative genres in the field, taking account of poetry and prose alike. While poetry was part of the literary field by definition (as a creative undertaking composed according to accepted conventions, and whose primary *function* was artistic), prose was not necessarily so. Administrative correspondence, even if crafted according to artistic prose standards (as it was often the case with al-Ṣāḥib and others in this period), still had the primary function of bureaucratic communication. In contrast, private correspondence should be taken as part of the field, not only for being couched in artistic prose, but also for its reflection of cultural practices organic to it, and for often dealing with its social fabric (e.g., in letters whose focus is on relations between courtiers). This approach, I believe, finds support in al-Thaʿālibī's (implicit) selection criteria in *Yatīmat al-dahr*—the veritable treasure trove of literary and cultural life in the fourth/tenth century—where administrative correspondence is marginalized, although not completely ignored.

Naturally, delineation of representative genres entails generic classification. Difficult and rough as it may be in any literature, in Arabic literature it may well be even more so. That is mainly for the following reasons: (1) the absence of any systematic traditional classification system, or rather, a consensus among the medieval critics on the criteria for such an endeavor; (2) the central role played by the polythematic ode (*qaṣīda*); and (3) the meager critical attention given to prose in contrast to poetry.

1. The different approaches to the classification of poetic genres (*gharaḍ*, "aim," "theme," is the closest indigenous term to our notion of "genre") taken by the various critics are over all based on content and rarely on form. The typological criteria revolve around grammatical categories (e.g., in praise, one says *anta* [you are]; in invective, *lasta* [you are not]; and in elegy, *kunta* [you were]), the psychological states of the poet that engender different types of poetic creativity (e.g., desire is expressed in panegyric and thanksgiving), functional (as a discourse whose purpose is, for instance, to command, predicate, question, and request), and purely thematic (division of all poetry to praise and blame, and subdividing each to subgenres).
2. The classification problem of the polythematic ode, having by nature more than one *gharaḍ*, was practically faced by anthology compilers. The latter normally opted for the dominant *gharaḍ* of the ode as their criterion for arrangement. Nevertheless, sometimes poems were split up to be classified under different headings.
3. Lastly, due to the superior status of poetry over prose as the highest art form, and its much easier definition in terms of form (as metrical rhyming speech; in contrast to the much more difficult classification of prose, for its sundry formal manifestations in numerous texts), "the traditional typology of prose forms is less developed."[6]

Among the different medieval classificatory approaches, the more promising are the functional and thematic ones, concerned with the *gharaḍ* of the piece, understood as both aim and theme. It is because the *gharaḍ* standing behind each line or passage of poetry was often understood by the critics as person-directed.[7] As such, poetry is set in its cultural and social context, allowing us to understand the work and its creation in a fuller fashion. Yet, even these two approaches taken together are far from being an adequate generic classificatory theory, and are severely lacking by neglecting the formal aspects—to name but one shortcoming. The tools that can assist us in expanding these approaches toward the formation of some necessary classificatory principles are found in modern formal generic theories and performance-centered approaches.

As previously noticed by Geert Jan van Gelder, Alastair Fowler offers a useful formal generic classification. Its main categories, kind, mode, and subgenre—despite its original application to English literature—prove to be helpful in our case, too.[8] Kind is "a type of literary work of a definite size, marked by a complex of substantive and formal features that always include a distinctive (though not usually unique) external structure." By "external structure," he means a linear sequence of parts, or even word division or grammatical pattern in very short forms. "This gives kind a certain palpability, by comparison with mode, which is not characterized by external structure."[9] Mode, therefore, has always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only from the corresponding kind's features. Perhaps for their being built on external structures, kinds are always nouns, while modes are adjectives (comedy vs. comic, for instance). When a mode is linked with a kind, it is a combined genre, whose overall form is determined by the kind alone.[10]

Finally, kinds may be divided into subtypes; they have the common features of the kind, the same external structure, but add special substantive features on the level of subject matter or motifs.[11]

The polythematic ode, therefore, should be regarded as a kind, just like the *muwashshaḥ* and *zajal*, for example. The ode's tripartite (or bipartite, in its common ʿAbbāsid form) form, the identical meter and rhyme, and the introductory rhymed hemistich (*taṣrīʿ*) make the external structure. As for the substantial aspect, the *nasīb*, *raḥīl*, and *madīḥ*—if we think of the common Umayyad ode—are the amatory (or lyrical), ekphrastic, and panegyric themes respectively. These may also function as modes (then named *ghazal*, *waṣf*, and *madḥ*) in monothematic poems (*qiṭʿa*, pl. *qiṭaʿ*) or even in prose. The ode as a kind, as proved by its history,[12] is quite elastic and allows for changes inasmuch as its external structure and a certain dialogue with its thematic tradition are preserved. Even if one of the conventional themes is missing, another one—or more—is added (e.g., an invective), or a conventional theme is replaced by another mocking it (e.g., the "anti-*nasīb*" of Abū Nuwās), the composition in question remains an ode. In cases where the composition in question is an ode, the classificatory principle for the whole poem should be the character of the dominant theme.[13] Therefore, since praise is usually, but not at all necessarily, expressed in a bipartite or tripartite ode, the panegyric theme (*madīḥ*), being the dominant one in such a poem, should determine its classification. Often, one can notice the aim of the whole ode as praise on account of features like the length of the panegyric part, its reference to specific names and events, the poet's asking for something well defined (be it a material or immaterial object of desire, e.g., the financial support or mercy of the patron), or performing certain illocutionary acts like the acknowledgment of benefits and undertaking commitments. In such cases, the panegyric part is at odds with the oftentimes rather short and hackneyed fashioning of the other parts.[14] Fowler's subtypes, with a requisite adjustment of his narrow thematic conceptualization of the term to a broader functional-thematic one, could be of use when we classify odes with various dominant themes. A panegyric ode, an elegiac ode, and an argot ode should be considered panegyric, elegiac, and argot subkinds sharing similar, but not identical, external structure yet differing in function and hence thematically.

It is clear that in the Arabic literary tradition modes significantly outnumber kinds. In poetry, a mode is formally set in a *qiṭʿa*, which by definition lacks any identifiable external structure (as "linear sequence of parts," the hallmark of kinds) relating it to a specific theme. The division between the *qiṭʿa* and ode is important beyond simply taxonomic considerations; for as noted by J.S. Meisami, the formal and stylistic differences between the *qiṭʿa* and the ode (*qaṣīda*) reflect their different functions. The ode was recited in ceremonial occasions, while the often improvised *qiṭʿa* was recited in informal gatherings.[15]

As for prose, we have to stick to an even more functional classificatory principle, given the *identity* of external structure among several kinds on the one hand, and different external structures of some variants of the same kind on the other. A fraternal letter, a *faṣl*, and a *ruqʿa*—albeit varying in length—normally have the same external structure but may have a different function. Contrarily, *tawqīʿāt* with the same function may range from one letter of the alphabet to a long prose piece, displaying completely different structure. Likewise, a *mathal* with the same function could be phrased in prose or poetry. Hence, when we focus on prose, the functional factor among our classificatory tools becomes weightier than the formal.

Fowler's generic analytic framework supplies one with helpful tools in discussing types of texts from a formal aspect. Nevertheless, despite acknowledging the fluidity of genre boundaries and genre transformation, because of isolating textual objects from their social contexts, his theory does not address the social and cultural arenas of generic production as a framework that induces such changes.[16] In contrast, performance-centered approaches "conceive of genres not solely as classificatory categories for the organization of cultural objects but also as orienting frameworks for the organization of ways of producing and interpreting discourse." Seeing genres as historically specific conventions and expectations shaped by the interrelationships of composers and audiences, can account for the flexibility, open-endedness, and manipulability of genres. Likewise, it can explain how textually identical or closely similar utterances can be interpreted in different occasions as relating to different genres.[17] This is especially significant, because generic conventions help define the possibilities of meaning.[18] Although the dynamics of performance are studied in Chapter 2, attention to genres as negotiated and socially specific is paid in the following as well, whenever the available evidence allows that.

The literary repertoire of our field includes the following noteworthy poetic types: panegyric (*madḥ*); ekphrastic (*waṣf)*; licentious or scatological (*mujūn* and *sukhf*); invective (*hijāʾ*); argot (*munākāt banī sāsān*); elegiac (*rithāʾ*); enigmatic (*muʿammā*); secretarial (*shiʿr kuttābī*); and fraternal poetry (*ikhwāniyyāt*). As for artistic prose, the following kinds have significant presence in the field: fraternal (*ikhwāniyya*) letter; short passage (*faṣl*) and *ruqʿa* (note, short letter, short petition); signature phrase (*tawqīʿ*); and proverb, aphorism (*mathal*). This is *not* an exhaustive list. Nevertheless, I tried to take account of those genres, which have a palpable presence in the field, as may be judged by a survey of the sources. In addition, only when I could make sure that compositions in a certain genre were created or performed by al-Ṣāḥib or his courtiers within the field's time-frame (366–85/976–95), I deemed the genre as eligible for inclusion.

Al-Sāḥib took pride in having been praised in 100,000 odes in Arabic and Persian.[19] Alongside the Arabic literary genres, Persian poetry played a part in the literary field, but unfortunately, only scant evidence has come down to us. The little we can confidently say, based on the available information in early Persian sources, is that the vizier had bilingual poets at the court who eulogized him in Persian, and that extemporized Persian–Arabic verse translation was among the literary activities practiced.[20] Owing to this fragmentary evidence, it is impossible to study in a substantial way the place Persian literature had in the literary field, and therefore our inquiry should be limited to Arabic. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that at the time and place in question, Arabic was still indubitably superior to Persian as a language of literary production and as a medium of high culture and scholarship in general. In what follows, I will present each genre—in poetry and prose—appearing on the mentioned list. The composers of the examples I adduce were the various agents active in the field (i.e., poets and prose writers), including al-Ṣāḥib himself, who was a patron directly involved in the processes of literary production, performance, and criticism.

II Types of poetry

*1 Panegyric poetry (*madḥ*)*

The panegyric theme was the dominant part of odes (*qaṣāʾid*) composed for the purpose of praising patrons on ceremonial occasions. Nonetheless, because it could also be the topic of a monothematic poem (*qiṭʿa*),[21] or appear accidentally in compositions that are not essentially panegyric, it is a mode and not a kind. Panegyric—among all other modes—won the highest prestige and prime attention on the part of patrons, poets, and literary critics.[22] Since pre-Islamic times, on account of its role as a means of good publicity and as an effective tool of political legitimization, panegyric poetry served the praised addressee (the tribal leader, notable, or even a tribe) by celebrating his merits and exploits. Hence, panegyric poetry constituted for al-Ṣāḥib, who possessed the multiple capacities of political functionary, military leader, administrator, secretary (*kātib*), poet, and theologian, a medium by which each one of them was publicly affirmed and legitimized. Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 1, very often in the poets' praise, al-Ṣāḥib is addressed and portrayed as a king.

I will focus here on the praise of al-Ṣāḥib in his capacity as a secretary, which was produced to the effect of celebrating his masterful command of language: Al-Thaʿālibī, in *al-Yatīma*'s entry on Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, endorses al-Ṣāḥib's phrase "Baghdad among cities is like the master among servants (or humans),"[23] and continues:

> It was said: "the craft of writing (*kitāba*) started with ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd[24] and ended with Ibn al-ʿAmīd." They were mentioned together proverbially by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Khāzin al-Iṣbahānī, in a unique ode in which he praised al-Ṣāḥib. When he ultimately got to the description of his eloquence (*balāgha*), he said, and he carried out well what he wanted [to do] [*al-basīṭ*]:
>
> *Daʿū l-aqāṣīṣa wa-l-anbāʾa nāḥiyatan*
> *Fa-mā ʿalā ẓahrihā ghayru bni ʿAbbādī*
>
> *Wālī bayānin matā yuṭliq aʿinnatahū*
> *Yadaʿ lisāna iyādin rahna aqyādī*
>
> *Wa-mūridun kalimātin ʿaṭṭalat zahran*
> *ʿAlā riyāḍin wa-durran fawqa ajyādī*

Wa-tārikun awwalan ʿAbda l-Ḥamīdi bi-hā
Wa-bna l-ʿAmīdi akhīran fī abī jādī

Put the stories and accounts aside
For there is none above them except for Ibn ʿAbbād

A governor of eloquence, who whenever letting loose its reins
Leaves the tongue of Iyād subject to fetters

Producing utterances that left flowers untended
In gardens and [likewise] pearls on necks

By means of which he, first, leaves ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd behind
And, finally, Ibn al-ʿAmīd by [his mastery of] the alphabet[25]

This four-line excerpt quoted by al-Thaʿālibī stands as a good example for *madḥ*, which distinguishes al-Ṣāḥib over two exemplary secretaries. Al-Ṣāḥib's secretarial skill, being a common motif in praise recited to him, is also matched with his military prowess, as done by Abū l-Fayyāḍ Saʿd b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī in the following line [*al-basīṭ*]:

Ammā yadu l-Ṣāḥibi l-yumnā fa-akramu mā
Yadun taṣāḥaba fī-hā l-sayfu wa-l-qalamū

As for the right hand of al-Ṣāḥib, it is the most liberal
Hand in which sword and pen kept company with one another[26]

The pen and the sword are normally not held by the same hand, namely, by the same person, and are often juxtaposed as rivals, representing metonymically the secretaries versus the military.[27] That, however, is not the case with al-Ṣāḥib who is commended as competent in both domains, nay the most liberal among those who possess such competence.[28]

The poets praising al-Ṣāḥib built on the available literary motifs to tailor their panegyric verse specifically to the ideology of the addressed vizier and the specific ways in which he wished to be publically viewed. To be seen as surpassing the two outstanding secretaries and excelling in both the secretarial and military pursuits was important for the vizier's self-perception. Those active in the literary field knew that and exploited it to elicit his appreciation. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the panegyrists employed various speech acts strategically to accomplish their goals while performing. And, while not every doing of a poetic genre was framed as performance (in the sense of "assumption of accountability to an audience for a display of virtuosity, subject to evaluation for the skill and effectiveness with which the display is accomplished"),[29] the ceremonial panegyric certainly was.

*2 Ekphrastic poetry (***waṣf***)*

A notable mode in the literary field of al-Ṣāḥib, *waṣf* manifests itself there as: (1) fragments[30]—often extemporized—in which the poet describes an animate or inanimate object; (2) a part, or several separate thematic sections in a descriptive part of an ode; and (3) a complete ode.

1 The attraction of patrons to improvised ekphrastic fragments, the adaptation of the poets to this trend, and consequently the palpable boost given to it, are clearly characteristic of the ʿAbbāsid courtly culture.[31] It occurred frequently that a poet described someone or something at the request of al-Ṣāḥib. Based on hierarchical differences, it was the superior who challenged his inferiors, but when they failed to respond, al-Ṣāḥib would do that himself. A short narrative depicting the circumstances of the improvisation may come before the poetry:

> I heard from ʿAwn al-Hamadānī [*sic*] who said: al-Ṣāḥib brought a slave-boy performing with swords (*ghulām muthāqif*), who played in front of him. Al-Ṣāḥib found his figure beautiful and was pleased with his performance. He said to his friends: "say [some poetry] describing him (*fī waṣfihi*)!" but they did not produce anything, so al-Ṣāḥib said [*al-sarīʿ*]:
>
> *Muthāqifun fī ghāyati l-ḥidhqī*
> *Fāqa ḥisāna l-gharbi wa-l-sharqī*
>
> *Shabbahtuhū wa-l-sayfu fī kaffihī*
> *Bi-l-badri idh yalʿabu bi-l-barqī*
>
> A performer with swords of the utmost skill
> Surpassed the beautiful ones in the west and east
>
> I likened him, while the sword is in his palm,
> To the full moon when playing with the lightning[32]

2 *Waṣf* constituted frequently a section or sections in odes recited to al-Ṣāḥib, and as such a long tradition since pre-Islamic times was followed.[33] In laments on Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim's black-reddish horse (see below), for example, various poets of al-Ṣāḥib dedicate a considerable part of the ode for a description of the horse. In a selection from an ode by the poet Abū l-Fayyāḍ al-Ṭabarī addressed to the vizier, al-Thaʿālibī indicates four sections of description: (i) of horses led to al-Ṣāḥib from Fāris, (ii) his robe of honor (*khilʿa*) and sword, (iii) the knife, the inkwell, and the pens, and (iv) the desert.[34] Section (iii) is translated and studied in Chapter 4 as part of the discussion of the mannerist *maṣnūʿ* style. This, however, is not done arbitrarily, because *waṣf* was normally not focusing on an action or a narrative,

but rather on a passive object (inanimate *or* animate, as the *waṣf* fragment on the slave-boy above shows), which as such renders itself easily to a mannerist description. The potentiality of the mannerist *waṣf* is probably best seen in the fragments of al-Maʾmūnī, who spent some time in al-Ṣāḥib's court, although unfortunately al-Thaʿālibī does not supply us with any clue regarding the addressee or circumstances of their composition.

3 We also have instances of complete odes whose dominant theme and aim—rather, their *raison d'être*—were *waṣf*, and therefore should be considered to be *waṣf* poems. The composition of these poems, whose text has usually not been fully preserved, was initiated by al-Ṣāḥib who had prompted his poets to describe a certain object in an ode. Al-Thaʿālibī recorded significant selections from such poems recited on two separate occasions: the festive inauguration of al-Ṣāḥib's new mansion in Esfahan, probably in 366/976;[35] and al-Ṣāḥib's capturing of an elephant from the army of Khorasan in the Battle of Jurjān in 372/982.[36] While al-Thaʿālibī does not report on any limitation regarding the extent of description binding the poets in the case of the Mansion Odes (*al-diyāriyyāt*), in that of the Elephant Odes (*al-fīliyyāt*) description was limited to the *tashbīb* (or *nasīb*) of an ode. In both cases there is also a concomitant panegyric theme, whose accomplishment is nevertheless completely dependent on the described object. As such, it does not differ from other ekphrastic odes, like al-Buḥturī's famous one on the ruins of Ctesiphon, in which the described object functions as an essential and indispensable catalyst for additional aims.[37]

Whereas the *waṣf* fragment was mostly extemporized and as such a spontaneous informal piece, the *waṣf* section and *waṣf* poem were—just like the panegyric ode—prepared in advance and formally delivered. Noticeably, the Elephant Odes, delivered on a festive occasion, were established on intertextual relationships through genre.[38] Following the 372/982 victory, when the vizier prompted his court poets (*man bi-ḥaḍratihi min al-shuʿarāʾ*) to describe the captured elephant in the *tashbīb*, he also limited them to the rhyme and meter of a line by ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib, a pre-Islamic and early Islamic (*mukhaḍram*) warrior and poet of a noble Yemenite family. It is the third line of an ode in which ʿAmr extolled his exploits, courage, and horse: "I prepared for misfortune a large coat of mail and a big fast-running horse."[39] By this intertextual strategy, the vizier, proud of the victory in battle, created an indexical connection extending beyond the present setting to a mythical hero. Moreover, he also "traditionalized" the poetic output of his poets by the link to the ancient warrior-poet in a manner that committed them stylistically and ideologically to the fabled heritage of the Arabs (not the Persians). All this was accomplished through the ekphrastic generic link between two big military animals, which in both cases serve as catalysts for the glorification of humans associated with them.

*3 Licentious and scatological poetry (***mujūn and sukhf***)*

The wide semantic field of each of these two terms (*mujūn* and *sukhf*) comprises the aspects of behavior, speech, and literature.[40] Whereas *mujūn* is more related to hedonism, *sukhf* deals with grossing out language and conduct.[41] Among the two modes, *sukhf*, as "obscene and scatological parody that also encompasses frivolous, intentionally irrational and blasphemous elements,"[42] is more characteristic of the literary production in our field. The main function of the scatological verse in our field was to lampoon, criticize, or taunt another person and as such it is strongly connected with invective poetry (*hijāʾ*). Antoon indicates the important influence the poetic language and conventions of *hijāʾ* played on *sukhf*.[43] In fact, sometimes one finds it rather difficult to determine the generic classification of a certain piece as *hijāʾ* or *sukhf*, as the two modes intertwine. Generic ambiguity, it should be remembered, is a familiar phenomenon even beyond Arabic literature; ethnographers often discover that against their expectations locally constructed classification reveals generic overlapping and interpenetrating.[44] In addition, this ambiguity may often spring from insufficient evidence on the way a given piece was originally contextualized or performed.

Al-Thaʿālibī includes many of al-Ṣāḥib's invective epigrams under the heading *mulaḥ min shiʿrihi fī l-hijāʾ wa-l-mujūn* ("Fine Selections from His Invective and Licentious Verse").[45] More confusing is the fact that many of the epigrams included there may well be described as *sukhf*, not *mujūn*, albeit subsumed under that heading. This suggests that the borders between the modes were rather blurred conceptually among contemporaries and warrants subsuming both *mujūn* and *sukhf* under the present heading. In some cases, like the three lines directed by Abū l-Qāsim Ghānim b. Abī l-ʿAlāʾ al-Iṣbahānī against al-Quwayḍī, I am inclined to consider a certain piece *sukhf* with invective function. This is mainly for the way al-Tawḥīdī sees similar pieces by al-Ṣāḥib as *sukhf*,[46] but also for the excess of graphic obscenity; indeed, *sukhf* as a genre feasts on taboo words and shuns euphemistic speech [*al-mujtathth*]:

Rijlī wa-ayrī wa-bayḍī
Fī isti ummi l-Quwayḍī

Lammā arāda hijāʾī
Wa-fayḍuhū dūna ghayḍī

Wa-rāma tadnīsa ʿirḍī
Fa-ṣāra khirqata ḥayḍī

My leg, cock, and balls
Are in the ass of al-Quwayḍī's mother

When he wanted to lampoon me,
While much [of his invective] does not measure up to a little of mine,

And wished to stain my honor,
He became a menstruation rag[47]

Not graphic but still suggestive is the following *mujūn* example by Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Asadī—clearly designated so by al-Thaʿālibī (*wa-la-hu fī l-mujūn*)—in which the poet expresses his unconditioned desire to his male beloved, probably a soldier [*al-khafīf*]:

Ana wa-llāhi ashtahīka fa-kun ʿAn
Tara in shiʾta aw ka-ʿAmri bni Maʿdī

Wa-tufāris in shiʾta aw fa-turājil
Laysa hādhā mimmā yaḍurruka ʿindī

By God, I desire you; thus be ʿAntara,
If you wish, or like ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib

You may be mounted, if you wish, or on foot
This is not something that may adversely affect my opinion of you[48]

*4 Invective poetry (***hijāʾ***)*

Generally, this mode may take many forms, mostly in poetry and rarely in prose (as, famously, al-Tawḥīdī's *Akhlāq*). It may be one theme among others in an ode (the others being love, panegyric, etc.), the sole theme of a lengthy one (especially from the ʿAbbāsid period onwards), or a brief and witty epigram—this being the form most characteristic of *hijāʾ*.[49] Indeed, in our field the brief and witty epigram is the only observable form of invective poetry as far as the extant evidence can tell.[50] The three main functions noticed are: (i) settling a score with someone (for political or other reasons); (ii) attacking a collective in the framework of a social or cultural conflict; and (iii) jesting.[51] Each of these often materializes in a very obscene way. To name but one example of type (i), the envy-based conflict between the poets Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī and al-Salāmī found an expression in an exchange of invective poetry.[52] Type (ii) is demonstrated by al-Ṣāḥib's invective against the Persians and his urging of Badiʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī to extemporize verse to the same effect.[53] As for (iii), the biting humor and wit in the following line, although we know nothing of the circumstances of its composition, suggest that it might have been an invective composed for amusement:

[al-Ṣāḥib] said about two brothers, one handsome and one ugly [*al-sarīʿ*]:

Yaḥyā ḥakā l-maḥyā wa-lākin lahū
Akhun ḥakā wajha abī yaḥyā

Yaḥyā resembled everlasting life, but he has
A brother resembling the face of death[54]

5 *Argot poetry (***munākāt banī sāsān***)*

This poetic mode concentrates on the life of marginal social groups, those known under the umbrella term of Banū Sāsān (beggars, vagabonds, rogues, tricksters, and other figures of low life), and is couched in their own argot (*munākā* or *munāghā*) to a great extent. Historically, the interest in low life appeared in the Islamic world of the third/ninth century in tandem with the progress of urbanization and sophistication. In contrast to the traditional noble Arabic and Islamic virtues praised in poetry, this mode celebrates profligacy and shamelessness often using obscene language.[55]

The *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* was dedicated to al-Ṣāḥib by Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī, who modeled it after (*ʿāraḍa*), a previous *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* by al-Aḥnaf al-ʿUkbarī (d. by 385/995).[56] It constitutes an embodiment of the argot poetry mode in a polythematic ode, and does so in following an already established literary model (al-ʿUkbarī's). It describes in detail and with a proud tone the miscellaneous types of Banū Sāsān, their habits, tricks, and professional secrets, based on an insider's knowledge and experience. That it was not understood by the uninitiated, we learn from al-Thaʿālibī, and also from the fact that Abū Dulaf appended a comprehensive commentary to it.[57] Structurally, it opens with a *nasīb*, moves to boasting (*fakhr*), then launches a lengthy description of the wiles of the different kinds of beggars and rogues—this being the cardinal part of the poem. It closes with a section in which the poet justifies his globe-trotting by the model of the Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) and expresses his resignation to the vicissitudes of Fate.[58] For the sake of illustration, I will translate here one line, referring to one class of charlatans "among us" (=Banū Sāsān), followed by Abū Dulaf's commentary (in Bosworth's translation) for those out of the know [*al-hazaj*]:

> *Wa-barkūshun wa-barkakkun*
> *Wa-muʿṭī hāliki l-jazrī*
>
> And the charlatan pretending to be deaf, and the tooth-drawer,
> And the one peddling eye remedies
>
> *Barkūsh* is the person who feigns complete deafness. He says to someone, "Pronounce your own name and your father's name over this signet ring." He listens stealthily to what the man says, and then is able to tell him exactly what he has said. *Barkak*(*k*) is the person who extracts molars and gives treatment for them. *Al-hālik* means "a healing drug." *Al-jazr* means "the faculty of sight"; the eye is called *al-jazzāra*.[59]

This line is couched almost entirely in jargon terms, which made Abū Dulaf gloss every single word except for *muʿṭī*. In his own commentary on the line, Bosworth indicates a linguistic characteristic of jargon observable here, namely, antiphrasis: while in standard Arabic *hālik* is "one who perishes," here it denotes "a healing drug."[60] Indeed, because *halaka* is an intransitive verb, an exact antonym should have been *muhlik*, "deadly." One may assume that especially because *hālik* and *muhlik* are equal in respect to the meter, the poet's choice of the former indicates a non-standard jargon use as well. In addition, the provenance of the jargon terms used in the first hemistich appears to be Persian and Syriac,[61] whereas in the second they come from Arabic. This goes hand in hand with Bosworth's remarks on the Arab-Persian and Syriac-speaking ethnic composition of the beggars known to Abū Dulaf, as inferred from their names.[62]

The rough and coarse speech of marginal figures, with whom al-Ṣāḥib used to associate, was not restricted to long polythematic odes. It could also be seen in a *qiṭʿa* like the following line extemporized as a collaborative–interactive composition. It has no expressions in argot but well demonstrates the obscene language and style of the genre. Al-Tawḥīdī recounts:

> I saw this al-Aqṭaʿ standing in front of Ibn ʿAbbād at the house's courtyard, and that one [=al-Ṣāḥib] was also standing. Then, Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Warrāq appeared, and Ibn ʿAbbād said while looking at him and at his combed beard [*al-rajaz*]:
>
> *Wa-liḥyatin ka-annahā l-qabāṭī*
>
> A beard as though it were fine white clothes
>
> And al-Aqṭaʿ responded immediately:
>
> *Jaʿaltuhā waqfan ʿalā ḍurāṭī*
>
> I made it an endowment for my farting[63]

This line may be classified as *sukhf*, given its sacrilegious obscenity, and also as *hijāʾ* for the scoffing of its addressee: the copyist's fine beard, likened by al-Ṣāḥib to a garment, is compared by al-Aqṭaʿ to the hair on his own anus endowed by him as a *waqf* for his farting. Nevertheless, despite the lack of argot expressions (even the *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* of Abū Dulaf, one should remember, is not entirely phrased in argot), it appears more suitable to subsume it under the argot category. Besides the fact that scatology and bawdiness are dominant traits of argot poetry, two weighty reasons to do so are the identity of its arch-criminal composer, and his capacity as al-Ṣāḥib's indispensable teacher for various underworld groups' argots.[64] Thanks to the contextualizing details provided by al-Tawḥīdī, it is clear that the argot or argot-like *qiṭʿa* was performed in an improvised informal way. To the vizier, the literary game of the *ijāza* was a common medium to prompt the coarse and "counter-culture" traits of this mode from the socially marginal at his court.

*6 Elegiac poetry (***rithāʾ***)*

Originating in pre-Islamic women's bewailing their male next of kin, the elegiac mode took shape in various forms until al-Ṣāḥib's time: in rhymed prose (*niyāḥa*) and verse (*qarīḍ*) in the pre-Islamic period; later developed the *marthiya*—normally as a bipartite ode form (without *nasīb*)—to which a letter of condolence (*taʿziya*) to the deceased person's parents (usually in prose but also in verse) was added starting in the second/eighth century.[65] Excluding the elegies (*marāthī*) lamenting al-Ṣāḥib's death (examples of which are quoted by al-Thaʿālibī)[66] for being outside the temporal limits of the field, we are left with two short pieces in which al-Ṣāḥib lamented Abū l-Ḥasan al-Silmī and Abū Manṣūr Kuthayyir b. Aḥmad,[67] and eleven excerpts from long odes lamenting Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim's black-reddish horse.[68] The first piece in which he laments al-Silmī reads [*al-ṭawīl*]:

> *Idhā mā naʿā l-nāʿūna ahla mawaddatī*
> *Bakaytu ʿalayhim bal bakaytu ʿalā nafsī*
>
> *Naʿaw muhjata l-silmiyyi wahya salāmatun*
> *Ghulibtu ʿalayhā fa-l-salāmu ʿalā l-unsī*
>
> When the death announcers announce the death of those whom I love
> I cry over them, rather, I cry over myself
>
> They announced the departure of al-Silmī's soul and it is well-being
> Taken from me by force; there goes intimacy![69]

*7 Fraternal poetry (***ikhwāniyyāt***)*

These monothematic poems focus on various themes related to friendship and relations between companions. The *ikhwāniyyāt* are normally short pieces,[70] frequently having the brevity, wittiness, and "point" of the epigram,[71] as the examples collected by al-Thaʿālibī throughout *Yatīmat al-dahr* demonstrate.[72] The fact that all the composers of these *ikhwāniyyāt* poems were high state officials, writing to their equals or inferiors in rank, and the lack of such poems composed by inferiors to superiors, suggests that hierarchy was an important element behind their production. The pieces by al-Ṣāḥib (each between one to six lines) follow this line. They are not pieces to be performed, but mostly written messages in verse communicating the following: reproaching a dear friend (Abū l-Faḍl b. Shuʿayb) for delaying his visit; or another one (Abū l-Qāsim al-Qāshānī) for not visiting; calling the physician (Abū l-Ḥusayn); inducing a courtier (Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī) to get drunk on a cold cloudless day; censuring (Abū l-Qāsim al-Qāshānī) for not inviting al-Ṣāḥib to drink wine; declaring strong love to a friend (Abū l-Ṭālib); calling on a pimp (Ibn Yaʿqūb)[73] to intercede on his behalf with a handsome boy named Masrūr; asking a courtier (Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Asadī) a cryptic question to be understood by him; sending sweetmeats warranted by an (anonymous) friend's sweet love; warning those (like the merchant Maḥmūd) who did not visit him when he was sick that he would not attend their grave when they pass away; rejecting a friend and protégé's (al-Qāḍī Abū Bishr al-Jurjānī) excuses for delaying his visit; and longing for an (anonymous) friend staying far away.[74] Here is his poem to the Qāḍī Abū Bishr al-Jurjānī [*al-wāfir*]:

Yaṣuddu l-faḍla ʿannā ayya ṣaddin
Wa-qāla taʾakhkhurī ʿan ḍuʿfi miʿdah

Fa-qultu la-hū jaʿaltu l-ʿayna wāwan
Fa-inna l-ḍuʿfa ajmaʿa fī l-mawaddah

He withholds the favor [of his visit] from us completely
Saying: my delay is due to a stomach weakness

I then said to him: I changed the *ʿayn* to *wāw*
For the weakness altogether is in the love [of yours][75]

In another place, al-Thaʿālibī produces an *ikhwāniyya* of al-Ṣāḥib to Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Asadī following one by Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, for they both share the same topic—inquiring of a friend the morning after his marriage about the consummation. Al-Thaʿālibī finds al-Ṣāḥib's more explicit and wittier (*aqrab min al-taṣrīḥ wa-aẓraf)* and Ibn al-ʿAmīd's purer and more implicit (*ajzal wa-akhfā*). Here is the *ikhwāniyya* of al-Ṣāḥib [*al-sarīʿ*]:

Qalbī ʿalā l-jamrati yā bā l-ʿAlā
Fa-hal fataḥta l-mawḍiʿa l-muqfalā

Wa-hal fakakta l-khatma ʿan kīsihī
Wa-hal kaḥalta l-nāẓira l-akḥalā

Innaka in qulta naʿam ṣādiqan
Abʿath nithāran yamlaʾu l-manzilā

Wa-in tujibnī min ḥayāʾin bilā
Abʿath ilayka l-quṭna wa-l-mighzalā

My heart is on burning coal, O Abū l-ʿAlāʾ,
Did you open the locked up place?

Did you break open the seal off its purse?
Did you smear the black eye with antimony?

If you say "yes" truthfully
I will send scattered gold pieces that will fill the house

But if you respond to me, out of bashfulness, “no”
I will send you cotton and spindle[76]

*8 Enigmatic poetry (***muʿammā***)*

We have two short enigmatic poems (*qiṭaʿ*) directed by Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī to al-Ṣāḥib (termed *muʿammā*) making clear that this mode was represented in our field. The enigma in verse named *muʿammā* (“blinded”) is strictly speaking different from *lughz* (“riddle”); for whereas the latter—often appearing in interrogative form—is solved by correctly combining concepts, the former’s solution is based on combining the alphabetic or numerical value of letters (or on other similar techniques like inversion). In practice, however, the two terms are often used indiscriminately.[77] In *Yatīmat al-dahr* we find an example of a one-line *muʿammā*, dubbed thus by al-Thaʿālibī, composed by the poet Abū l-Qāsim al-Zāhī [*al-kāmil*]:

Man kāna Ādama jummalan fī sinnihī
Hajarathu Ḥawwāʾu l-sinīna mina l-dumā

Whoever is Adam—in terms of numerical value—at his age
Is abandoned by Eve of the years among beautiful women

Al-Thaʿālibī adds that Ādam equals forty-five, according to the numerical value of its letters, whereas Ḥawwāʾ (Eve) makes fifteen.[78] The “blinded” meaning in this case does not require much reflection,[79] to wit, old men are abandoned by beautiful young women. Given this type of solution (combination of letters’ numerical value), the use of the term *muʿammā* for this specific enigma is strict.

In contrast, the following so-called *muʿammā* composed for al-Ṣāḥib by al-Hamadhānī, is actually a *lughz* in a strict use [*al-kāmil*]:

Akhawāni min ummin wa-ab
Lā yafturāni ʿani l-shaghab

Mā minhumā illā ḍanin
Yashkū muʿānāta l-daʾab

Wa-kilāhumā ḥaniqu l-fuʾā
Di ʿalā akhīhi bi-lā sabab

Yughrīhimā bi-l-sharri sib
Ṭu l-rīḥi wa-bnu abī l-khashab

Mā minhumā illā bihī
Sharṭu l-yubūsati wa-l-ḥarab

Fa-lanā bi-ṣulḥihimā radan
Wa-lanā bi-ḥarbihimā nashab

Yā ayyuhā l-maliku l-ladhī
Fī kulli khaṭbin yuntadab

Akhrijhu ikhrāja l-dhakiy
Yi fa-qad waṣaftu kamā wajab

[They are] two brothers from [the same] mother and father
Who will not give up quarelling

Both of them are worn out
Complaining about the pains of perseverance

Each one of the two has a heart enraged
Against his brother for no reason

The grandson of the wind
And the son of the father of wood provoke evil from them

Only by it do they satisfy
The condition of separation and anger

Their reconciliation brings about destruction for us
While their war yields property for us

O king who
Is always promptly obeyed

Figure it out the way a sharp-witted person does
For I gave an adequate description

The solution given is the millstone (*ḥajar al-raḥā*);[80] to be more precise, the pair of millstones consisting of the stationary bedstone and the uppermost runner stone, used to grind grains, whose driving mechanism is the flowing water ("the grandson of the wind") and a water wheel made of wood ("the son of the father of wood"). One is expected to figure it out based on the conceptual picture evoked by the description, which in its style is reminiscent of ekphrastic poetry. In addition, as it is often the case with *lughz*, the composer directs his words to the addressee, al-Ṣāḥib, here referred to as a king. Yet, without contextual details, we cannot infer from that whether this piece was orally performed or was sent out as a written message.

*9 Secretarial poetry (***shiʿr kuttābī***)*

Neither mode nor kind, secretarial poetry should be rather described as the approach taken by a non-specialist educated elite group toward the composition of poetry.

The poetry of secretaries was studied by Bencheikh with due attention to its socio-cultural aspects during the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. Mostly from Persian descent, the secretarial group gained much power and influence in the second/eighth century, and at the same time started to play a major role in literary life. With regard to poetry, one wonders in what way the secretary-poet differed from the professional poet and what was the nature of his poetic production in comparison to the latter's. Bencheikh shows that given the fact that the secretaries—unlike the professional poets—did not have to depend on their poetry for subsistence, they could compose their poetry for pleasure without being expected to meet the high reqirements set to the professionals. Thus, instead of composing the "staple" modes of the poets, for example, panegyric and invective, they could indulge in writing poems that expressed their cultural model, namely, *adab* (meaning here "good education, elegance of behavior, knowledge, practice of arts and letters"). Hence, their poetry represents more the collective spirit of a *milieu* than the personality of a professional poet. Despite its socio-cultural expressiveness, however, it loses—through the banalization of its common employment in everyday life and as a means of communication—the artistic qualities of great poetry and consequently resorts to affectation.[81]

Given its legitimate dilettante nature, it is not surprising, therefore, that al-Ṣāḥib was not holding a favorable opinion of secretarial poetry, as revealed by his praise of the secretary, *adīb*, and poet Abū Saʿd Naṣr b. Yaʿqūb: "It indeed amazes me that a secretary is a poet, just as I am amazed that his poetry is widely known."[82] Other than belittling the secretaries whose poetic production al-Ṣāḥib did not consider "real" poetry, this statement of his alludes to the fact that he did not consider himself among those dilettante secretary-poets. For otherwise, being a secretary himself (until becoming a vizier), he would probably not have made such a remark, unless he was assured of his position—at least in his self-view—as a "real" poet.

Secretarial poetry was taken as a category per se, because of its composer's occupation and typical competences, bearing production that could be judged as good or bad according to its own standards; namely, how good the poetry of a non-specialist literate elite member could be. We learn that from al-Thaʿālibī's appreciation of al-Ustādh Abū l-ʿAlāʾ Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Ṣafī l-Ḥaḍratayn and his presented selections. Before citing highlights of Abū l-ʿAlāʾ, he refers to "his far-aiming and coherent secretarial poetry" (*shiʿruhu l-kuttābī l-baʿīd al-marām al-mustamirr al-niẓām*).[83] The highlights make it clear that *shiʿr kuttābī* is an approach to poetry and not a mode that has to do with some unique secretarial topics. This is because it actually finds expression in various modes (praise, *ghazal*, invective, gnomic) in addition to poems composed as an occasional comment on different specific social situations.[84] It also demonstrates that secretarial poetry (dubbed thus by al-Thaʿālibī) could embrace modes, for example, praise, that were apparently—according to Bencheikh—in the domain of the professional poet.[85]

The following is an example for secretarial poetry in our field composed by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Barūjirdī, preceded by al-Thaʿālibī's portrayal of the secretary and his poetry:

> A secretary rightly and truly, deeply penetrating in his epistle writing, peerless among the secretaries of his age.… He had served al-Ṣāḥib in the prime of his youth, became well-mannered in his etiquette, was closely related to him, and trained his nature to adopt his way. From his court (*jānib*) he arrived to the land of Khorasan, and then became famous there.… His apt quotation (*muḥāḍara*) is beautiful and meaningful. His secretarial poetry (*shiʿr kuttābī*) has many embellishments (*maḥāsin*)[86] and uninterrupted coherence (*mustamirr al-niẓām*). Among its primary examples is the following: al-Ṣāḥib blamed one of the beardless youths at his session (*majlis*) for stealing his books, saying [*al-mujtathth*]:
>
> *Saraqta yā ẓabyu kutbī*
> *Alḥaqta kutbī bi-qalbī*
>
> O gazelle, you stole my books;
> You added my books to my heart!
>
> He ordered Abū Muḥammad to complete it (*bi-ijāzatihi*), and he said:
>
> *Fa-law faʿalta jamīlan*
> *Radadta qalbī wa-kutbī*
>
> If you were to act nicely
> You would return my heart and my books
>
> Some other day, these two lines were recited at his court [*al-madīd*]:
>
> *Yā nasīma l-rīḥi min baladin*
> *Khabbirī bi-llāhi kayfa humū*
>
> *Laysa lī ṣabrun wa-lā jaladun*
> *Layta shiʿrī kayfa ṣabruhumū*
>
> O breezy wind coming from a certain town,
> Inform [me], by God, how they are!
>
> I have no patience and no endurance
> I wish I knew how patient they are

> [Al-Ṣāḥib] then ordered [al-Barūjirdī] to complete these two lines (*bi-ijāzatihimā*), and he said:
>
> *Wa-lisānu l-damʿi yashhadu lī*
> *Wa-hwa mimman laysa yuttahamū*
>
> The tongue of tears bears witness to my condition
> And it is not to be doubted[87]

In these two cases, the—often characteristic—occasional and recreational nature of this poetic approach is seen. Al-Barūjirdī's completion (*ijāza*) of these lines was well done, but by no means could it be considered as great poetry. It shows, though, that this secretary possessed the competence to versify extempore, which was a valuable skill for courtiers. This, in addition to the information in al-Thaʿālibī's introduction, indicates his successful acquisition of *adab*, its behavioral and cognitive aspects alike. *Adab*, as described by Bencheikh, was indeed the main trait of the secretarial poetry, well embodying the secretarial "spirit."

III Types of artistic prose

*1 Fraternal (***ikhwāniyya***) letter*

A distinction is drawn between two types of letters whose main function is strict communication (unlike the monograph epistle): the administrative (*risāla dīwāniyya* or *sulṭāniyya*) and fraternal (*risāla ikhwāniyya*). Unlike the *risāla dīwāniyya*, the *ikhwāniyya* is an informal private correspondence, often between two friends.[88] When it focuses on the ties of affection between the two, the letter constitutes a substitute for the absent friend longed for by the writer in nostalgia. Nonetheless, it must not necessarily concentrate on affection and yearning; being an informal correspondence, it may engage in many matters that have to do with the two friends, their relations and feelings, or discuss relevant events in their lives. Thus, for example, it may be composed to congratulate on the birth of a son or on the occasion of a marriage, to offer condolences, to accompany an exchange of gifts, to welcome, to invite, to intercede, to excuse oneself, to reproach, to lampoon, etc. Some of these issues were traditionally treated in poetry before the ʿAbbāsid period, and those who started fashioning them in prose as well were the secretaries.[89]

Zakī Mubārak notes that despite the *ikhwāniyya*'s previous history (in poetry as well as prose), one may think that it was a new type created in the fourth/tenth century for its many formal developments during this period.[90] These developments were related to general trends in the realm of artistic prose at that time: mainly the expansion of the figurative language of *badīʿ* from poetry to prose, parallelisms, application of the phonic effect of rhyme (*sajʿ*), and assonance. These essential elements of the artistic prose style (*kitābat al-inshāʾ*) developed by the secretaries affected the *ikhwāniyya* letter as well as various other types of communication and correspondence of the period.[91]

We have several examples of fraternal letters in our field, most are by al-Ṣāḥib to others, some are by al-Khwārazmī to al-Ṣāḥib, and others are between two courtiers.[92] For the sake of illustration, here is a letter[93] sent by al-Ṣāḥib to an anonymous friend as a felicitation on the occasion of the birth of a daughter. It is the greeting letter type:

> May God congratulate my master on the arrival of his daughter, increase through her the number of his highborn offspring, and make her a harbinger of righteous brothers that will fill the assemblies of learning and live for the rest of time. The news of the newborn girl—may God honor her and raise her up as a beautiful plant—reached me. I also learned on your change for the worse after the news came out and on your denial of what God predestined for you. You had known that daughters are closer to the hearts, and that God the Sublime started with them in sequence, for the Exalted said: "He bestows on those He wills females and He bestows on those he wills males" (Q 42:49). What He called "bestowal" is more deserving of gratitude and more worthy of good acceptance.
>
> Welcome to the excellent woman and mother of sons! The one securing family relations by marriage and the affinity of the descendants of the pure; the forerunner of brothers in proper order and noble ones in close succession [*al-wāfir*]:
>
> *Fa-law kāna l-nisāʾu ka-mithli hādhī*
> *La-fuḍḍilati l-nisāʾu ʿalā l-rijālī*
>
> *Wa-mā l-taʾnīthu li-smi l-shamsi ʿaybun*
> *Wa-lā l-tadhkīru fakhrun li-l-hilālī*
>
> If women were like this one
> They would be preferred to men
>
> The feminine gender of the sun's name is not a fault,
> Nor is the masculine gender a source of pride for the crescent moon[94]
>
> God will acquaint you with the blessing in her ascendant and the felicity in her descendant. Therefore, arm yourself with joy and invigorate yourself; for the world (*al-dunyā*) is feminine, and men serve it; the fire (*al-nār*) is feminine, and males worship it; the earth (*al-arḍ*) is feminine, and from it all beings were created, and on it the progeny is abundant; the sky (*al-samāʾ*) is feminine, and it had been adorned with stars, and embellished with celestial bodies of piercing brightness (*al-nujūm al-thawāqib*: Q 86:3); the soul (*al-nafs*) is feminine, and it is foundational for the body and indispensable for the animal; life (*al-ḥayāh*) is feminine, and if it were not for it,

> bodies would not act freely and mankind would not be known; paradise (*al-janna*) is feminine, and it was promised to the God-fearing, and is inhabited delightfully by the prophets. Thus, may God congratulate you with what you were given, and inspire you with thankfulness for what you were awarded. May God extend your life as long as your progeny and offspring exist, and as long as Time lasts. He is wont to do what He wills.[95]

This letter is a typical product of the artistic prose (*inshāʾ*) style:[96] It is almost entirely rhymed with *sajʿ* (e.g., *wa-l-mubashshira bi-ikhwa yatanāsa*qūn *wa-nujabāʾ yatalāḥa*qūn), and with assonance (twice: *fa-huwa bi-l-shukr aw*lā *wa-bi-ḥusn al-taqabbul aḥ*rā; *yaʿmurūna andiyat al-*faḍl *wa-yaghburūna baqiyyat al-*dahr); rich in parallelisms (e.g., "the sky is feminine and it had been *adorned with stars* and *embellished with celestial bodies of piercing brightness*"; note also the previous three examples); detailed and overflowing description, especially after the poem; quotations from the Qurʾān and the poetic legacy (two lines of al-Mutanabbī) that are not only aptly chosen for consolidating the writer's apologetic argument, but also in the case of the poetry serve as a platform on which the second part of the letter is built. At first glance, the thematic development of the irrelevance-of-the-object's-gender-for-its-significance motif appears to continue from al-Mutanabbī's second line until the letter's end as if it were a case of *ḥall al-naẓm* (unraveling of poetry into prose).[97] Yet, in a closer look, it turns out to be a development contradicting the argument in the second line of the poem. For in his itemization of admirable entities whose gender is feminine, al-Ṣāḥib seeks to "prove" the advantage of the feminine by means of the *ḥusn al-taʿlīl* (fantastic etiology) trope. The fact that this world (*al-dunyā*)—to name but one example—is of the feminine gender is not in reality the reason men serve it; division to proportional sections—in the Arabic edition used there are two, each amounting to eight lines—separated by the poetry; as a whole it is poeticized prose "marred" only by the dearth of rhetorical figures (*badīʿ*) like metaphors and similes in comparison to similar letters.[98]

The argumentative tone discernible in this letter is given a boost by the strong effect of itemizing a long rhyming list of entities of the feminine gender which are nevertheless worshipped or otherwise indispensable to humans. Such an urgent tone is absent from an analogous letter by Hilāl al-Ṣābī (359–448/969–1056) included in his work on model correspondential writing for all occasions. This is in spite of raising several arguments similar to al-Ṣāḥib's (criticizing the disapproval of God's decree and ingratitude to His present in addition to noting the merits of women) and quoting the same Qurʾānic verse. Al-Ṣābī's inclusion of a model for such a letter also suggests that encouraging a friend in writing following the birth of a daughter was a common practice and a literary type.[99] One might be tempted to claim that al-Ṣāḥib's tone in this letter has only to do with the fact that he fathered one daughter and no sons at all. However, other pieces of writing by al-Ṣāḥib characterized by disputative tone exist, and this characteristic may well be related to his adherence to Muʿtazilī theology.[100]

*2 Short passage (***faṣl***) and* **ruqʿa**

The above letter is presented by al-Thaʿālibī *inter alia* under the rubric of al-Ṣāḥib's *fuṣūl* and *riqāʿ* (short passages and notes).[101] A *faṣl* is a short passage from a letter deserving to be extracted and collected for its artistic value. It is used interchangeably with *fiqra* (paragraph).[102] The shortest among these *fuṣūl* of al-Ṣāḥib, titled simply *faṣl*, is the following:

> I am on the edge of a garden, whose opened roses reminded me of your character, its flowing streamlet reminded me of your nature, and its paradisiacal flowers reminded me of your nearness.[103]

In other cases, *fuṣūl* denote short passages of refined composition "on all kinds of subjects and for different social occasions," collected and established as models of prose literature.[104] The latter meaning of *fuṣūl* differs from the former, since it refers to independent compositions, which are not parts of whole letters.[105]

Ruqʿa (pl. *riqāʿ*) is a note, a short letter, or a short written petition to a potentate.[106] Stylistically, the *riqāʿ* composed by al-Ṣāḥib are not different from other texts in artistic prose he used to write in terms of the rhyming, parallelisms, rhetorical figures, and the embedment of quotations (poetic, Qurʾānic, proverbial, etc.) Therefore, the difference between *ruqʿa* and *faṣl* is mainly in their function.

A *ruqʿa* as a note may carry a message like inviting someone to come, welcoming a visitor, or thanking someone for a present. For instance, the following *ruqʿat istizāra* (invitation) was sent by al-Ṣāḥib to an anonymous person:

> This day, sir, is gloomy, and its murky clouds astonish me. Since the sun of the sky had withdrawn from us, it is necessary that the sun of the earth come close to us. If you feel like showing up, you will join us in our happiness. If not, there is no compulsion and no coercion, and you have the choice whenever you want.[107]

As a short letter, an example of *ruqʿa*[108] is brought above (the felicitation letter). Regarding *ruqʿa* as a short written petition, which clearly reveals the hierarchical gap between the petitioner and the petitioned party, al-Thaʿālibī presents a splendid example:

> One of the Esfahanis showed me a petition (*ruqʿa*) of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Warrāq (the copyist) al-Iṣbahānī. The *ruqʿa* was in a worn condition, and there was the *tawqīʿ* of al-Ṣāḥib on it. Here is the petition's copy:
>
> If not for the fact that being reminded[109]—may God extend the life of our exalted master al-Ṣāḥib—is of advantage to the believers, and the brandishing of the sword helps those who draw it, I would not give a reminder and

> not brandish a sharp sword. Yet, the needy person, for his distress, desires to accelerate the favorable outcome, and presses the bountiful liberal man. The condition of the slave of our master—may God perpetuate His support to him—in respect to wheat is [now] different, and the rats of his house turned away from it. If he thinks proper that his slave be mixed with those whose dwelling he made abundant, and that he not fasten his saddle [to leave], he will do that—God, the Sublime, willing.
>
> Here is the *tawqīʿ*'s copy:
>
> You spoke well, Abū Ḥafṣ, and we will act well. Therefore, announce abundance to the rats of your house, and set their mind at rest from drought. The wheat will reach you this week, and you are not deprived of other support—God, the Sublime, willing.[110]

It is noteworthy that both the petitioner and the addressee in this case use the *inshāʾ* prose style in their writing. This is yet another example for the consolidation of artistic prose as the current and hegemonic style in the literary field of the court.

*3 Signature phrase (***tawqīʿ***)*

The *tawqīʿ* originates in the practice of Persian kings and viziers to sign with concise and eloquent expressions on complaints of wrongdoing submitted to them. This custom was followed by ʿAbbāsid caliphs and viziers, who signed on letters of complaint or petitions (named *qiṣaṣ* and *riqāʿ*). Their *tawqīʿāt*, often with an apt Qurʾānic verse, poetry line, or saying were copied and preserved by the secretaries.[111] Formally, at least since the times of the Sāsānians, it was the duty of the secretary to sit in front of the ruler during public audiences and note down his decisions in the most concise and stylistically perfect way. Nonetheless, many learned rulers and potentates, like the vizier Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī, were able to make decisions and epitomize them eloquently as *tawqīʿāt* on their own.[112] Al-Ṣāḥib should also be counted among those, and at least in some cases it is completely clear that he wrote the signature phrases on the petition letter by himself.[113]

Al-Kalāʿī, the Andalusian secretary and vizier (d. *c*. mid-sixth/twelfth century), defines *tawqīʿ* as "the type of speech, in which prolixity and repetition were relinquished in favor of concision and brevity." He goes on to say that *tawqīʿ* may contain: (i) several utterances (*bi-l-kalimāt*), (ii) one utterance (*bi-l-kalima al-wāḥida*), or (iii) one letter (*bi-l-ḥarf al-wāḥid*), illustrating this with three anecdotes on al-Ṣāḥib drawn from the latter's entry in *Yatīmat al-dahr*:[114] (i) an informer of al-Ṣāḥib sent a message to him about a man harboring unsympathetic feelings against the vizier who would enter his mansion among other people and then keep eavesdropping for a long time. Al-Ṣāḥib signed: "This mansion of ours is an inn; to be entered by those who are loyal and those who are disloyal" (*dārunā hādhihi* khān*; yadkhuluhā man wafā wa-man* khān; note the paronomasia, *jinās*); (ii) once, when the mint employees sent a complaint letter opening with "the mint employees" (*al-ḍarrābūn*; also meaning those who fashion or mint), he signed below it "in cold iron" (*fī ḥadīd bārid*). Al-Ṣāḥib—referring to the proverb "you fashion cold iron" (*taḍribu fī ḥadīd bārid*),[115] that is, entertain false hopes—made it clear to them, concisely and wittily, that he denied their appeal; (iii) one of al-Ṣāḥib's friends wrote to him a petition (*ruqʿa*) about some matter, on which the vizier signed, but when it was returned to the petitioner he could not see a signature phrase (*tawqīʿ*). The reports on the vizier's signing on it persisted, so he presented the petition to Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḍabbī, who kept scrutinizing it until finding out that the *tawqīʿ* was a single *alif*: the petition included the sentence "thus, if our master deems appropriate to bestow that, he will do it (*faʿala*), and al-Ṣāḥib wrote an *alif* facing *faʿala*, meaning thereby *afʿalu* [= 'will do']."

In contrast to al-Kalāʿī's stress on brevity as a characteristic of the *tawqīʿ*, we find that al-Ṣāḥib would at times write a rather long one. Responding to a petition (*ruqʿa*) addressed to the vizier by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī, in which he asked for his permission to leave and for a recommendation letter, al-Ṣāḥib granted his approval and spoke highly and at length of Abū l-Ḥasan's merits. He made it clear in the end that this *tawqīʿ* also constituted a substitute for a formal recommendation letter.[116] In terms of style, it is no different from other examples of *inshāʾ* writing (apart from the quite limited use of *sajʿ*) and does not have the condensed nature of other *tawqīʿāt* of the vizier. Likewise, the above cited *tawqīʿ* on the petition of Abū Ḥafṣ, albeit shorter, is still relatively long, and has "uneconomic" parallelisms and persistent rhyme found in more extensive *inshāʾ* pieces.[117]

*4 Proverb, aphorism (*mathal*)*

The Arabic philologists attributed the three essential characteristics of comparison, brevity, and familiarity to *mathal* (pl. *amthāl*). They have established that *amthāl* are based on experience and hence contain practical common sense (*ḥikma*); that they allow pointed and intelligible statement of facts in an indirect fashion; that since they can be used individually to represent all analogous cases while remaining unchanged, they make it easier to communicate matters that would be difficult to communicate in a more straightforward way. These characteristics and qualities in their totality do not necessarily apply to every single *mathal*, and therefore the understanding of *mathal* is wider than "proverb." It also includes the "proverbial saying," containing comparisons employing the *afʿalu min* form; "adages" (*ḥikam* and *aqwāl*), including mottoes and aphorisms; "set turns of speech," as used in optative and maledictive exclamation; and "parable" and "fable."[118]

Amthāl by al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers were often cited by al-Thaʿālibī. Many times the proverbs are built as two, or more, paralleling rhyming units, while other figures like paronomasia (*jinās*) or antithesis (*muṭābaqa*) might be used, too. The following examples are by al-Ṣāḥib unless otherwise stated.

Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī: "This world is a female that gets married to everyone asking her hand, and a tractable mount that carries every rider" (*al-dunyā unthā tankiḥu kull khāṭib wa-dābba dhalūl taḥmilu kull rākib*).[119]

"The world is a whore; one day she is at the perfumer's, another day at the veterinarian's" (*al-dunyā qaḥba fa-yawman ʿinda ʿaṭṭār wa-yawman ʿinda bayṭār*).[120] The whore's volatility and unreliability represents the world's, hence those dwelling in it are strongly affected. A less literal translation would be: "one day is rosy, another stinks."

"Prose is dispersed like sparks and poetry remains like engraving on stone" (*al-nathr yataṭāyaru taṭāyur al-sharar wa-l-naẓm yabqā baqāʾ al-naqsh fī l-ḥajar*).[121]

Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī: "Guarding jealously books is among the noble traits, nay, it is the sister of guarding jealously close female relatives" (*al-ghayra ʿalā l-kutub min al-makārim lā bal hiya ukht al-ghayra ʿalā l-maḥārim*).[122]

Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī combines two paralleling rhyming units with a part of a Qurʾānic verse which matches them with its internal rhyme: "Do not endeavor to surpass God in his lands and attempt to turn him from His will; {indeed, the earth is God's; He bequeaths it to whoever He wants among His servants}" (*lā tukāthirū llāh fī bilādihi wa-lā turāddūhu fī murādihi* {*innā l-arḍa li-llāhi yūrithuhā man yashāʾu min ʿibādihi*}).[123]

Paralleling rhyming units (two or more) may also be phrased as rhetorical questions, as shown for instance by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī: "Can a sick person recover amidst two physicians?! And can a sheath contain two swords?!" (*hal yabraʾu l-marīḍ bayna l-ṭabībayn wa-hal yasaʿu l-ghimd sayfayn*).[124]

The paralleling construction with two rhyming units is, however, not the only one. The conditional *man* construction is also common, for example (with rhyme and *jinās*): "Whoever is ungrateful for benefit, deserves retribution" (*man kafara l-niʿma stawjaba l-niqma*);[125] a simple proposition, albeit with an assonance and *jinās*, may occur: "The years change the customs" (*inna l-sinīn tughayyiru l-sunan*);[126] and finally rhyming is not necessarily limited to the end of paralleling units: "Obey the sultan of prohibition before the satan of passion" (*aṭiʿ sulṭān al-nahy dūna shayṭān al-hawā*).[127]

In the introduction to his work *al-Tamthīl wa-l-muḥāḍara*, al-Thaʿālibī—unfortunately without defining what *mathal* is—declares his far-reaching goal of including *amthāl* of different periods, peoples, religions, schools of thought (e.g., philosophers, ascetics, etc.), social strata, and professions, in both poetry and prose.[128] He, therefore, supplies us with a precious source for "current *amthāl*" coined by his contemporaries, including al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers. Many of the *amthāl* cited by al-Thaʿālibī are originally poetry lines extracted from their original place for their proverbial quality. It is clear that many of these poetic *amthāl* are so defined in the broadest sense of the term, for sometimes they are nothing but a nice metaphor. Here are some examples of this type composed by courtiers of al-Ṣāḥib and the vizier himself.

Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī [*al-ṭawīl*]:

A-fī l-ḥaqqi an yuʿṭā thalāthūna shāʿiran
Wa-yuḥrama mā dūna l-riḍā shāʿirun mithlī

Kamā sāmaḥū ʿAmran bi-wāwin ziyādatan
Wa-ḍūyiqa bismi llāhi fī alifi l-waṣlī

Is it fair that thirty poets are granted
While a poet like me is denied what is below contentment?

As they gave ʿAmr a *wāw* in excess
And *bismi llāh* was harshly treated in respect to *alif al-waṣl*[129]

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Salāmī [*al-wāfir*]:

Tabassaṭnā ʿalā l-āthāmi lammā
Raʾaynā l-ʿafwa min thamari l-dhunūbī

We have become emboldened regarding offenses when
We saw pardon among the fruits of misdeeds[130]

Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Wa-lā taʿjabā an yamlika l-ʿabdu rabbahū
Fa-inna l-dumā staʿbadna man naḥata l-dumā

Do not marvel at the slave's being a master of his owner
For the idols enslaved those who sculptured them[131]

Ismāʿīl al-Shāshī [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Wa-kuntu arā annā l-tajāriba ʿuddatun
Fa-khānat thiqāta l-nāsi ḥattā l-tajāribū

I used to think that trials are a ready gear [to meet the vicissitudes of Time]
But even trials have betrayed people's trust[132]

Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī [*al-basīṭ*]:

Wa-kuntu yūsufa wa-l-asbāṭu hum wa-abū l-
Asbāṭi anta wa-daʿwāhum daman kadhibā

I was Joseph, they were the Children of Israel, the father of the
Children was you, and their claim was false blood[133]

Al-Ṣāḥib [*al-mutaqārib*]:

Fa-innā l-humūma bi-qadri l-himam

Worries are to the extent of ambitions[134]

Al-Ṣāḥib [*al-rajaz*]:

Ḥifẓu l-lisāni rāḥatu l-insānī
Fa-ḥfaẓhu ḥifẓa l-shukri lil-iḥsānī

Fa-āfatu l-insāni fī l-lisānī

Guarding the tongue is one's peace of mind
So guard it the way gratitude guards benefaction

Because the harm to a person is found in his tongue[135]

On the appreciation for proverbial poetry we can also learn from al-Ṣāḥib's compilation of the *amthāl* in al-Mutanabbī's *dīwān*. In the introduction to this compilation, al-Ṣāḥib notes that al-Mutanabbī, in addition to his distinguished skill in the poetic craft, leaves his rivals behind especially in *amthāl*. This compilation is dedicated to Fakhr al-Dawla, whom al-Ṣāḥib frequently heard quoting fine verses of al-Mutanabbī as *amthāl*.[136] The following examples deal with *ḥilm* (forbearance, clemency, patience, reason) and its opposite *jahl* (ignorance, folly, ruthlessness) [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Idhā qīla rifqan qāla lil-ḥilmi mawḍiʿun
Wa-ḥilmu l-fatā fī ghayri mawḍiʿihī jahlū

If it is said, "gently," he says: "forbearance has its place,
But youthful forbearance out of place is folly"[137]

[*al-ṭawīl*]:

Mina l-ḥilmi an tastaʿmila l-jahla dūnahū
Idhā ttasaʿat fī l-ḥilmi ṭurqu l-maẓālimī

Deliberate forbearance requires that you apply ruthlessness instead of it,
If the ways of iniquity are widened by forbearance[138]

The verse *mathal* type was widely represented and appreciated by al-Thaʿālibī, al-Ṣāḥib, and their contemporaries. Dressed in poetic garb, the message, with its concision, universality, and (often) practical wisdom, was even more appealing in its reception. The critic and poet Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī (390–456/1000–63) wrote that the reason behind versifying a *mathal* was to make it more widespread, lighter to utter, and more enduring.[139] From a historical perspective, the verse *mathal*'s attractiveness has to do with the ancient Arabic tradition of making sentential observations in poetry. A Prophetic saying avers that "in poetry there is wisdom" (*inna li-l-shiʿr ḥikma*). Later, poets relied more and more on Greek and Persian materials to make gnomological observations to the effect that wisdom (*ḥikma*) poetry became a favorite mode of the "modern" poets of the ʿAbbāsid period (*muḥdathūn*).[140]

The influence of *ḥikma* is palpable in the *amthāl* used by al-Ṣāḥib and his courtiers. As a result, it is often impossible to distinguish between *amthāl* and *ḥikam* (aphorisms). We see it in *amthāl* that have a clear admonitory, disillusioned, or instructive tone normally associated with aphoristic expressions. In prose: al-Hamadhānī's "Do not endeavor to surpass God in his lands…", and al-Ṣāḥib's "Obey the sultan of prohibition before the satan of passion"; in poetry: Ismāʿīl al-Shāshī's "I used to think that trials are a ready gear [to meet the vicissitudes of Time] but even trials have betrayed people's trust," al-Ṣāḥib's "Worries are to the extent of ambitions," al-Mutanabbī's "Deliberate forbearance requires that you apply ruthlessness instead of it, if the ways of iniquity are widened by forbearance." The blurry borders between proverbs and aphorisms are also reflected in the headline given by al-Thaʿālibī to the part in his work, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, focusing on them: "The Book of Proverbs, Aphorisms and What Follows Their Model" (*kitāb al-amthāl wa-l-ḥikam wa-mā yaḥdhū ḥadhwahā*).[141]

Based on what we saw, the inclusiveness of the term *mathal* as used in our sources certainly agrees with Sellheim's definition summarized above. It is yet another reminder that "all genres leak."[142] While it is crucial for this and other studies to have a classificatory framework to discuss genres, one should bear in mind that any framework will necessarily show overlapping, ambiguity, and even contradictions. Yet, to a large extent, these are reflective of the real life conditions of any literary field. The genres depicted in this chapter were the main molds for the agents, poets, and prose writers available in the literary field of al-Ṣāḥib's court. In these molds they cast their products using their cultural capital, and competed with their peers for standing and benefits.

Notes

1 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 163–4; on the nature of the field, see also, 181–3, 187.

2 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 30.

3 Bourdieu refers to the patron dependency of pre-modern and early-modern European writers in contrast to the increased liberty of the modern ones in *The Field of Cultural Production*, 112–14.

4 This state of affairs goes hand in hand with the observation of Wolfhart Heinrichs on the typology *maṭbūʿ* ("natural") and *maṣnūʿ* ("artificial/artful"): "It should be noted, however, that there are no schools with these labels. The same poet may write verses in both categories, even within the same poem. The most that can be said is that a given poet has a tendency one way or the other": "*maṭbūʿ* and *maṣnūʿ*," *EAL*, 516.

5 Another observation of Bourdieu's which is irrelevant to the present inquiry is his division of the modern literary field to the two sub-fields of high culture (e.g., symbolist poetry) and low culture (e.g., bestsellers). The court, being an elite institution, had no similar division. Nevertheless, in an interesting "alchemic" socio-literary process, the low (the underworld argot and cultural lore, as reflected among other things in the *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* genre) became attractive and "exotic" to members of the high society (foremost among whom was al-Ṣāḥib himself). Thus, low materials had high demand; coarse and bawdy poetry and gutter slang became *chic* only through the mediation, control, and consumption of the elite. This is the context in which the commission of Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī's *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* as well as the co-optation of underworld figures by al-Ṣāḥib should be understood. On the attraction to the underworld and the obscene in the context of al-Ṣāḥib and some of his courtiers, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature. Part One: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Life and Lore* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 60–79.

6 Geert Jan van Gelder, "Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification in Premodern Arabic Literature," in Bert Roest and Herman Vanstiphout (eds), *Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures* (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 15–31 (the citation above is from p. 17); Julie Scott Meisami, "genres, poetics," *EAL*; idem, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 26–30; Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Literary Theory: The Problem of its Efficiency," in Gustave Edmund von Grunebaum (ed.), *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development. Third Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), 35–43; on medieval Arabic generic classification (in poetry only), see also Gregor Schoeler, "Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern," *ZDMG* 123 (1973), 9–55; the problematics of genre in general are well explained by Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," in Alessandro Duranti (ed.), *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 223–4.

7 See Van Gelder, "Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification," 20–1.

8 Van Gelder made use especially of the term "mode" (paralleled by him to the medieval critics' *gharaḍ*), applying it to the various poetic Arabic genres: Van Gelder, "Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification," 16–17, 20–1 and *passim*; unlike some other formal theories of genre, Alastair Fowler's emphasizes tradition and the diachronic dimension, besides the synchronic, in generic formation and transformation.

> What produces generic resemblances … is tradition: a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes connecting works in the genre. As kinship makes a family, so literary relations of this sort form a genre.… Naturally the genetic make-up alters with slow time, so that we may find the genre's various historical states to be very different from one another. Both historically and within a single period, the family grouping allows for wide variation in the type.
>
> Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 42–3

9 Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 74, 60–1.

10 Ibid., 106–7; Fowler illustrates the distinction between kind and mode thus: "[Shakespeare's] *The Winter's Tale* is a tragicomedy in kind, with parts that are pastoral or romantic in mode. But it is not a romance in kind": ibid., 55.

11 Ibid., 111–12; "A piscatory or a sea eclogue is just as much an eclogue as a pastoral one, but it adds a new range of topics relating to fishermen rather than shepherds": ibid., 112.

12 See R. Jacobi, "*qaṣīda* (pl. *qaṣāʾid*)," *EAL*; following Jacobi, I also treat the ode (*qaṣīda*) as a polythematic poem and not simply a long poem.

13 That is also in keeping with the common practice of medieval anthology editors to classify according to the dominant *gharaḍ*: Heinrichs, "Literary Theory," 43.

14 The *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* of Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī (see below) is a case in point as the brief and trite *nasīb* and final part are completely overshadowed by the lengthy essential part celebrating in detail Banū Sāsān and their practices.

15 Julie Scott Meisami, "*qiṭʿa*," *EAL*.

16 Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 42–3, and 170–90, where one clearly sees that he acknowledges synchronous and diachronic changes in genres, yet does not discuss extra-textual reasons for these.

17 Richard Bauman, "Genre," in idem (ed.), *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-centered Handbook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 57–8; William Hanks illustrates this approach in his study of the rise of new discourse genres in sixteenth-century colonial Yucatán, treating genres as elements of linguistic habitus on which actors improvise in the course of linguistic production: "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice," *American Ethnologist* 14: 4 (1987), 668–92.

18 "Whether we read a text as fiction, parody, prayer, or documentary is a generic decision with important consequences for interpretation": Hanks, "Discourse Genres," 670.

19 As reported by his poet Ibn Bābak: Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 699.

20 Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, the earliest systematic biographer of Persian poets whose work has survived, mentions al-Ṣāḥib as a patron of Pindār-i Rāzī. This able poet is said to have composed poetry in "three languages," namely, Arabic, Persian, and the Daylamī dialect: *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarāʾ* (dated *c.*892/1487), ed. Edward G. Browne (London: Luzac, 1901), 43; Browne lists Pindār among other poets who versified also in a Persian dialect and discusses the little information we have about him: Edward Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), I, 85–6, and II, 117, 157–9, 419; Muḥammad ʿAwfī, the author of the earliest extant Persian literary anthology (dated 617/1220), included a short entry on Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Junaydī, a poet of al-Ṣāḥib's. He described him as a learned littérateur, who had full command of Arabic and Persian, and was skillful at both poetry and prose. As noted by ʿAwfī, al-Junaydī was mentioned in *Yatīmat al-dahr* (Y, IV, 318–19), although in our text he appears as Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ghawwāṣ, without any reference to his relation to al-Ṣāḥib. ʿAwfī ascribes to Abū ʿAbdallāh two lines from an Arabic Mansion Ode composed for the vizier, but according to al-Thaʿālibī these lines were describing the mansion of Abū Jaʿfar al-Mūsawī: *Lubāb al-albāb*, 261; Abū ʿAbdallāh is mentioned briefly in Browne, *A Literary History*, I, 453, 467; ʿAwfī presents Persian poetry composed by the poets Manṭiqī and Khusrawī in praise of al-Ṣāḥib. He also notes that al-Ṣāḥib paid great attention to the (Persian) poetry of Manṭiqī, and preserves a Persian *ghazal* of his and its extemporized Arabic version by Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (discussed above): *Lubāb al-albāb*, 254–7. For a translation of these Persian and Arabic poems and remarks on Manṭiqī and Khusrawī, see Browne, *A Literary History*, I, 463–6 and II, 93–94. These surviving Persian poems dispel the doubt expressed by Charles Pellat, commenting that "[al-Ṣāḥib] *may* have patronized poets writing in Persian": Charles Pellat, "al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," in Julia Ashtiani *et al.* (eds), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 108 (italics are mine); on al-Ṣāḥib's patronage of Persian poetry, see also Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, [1968]), 112, 147; Gilbert Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans, IXe–Xe siècles: fragments rassemblés, édités et traduits* (Tehran: Dép. d'iranologie de l'Institut francoiranien, 1964), I, 15.

21 Meisami, "*qiṭʿa*."

22 Julie Scott Meisami, "*madīḥ, madḥ*," *EAL*; for a monograph studying the panegyric genre as represented by the poet Ibn al-Rūmī, see Beatrice Gruendler, *Medieval*

Arabic Praise Poetry: Ibn al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); for a detailed study of various classical panegyric odes, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

23 *Baghdād fī l-bilād ka-l-ustādh fī l-ʿibād*; "the Master" (*al-ustādh*) was one of the appellations of Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970), the great secretary and vizier, and the patron of the young al-Ṣāḥib.

24 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (d. 132/750), the chief secretary of the last Umayyad caliph Marwān II, is considered to be the founder of Arabic epistolary style: H.A.R. Gibb, "ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā," *EI2*.

25 Y, III, 3; I read *nāḥiyatan* and *abī jādī*, as in Y, A, III, 159, instead of *nājiyatan* and *abī jiyādī*; Iyād in the second line refers to the ancient Arab tribe that settled in Iraq long before the Islamic period and was reputed for its command of Arabic writing: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Abdallāh al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1998), IX, 528; in the last line, the meaning of *abū jād* equals *abjad*, the first of the eight mnemotechnical terms into which the twenty-eight consonants of the Arabic alphabet were divided: G. Weil and G.S. Colin, "Abdjad," *EI2*. Here, it stands synecdochically for the whole alphabet.

26 Y, III, 282.

27 See Geert Jan van Gelder, "Conceit of Pen and Sword," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32: 2 (1987): 337, 339–40; Adrian Gully, "The Sword and the Pen in the Pre-Modern Arabic Heritage: A Literary Representation of an Important Historical Relationship," in Sebastian Günther (ed.), *Ideas, Images and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 403–30; Cl. Huart and A. Grohmann, "Ḳalam," *EI2*.

28 Associating the pen and the sword with the same man (the *mamdūḥ*) in a panegyric occurred from time to time, from the ʿAbbāsid period; van Gelder brings a line by Abū Tammām (d. 231/845) as the first example for that: "Conceit of Pen and Sword," 340–1, 345; as for al-Ṣāḥib himself, maybe because of his ascending from the ranks of the secretaries, in one paragraph cited by al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, he lauds the pen (without mentioning the sword) and speaks highly of its great power in the administration and rule of the world, and even over Fate: *Majmaʿ al-balāgha*, ed. ʿUmar al-Sārīsī (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1986), I, 170.

29 Briggs and Bauman, "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," 222.

30 It should be borne in mind, however, that while commonly dubbed "fragments" by scholars, they were mostly independent short pieces.

31 A. Arazi, "Waṣf," *EI2*; two monographs on ʿAbbāsid ekphrastic poetry are J. Christoph Bürgel, *Die ekphrastischen Epigramme des Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); and Alma Giese, *Waṣf bei Kušāǧim: eine Studie zur beschreibenden Dichtkunst der Abbasidenzeit* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1981).

32 Y, III, 44. I read *muthāqifun*, as in Y, A, III, 206, instead of *wa-muthāqifin*, which does not agree with the meter.

33 Bürgel, *Die ekphrastischen Epigramme*, 225–8.

34 Y, III, 282–3.

35 Y, III, 44–55 (the Mansion Odes).

36 Y, III, 68–74 (al-Thaʿālibī preserved large selections from three Elephant Odes by ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bābak, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Jawharī, and Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin); al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, I, 68–70 (Ibn Bābak's selection and much shorter ones by al-Jawharī and al-Khāzin); *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 879 (only a much shorter selection by al-Jawharī); al-Ṣāḥib himself described the Battle of Jurjān in his *Raṣāʾil*, 22–30, 33 (the capturing of the elephant is mentioned on p. 28); other historical accounts of the Battle are: Abū l-Naṣr Muḥammad al-ʿUtbī, *al-Yamīnī fī sharḥ akhbār al-Sulṭān Yamīn al-Dawla wa-Amīn al-Milla Maḥmūd al-Ghaznawī*, ed.

Iḥsān al-Thāmirī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 2004), 56–61 (al-Jawharī's Elephant Ode, probably in its entirety, is produced by al-ʿUtbī in the end of the account; according to him the Battle took place in the previous *hijrī* year, namely, Ramaḍān 371/March 982); Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 38–9.

37 Stefan Sperl shows how the encounter with the other, materialized for al-Buḥturī through the carefully described ruins of Ctesiphon and the Sāsānian frescos he observes, leads to the recovery of his "alienated self": Stefan Sperl, "Crossing enemy boundaries: al-Buḥturī's ode on the ruins of Ctesiphon re-read in the light of Virgil and Wilfred Owen," *Bulletin of SOAS* 69: 3 (2006): 365–79; Samer Ali points out that the poet's sympathy with the Sāsānians' misfortune and by extension that of the ʿAbbāsids, achieved through the encounter with the ruins, seeks to heal a communal rift: Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 153–70.

38 See Briggs and Bauman, "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," 225–7.

39 Y, III, 68; *Shiʿr ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib al-Zubaydī*, ed. Muṭāʿ al-Ṭarābīshī, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya, 1985), 79–82; Charles Pellat, "ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib," *EI2*; *GAS*, II, 306–7.

40 See Charles Pellat, "Mudjūn," *EI2*; Everett K. Rowson, "*mujūn*," *EAL*; J.E. Montgomery, "Sukhf," *EI2*; Everett K. Rowson, "*sukhf*," *EAL*.

41 Rowson, "*mujūn*," and "*sukhf*," *EAL*.

42 Sinan Antoon, "The Poetics of the Obscene: Ibn al-Ḥajjāj and *Sukhf"* (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2006), 30.

43 Ibid., 43–5.

44 Briggs and Bauman, "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," 223.

45 Y, III, 101–5; this generic classification (*wa-li-l-Ṣāḥib fī l-hijāʾ wa-l-mujūn*) is visible also in al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 129.

46 *Akhlāq*, 166; for *sukhf* (as dubbed by al-Tawḥīdī) in heavily-rhymed prose, see *Akhlāq*, 173.

47 Y, III, 147; cf. al-Hamadhānī's improvised answer (*Dīwān*, 38; discussed in Chapter 2) to al-Ḥimyarī, "my head and leg are in your mother's slit/together with the thing hanging from your donkey"; on the application of language censorship by medieval Arabic speakers and the various ways in which the language reflected taboo concepts, see Erez Naaman, "Women Who Cough and Men Who Hunt: Taboo and Euphemism (*kināya*) in the Medieval Islamic World," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133: 3 (2013): 467–93.

48 Y, III, 161; ʿAntara b. Shaddād was a sixth-century AD warrior-poet of the ʿAbs central Arabian tribe, who displayed great exploits in the inter-tribal battlefield: R. Blachère, "ʿAntara," *EI2*.

49 G.J.H. van Gelder, "*hijāʾ*," *EAL*; for a monograph on this mode, see idem, *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes towards Invective Poetry (*hijāʾ*) in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

50 One finds many prose *hijāʾ* pieces in *sajʿ* reported by al-Tawḥīdī to have been orally performed by al-Ṣāḥib. These pieces directed against various individuals were couched in an abusive and often obscene language. What differentiates them from street cursing is the high register of language usually used, and features characteristic of artistic prose (rhyme, parallelisms, paronomasia, etc.): *Akhlāq*, 121–2, 123–4, 140, 394; we do have an invective ode section directed against al-Ṣāḥib long after his demise (and as such, naturally, outside our field) by the famous philosopher and historian Abū ʿAlī Miskawayh (*c.*320–421/932–1030), who was a bitter enemy of his: T, I, 99–100.

51 Jesting *hijāʾ* is to be studied from the vantage point of power relations. The extent to which the hierarchically superior al-Ṣāḥib may amuse himself or others (other than the victim) is by all means larger than that of his inferiors.

52 For the invective poems related to this conflict, see Y, II, 162 and Y, III, 175.

53 Y, III, 102; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 55–7, and al-ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid al-tanṣīṣ*, IV, 118–19.

54 Y, III, 107; al-Thaʿālibī produces this line also in *Kitāb al-kināya*, 148, where euphemisms (*kināyāt*) for bad omens are discussed. Among the antonymic euphemisms he specifies is "Abū Yaḥyā" [=the Father of He'll-live] for the angel of death (*malak al-mawt*); Abū Yaḥyā also means simply "death": Lane, "*ḥ.y.y.*"

55 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 30; Bosworth's work, including a comprehensive study of Banū Sāsān from social, cultural, and philological aspects, is centered on two *qaṣīda sasāniyya*s composed by Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī and Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Ḥillī (edited, translated, and commented upon in Vol. 2).

56 Y, III, 175; ten lines from the model *qaṣīda* are preserved in al-Thaʿālibī's entry on al-ʿUkbarī: Y, II, 285–6; on these two poets, see *GAS*, II, 566, 645.

57 Y, III, 175.

58 Y, III, 176–94; see Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 80–95 for a detailed discussion of form and context in the *qaṣīda*.

59 Y, III, 184; Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, II, 201.

60 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, II, 250.

61 *Barkūsh* seems to have something to do with the Persian *gūsh*, "ear." In literal translation *bargūsh* means "on the ear," and given the context, one wonders whether it was not originally *bīgūsh*, "without an ear." *Barkakk*, however, appears to be from the Syriac *kakkā*, "tooth." *Bar* means "the son of," but also "the possessor of," and therefore *barkakk* denotes "the possessor of a tooth."

62 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 93.

63 *Akhlāq*, 186; on the eloquent multifaceted criminal al-Aqṭaʿ, see Chapter 5.

64 *Akhlāq*, 185.

65 G. Borg, "*rithāʾ*," *EAL*; Charles Pellat, "Marthiya," *EI2*.

66 Y, III, 112–18.

67 Each as a *qiṭʿa* of two lines: Y, III, 107.

68 Y, III, 55–68 (*dhikr al-birdhawniyyāt*); composing an elegy on the loss of an animal was a legitimate act: Pellat, "Marthiya." For several interesting examples of elegies on animals (a goat, a cat, an unidentified bird, and a ring-dove) composed by the secretary al-Qāsim b. Yūsuf (*fl.* first half of third/ninth century), see K.A. Fāriq, "An ʿAbbāsid Secretary-Poet who was Interested in Animals," *Islamic Culture* 24: 4 (1950): 261–70.

69 Y, III, 107.

70 Among the *ikhwāniyyāt* poems collected by al-Thaʿālibī, the only relatively long pieces, in addition to an ode, were composed by Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd: Y, III, 17–21.

71 On epigrams, see Geert Jan van Gelder, "epigram," *EAL*.

72 *Yatīmat al-dahr* includes *ikhwāniyyāt* composed by al-Ṣāḥib, Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, Abū l-Fatḥ al-Bustī (poet and *kātib* under the Ghaznawid rulers Sebüktigin and Maḥmūd: J.W Fück, "al-Bustī, Abū l-Fatḥ ʿAlī b. Muḥammad," *EI2*), Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī, and Abū l-Faḍl al-Mīkālī.

73 Ibn Yaʿqūb is described as *naqīb al-budūr*, "the chief of full-moons," that is, moon-faced boys. *Naqīb*, however, is also a euphemism for "pimp" (*qawwād*): al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb al-kināya*, 157; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Tīfāshī, *Nuzhat al-albāb fīmā lā yūjadu fī kitāb*, ed. Jamāl Jumʿa (London: Riad El-Rayyes, 1992), 91–2.

74 Y, III, 97–9.

75 Y, III, 99; al-Ṣāḥib plays with the two words معدة and مودة, whose graphic representation is the same, except for *ʿayn* in the former where the latter has *wāw*.

76 Y, III, 20–1; the first line is also cited in Y, III, 160; cf. (in prose) Y, III, 84 and al-Ḥuṣrī, *Nūr al-ṭarf*, 271–2.

77 G.J.H van Gelder, "*lughz*" and "*muʿammā*," *EAL*; M. Bencheneb, "Lughz," *EI2*; an additional term, *uḥjiyya* (pl. *aḥājī*), "conundrum," means fairly the same as *lughz*

(Bencheneb, "Lughz," see his example), but may also be employed indiscriminately with the other terms: van Gelder, "*lughz*," *EAL*; according to Ewald Wagner, Abū Nuwās might have been among the first poets to write independent puzzle poems (*Rätselgedichte*), cultivating only one specific sort of puzzles, namely, the *muʿammā*. Wagner, describing this mode as "especially letter or word puzzles," goes on to translate and discuss various examples: *Abū Nuwās: eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen ʿAbbāsidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965), 379–83; apart from the meaning (and function) discussed here, *muʿammā* also denotes "secret writing" and "code," like those employed for secret correspondence. On that, see C.E. Bosworth, "Muʿammā," *EI2*, and M. Mrayati *et al.* (ed.), *Three Treatises on Cryptanalysis of Poetry* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center, 2006) for a bilingual edition of three illuminating medieval works (the earliest was composed by Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, d. 322/934).

78 Y, I, 173; al-Thaʿālibī regarded (Y, I, 171) Abū l-Qāsim al-Zāhī as an excellent composer of ekphrastic (*waṣf)* poetry. Indeed, van Gelder is right in pointing out the stylistic similarity between *lughz* and much ekphrastic poetry, like al-Maʾmūnī's: van Gelder, "*lughz*," *EAL*; reading the enigmatic poems of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Muflis, who composed a lot of *lughz* and *aḥājī* poetry for Bahāʾ al-Dawla (the supreme Būyid *amīr*, r. 379–403/989–1012), one may easily consider them *waṣf*: T, I, 16–18.

79 Although normally solving a *muʿammā* does require much thinking, according to a line by al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Zulālī: Y, I, 222.

80 Al-Hamadhānī, *Dīwān*, 7–8; the second *muʿammā* (also a *lughz* strictly speaking) addressed to al-Ṣāḥib by al-Hamadhānī is found ibid., 56.

81 Jamel E. Bencheikh, "Les secrétaires poètes et animateurs de cenacles aux IIe et IIIe siècles de l'hégire: contribution à l'analyse d'une production poétique," *Journal Asiatique* 263 (1975): 265–8, 271, 312–13.

82 Y, IV, 274; this statement of al-Ṣāḥib is also cited by al-Thaʿālibī speaking in praise of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baghawī, who excelled in both the secretarial craft of correspondence and poetry: T, II, 57.

83 T, I, 107 (the poetic highlights are on pp. 108–12); Abū l-ʿAlāʾ, son of the secretary Abū l-Qāsim, who was incarcerated by al-Ṣāḥib, grew up in al-Rayy, and was appointed to high bureaucratic positions under the Ghaznawids Maḥmūd and Masʿūd: T, I, 107.

84 Such a comment, for instance, is a five-line poem on a deposed functionary who sat above Abū l-ʿAlāʾ in the session (*majlis*) of the vizier: T, I, 109.

85 Likewise, al-Thaʿālibī preserves for us a part of an elegy on Fakhr al-Dawla by Abū l-Faraj al-Sāwī. Al-Sāwī is introduced as the most famous of al-Ṣāḥib's secretaries for his beautiful handwriting and as a very eloquent man. His poetry is said to be among the most exemplary secretarial poetry (*shiʿr al-kuttāb*): Y, III, 211; in three other places in *al-Yatīma*, however, when a person's poetry is characterized as *shiʿr kuttābī*, we do not find examples of "heavy" modes, such as *madḥ* and *marthiya*: Y, IV, 297–8; T, II, 25; Y, IV, 278–81.

86 *Maḥāsin* is probably used here in the technical sense developed by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, and thus characterizes al-Barūjirdī's poetry as artful/artificial, a trait of the secretaries' poetry according to Bencheikh; Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908), the first critic to devote a monograph to *badīʿ* ("new style"), listed twelve "beauties" of speech (*maḥāsin kalām*) to complement the five key figures of *badīʿ*: W.P. Heinrichs, "*badīʿ*," *EAL*.

87 Y, IV, 278–9; Ibn Ẓāfir, *Badāʾiʿ al-badāʾih*, 99.

88 A slightly different typology comes out of al-Thaʿālibī's *Siḥr al-balāgha*, an anthology of exemplary prose—part of which is poetry unraveled into prose by the compiler—dealing with various subjects. The material is almost exclusively from al-Thaʿālibī's period, but is usually presented without attribution to the authors. One

chapter is dedicated to *ikhwāniyyāt*, where we find (anonymous) extracts from sample letters expressing feelings and referring to conditions like affection, yearning, union, admonition, complaint, anger, and apologies. The chapter, however, does not include greeting and consolation letters, or correspondence regarding sickness and recuperation, to which he dedicates three separate chapters. As for formal correspondence, several examples are found in the *sulṭāniyyāt* chapter.

89 A. Arazi and H. Ben-Shammay, "Risāla," *EI2*; Maḥmūd Ṣāliḥ, *Funūn al-nathr fī l-adab al-ʿabbāsī* (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1994), 101–24; ʿUmar al-Sārīsī suggests to divide *rasāʾil ikhwāniyya* to three categories: private (discussing all kinds of matters, relations, and feelings between *two* friends), private with some generalization (a private correspondence between two friends notwithstanding, some abstraction or universalization of the issue at stake moves it beyond the reciprocal level), and general (epistles on the topic of friendship in general, like al-Tawḥīdī's, not directed to a specific person or discussing a certain relationship): Umar al-Sārīsī, *Fī adab al-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī* (Amman: self-publishing, 2004), 8–11.

90 Zakī Mubārak, *al-Nathr al-fannī fī l-qarn al-rābiʿ*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya, 1934), I, 163.

91 S. Leder, "prose, non-fiction, medieval," *EAL*; Stefan Leder and Hilary Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 23 (1992), 8–10; for illustrated discussions of the friendship letter see Ṣālih, *Funūn al-nathr*, 101–24; Shawqī Ḍayf, *al-ʿAṣr al-ʿabbāsī l-awwal* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, [1966]), 491–506; idem, *al-ʿAṣr al-ʿabbāsī l-thānī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1973), 562–73.

92 Among the relevant fraternal letters we hold, whose composer is not al-Ṣāḥib, are those by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī recorded in *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.): three fraternal letters to al-Ṣāḥib (pp. 75–7, 104–7, 194–5), one to Abū Isḥāq the chamberlain (9–16; in which he chastises him for his ingratitude to al-Ṣāḥib), one to the poet Abū l-Ḥasan al-Badīhī (235–50; in which Abū Bakr severely attacked and ridiculed al-Badīhī, claiming he had committed an offense against him), and one to al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī (253–4).

93 It is described by al-Thaʿālibī once as a letter (*risāla*; Y, I, 89), and at other times as a short letter (*ruqʿa*; see below under "Short Passage (*faṣl*) and *Ruqʿa*"); letters may be sometimes very long, as the one (dubbed *kitāb* by al-Thaʿālibī) written by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh al-Khāzin to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī—both courtiers of al-Ṣāḥib's: Y, III, 148–51; frequently, letters—for their length—are not produced in full by anthology compilers, but only the most exquisite or relevant passages (*fuṣūl*) are displayed, as in Y, III, 274–5 (a passage from "a long letter" [*kitāb ṭawīl*] from al-Ṣāḥib to the father of the poet Abū Muʿammar al-Ismāʿīlī).

94 These two (unattributed) lines, with a small change, are from an elegy by al-Mutanabbī on the death of Sayf al-Dawla's mother: *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 149; al-Thaʿālibī alerts the reader to that and notes the small change made by al-Ṣāḥib (Y, I, 89): al-Mutanabbī's *wa-law kāna l-nisāʾu ka-man faqadnā* ("if women were like the one we lost") turns into *fa-law kāna l-nisāʾu ka-mithli hādhihi*. This change is *in tandem* with the common observation of the medieval critics regarding the thematic similarity between praise and elegiac poetry with only the *anta* (you are) changing to *kunta* (you were). Thus, al-Ṣāḥib recontextualizes two lines from an elegy, with a minor change only, as praise. Since this elegy was well known, and because of its recontextualization by al-Ṣāḥib, he was not charged as a plagiarist for using it without attribution to its author. Indeed, al-Thaʿālibī does not include the lines among those specified as *sariqāt* ("literary thefts") from al-Mutanabbī: Y, I, 91–4.

95 Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣri, *Zahr al-ādāb wa-thamr al-albāb*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, 2nd ed. ([Cairo:] Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1969), 347–8; different versions of this letter are found in Y, III, 83–4 (and Y, I, 89—only the very beginning and the two lines); al-Thaʿālibī, *Taḥsīn al-qabīḥ*, 62; idem, *Siḥr al-balāgha*,

91–2; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 408–9; whereas *al-Yatīma* (in both places), *Taḥsīn al-qabīḥ*, and *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ* mention al-Ṣāḥib as the composer, the identity of the writer is not disclosed in *Siḥr al-balāgha* and *Zahr al-ādāb*.

96 On its characteristics and development, see Julie Scott Meisami, "artistic prose," *EAL*.

97 Al-Mutanabbī did not develop this motif in the elegy beyond that line; unraveling poetry into prose and using it in correspondence was one of al-Ṣāḥib's composition practices. Al-Thaʿālibī dedicates a sub-chapter in his entry on al-Mutanabbī to show the great influence played by the poetry of the latter on the vizier's and others' output (Y, I, 87–91). These two lines are among the examples produced by the anthologist.

98 The difference between the earlier ʿAbbāsid prose style and the later ʿAbbāsid *inshāʾ* is clearly demonstrated by Maḥmūd Ṣāliḥ's juxtaposition of a shorter version of al-Ṣāḥib's letter to another by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (102–39/720–56) on the very same topic (congratulating a friend on the birth of a daughter): *Funūn al-nathr*, 121–2. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's is a much simpler, pithy piece of three lines with no quotations. It nonetheless seems to already have the potential for future development with the assonance, *sajʿ*, and parallelisms it does have.

99 Abū l-Ḥusayn Hilāl al-Ṣābī, *Kitāb ghurar al-balāgha*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dībājī ([Casablanca]: Jāmiʿat al-Ḥasan al-Thānī, 1988), 379–82 (titled: "*ilā rajul wulidat lahu bint*").

100 For remarks on the relation between Muʿtazilī doctrine and the development of prose, see Leder and Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 8.

101 Y, III, 79, 83–4. This version is shorter than the one translated above.

102 Y, III, 85, 88.

103 Y, III, 81–2: *faṣl: anā ʿalā ṭaraf bustān adhkaranī warduhu l-mutafattaḥ * bi-khulqika * wa-jadwaluhu l-sāyiḥ * bi-ṭabʿika * wa-zahruhu l-janniyyu * bi-qurbika ** (rhyming has been marked with asterisks).

104 Leder and Kilpatrick, "Classical Arabic Prose Literature," 10; Leder, "prose, non-fiction, medieval," 617.

105 This is made clear by Abū l-Ḥusayn Hilāl al-Ṣābī's introduction to *Kitāb ghurar al-balāgha*, 45–6, where he disagrees with the methodological approach of a previous collection of *fuṣūl* extracted from letters of epistolary writers, and instead stands up for *fuṣūl* created ad hoc by the author. This was the approach he adopted in his work, which includes model *fuṣūl* (and also formal documents of appointment, oaths, etc.) of the different correspondence types, formal and informal alike. At least in one place Abū l-Ḥusayn uses *fiqar* (paragraphs) in the sense of *fuṣūl*: ibid., 45 (l. 10–11).

106 Lane, "*r.q.ʿ.*"; the basic meaning of *ruqʿa* (pl. *riqāʿ*) is "a patch."

107 Y, III, 80; in the last sentence of the present note, al-Ṣāḥib puns on the words compulsion (*ikrāh*), coercion (*ijbār*), and choice (*ikhtiyār*), alluding clearly to the Muʿtazilī tenet of free will espoused by him; for two other samples of note-type *riqāʿ*, see Y, III, 86 (al-Ṣāḥib welcomes a visitor, the Qāḍī Abū Bishr al-Jurjānī) and 86–7 (al-Ṣāḥib thanks someone for a Qurʾān copy presented to him).

108 Thus defined by al-Thaʿālibī in *Taḥsīn al-qabīḥ*, 62 (*wa-hādhihi nuskhat ruqʿa li-bni ʿAbbād fī l-tahniʾa bi-bna*); in Y, III, 83–4, it is less clear, titled simply "*tahniʾa bi-bint*," but placed after and before *riqāʿ*; as mentioned above, it was also described by him as a *risāla*: Y, I, 89.

109 The word *al-dhikrā*, translated above as "being reminded," is connotative of several Qurʾānic verses, in which the meaning ranges (according to Lane, under *dhikrā*) between remembrance with the reception of exhortation (Q 47:18), repentance (Q 89:23), a reminding (Q 11:120), an admonition (Q 38:43), and being reminded (Q 38:46). Consequently, the use of this word evokes the believer's duty to follow the right way and fear God's punishment.

110 Y, III, 37–8; the copyist Abū Ḥafṣ wittily alludes to two sayings (brought by Lane under *juradh*): *akthara llāhu jirdhāna baytika* and *tafarraqat jirdhānu baytihi*. Lane

translates the former literally "may God multiply the large rats of thy house, or tent," and writes that it means "may God fill thy house, or tent, with wheat, or food." The latter, literally "the large rats of his house, or tent, became dispersed," refers to the opposite situation (the lack of food); al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, II, 375, provides this version as an example of allusion (*taʿrīḍ*): "Abū Ḥafṣ al-Warrāq said to al-Ṣāḥib: 'Indeed, the rats in my house walk with a cane due to their emaciation.' He answered: 'Announce to them the arrival of wheat'." This very version appears in the selective Persian translation of *Muḥāḍarāt* by Muḥammad Qazwīnī (d. 1117/1705), *Nawādir* (Tehran: Surūsh, 1993), 140; al-Ṭībī produces as an example for allusion (*talwīḥ*) a terse anecdote whose pragmatic message goes along the same lines of the *ruqʿa* translated above: "a woman complained to one of the children of Saʿd b. ʿUbāda about the scarcity of mice at her house and he said: 'Fill her house with bread, clarified butter, and meat!' ": *Kitāb al-tibyān*, 266.

111 Ḍayf, *al-ʿAṣr al-ʿabbāsī l-awwal*, 489–90; see ibid. for various examples; for examples of poetic and Qurʾānic *tawqīʿāt*, see Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Kalāʿī, *Iḥkām ṣanʿat al-kalām*, ed. Muḥammad al-Dāya (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1966), 162–4.

112 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, II, 23; Mohsen Zakeri, "Some Early Persian Apophthegmata (*tawqīʿāt*) in Arabic Transmission," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002): 286, 292–3, 300; Zakeri indicates the transformation of *tawqīʿāt*, originally epitomizing the decisions of Sāsānian kings in specific cases, to mottoes and proverbs. This happened owing to their detachment in the course of time from their original context: ibid., 293–4; Zakeri notes as well the importance of the *tawqīʿāt*, spoken by learned rulers and policy makers, as representative of the elite's attitudes at a given time: ibid., 300.

113 For example, "He who reads this response—my handwriting in it is a proof, and my expression in it is an evidence": Y, IV, 238; "al-Ṣāḥib wrote an *alif* facing *faʿala*, meaning thereby *afʿalu* [=will do]": Y, III, 38.

114 Al-Kalāʿī, *Iḥkām ṣanʿat al-kalām*, 160–1; al-Thaʿālibī produces these anecdotes in a section on the vizier's signature phrases (*tawqīʿāt*): Y, III, 38–9.

115 Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ al-amthāl*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (n.p.: ʿĪsā l-Bābī, n.d.), I, 221. Al-Maydānī comments "it is coined for those who hope for a thing not to be hoped for"; Abū l-Maḥāsin Muḥammad al-Shaybī illustrates this proverb with several poems and also paraphrases the anecdote on al-Ṣāḥib's signing with it: *Timthāl al-amthāl*, ed. Asʿad Dhubyān (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1982), I, 396–7.

116 Y, IV, 238 (translated in Chapter 1); writing letters of recommendation by one's master were mentioned in eighth/fourteenth-century Egypt as *al-madḥ fī ruqʿa*, and they were supposed to be honest and factual: Franz Rosenthal, " 'Blurbs' (*taqrîẓ*) from Fourteenth-Century Egypt," *Oriens* 27 (1981): 179.

117 A *tawqīʿ*, in which al-Ṣāḥib gives a name and a *kunya* to the newborn son of a descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in response to his father's request, also shows a manifest *inshāʾ* style and is relatively long for a *tawqīʿ*: Y, III, 37.

118 R. Sellheim, "Mathal," *EI2*.

119 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl wa-l-muḥāḍara*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1961), 250.

120 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 250; Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī ʿAwn (d. 322/934), *al-Ajwiba al-muskita*, ed. Mayy Yūsuf (Cairo: ʿAyn li-l-Dirāsa, 1996), 188; al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, IV, 62; in the last two references, the saying is attributed to a resident of Medina.

121 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 187.

122 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 192.

123 Ibid., 196; the citation in braces is from Q 7:128.

124 Ibid., 194; this *mathal* appears (with the insignificant variation of *ʿalīl* instead of *marīḍ*) in a letter from Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī to al-Ṣāḥib's chamberlain Abū Isḥāq (discussed above), when the writer rejects the possibility of genuinely serving a

second patron while the first is still alive. This letter could well be the source from which al-Thaʿālibī took the *mathal*: *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 13/ *Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 136.

125 Y, III, 77; a close variant of this proverb says, "whoever is ungrateful for benefit, invokes retribution" (*man ghamaṭa l-niʿma istanzala l-niqma*): al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 187; three other proverbs with the same message indicate al-Ṣāḥib's vengeful approach as a patron to ingratitude on the part of protégés: Y, III, 78; al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 189.

126 Y, III, 78.

127 Ibid.; the pair *sulṭān* and *shayṭān* may also be taken as *jinās*.

128 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 5.

129 Ibid., 162; these two lines are part of an ode addressed to al-Ṣāḥib (Y, III, 142–3, with the two lines slightly modified). In his protest, al-Rustamī eloquently uses a simile from the realm of grammar, or, to be more precise, orthography: While the private name ʿAmr was given a superfluous *wāw* (written عمرو), "in the name" in the *basmala* formula was deprived of *alif al-waṣl* (written بسم).

130 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 117; al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 171 (al-Thaʿālibī adds that al-Ṣāḥib was extremely moved by it); this line was taken out of an ode eulogizing al-Ṣāḥib in Esfahan, for which al-Salāmī was generously rewarded: Y, II, 159–60; the medieval *dīwān* of al-Salāmī did not come down to us, but his surviving poems were collected and edited by Ṣabīḥ Radīf, *Shiʿr al-Salāmī* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Īmān, 1971).

131 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 125; this line appears in Y, IV, 129, under the heading of witticisms from Abū Bakr's amatory verse; *dumya* (pl. *duman*) is also a beautiful woman.

132 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 126; this line by al-Shāshī is extracted from an ode in praise of al-Ṣāḥib: Y, III, 202.

133 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 20; the origin of this line is an ode, in which al-Maʾmūnī asked al-Ṣāḥib for his permission to leave: Y, IV, 85 (translated in Chapter 4); al-Maʾmūnī compared himself to Joseph, as narrated in sūrat Yūsuf. Joseph's brothers presented his shirt with false blood on it to their father, Jacob, as evidence that their brother had been devoured by a wolf: Q 12:18.

134 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 122; this is the second hemistich of a line starting with "I then said, leave me with my agony" (*fa-qultu daʿīnī ʿalā ghuṣṣatī*): Y, III, 108; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 549.

135 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl*, 123; al-Ḥuṣrī, *Nūr al-ṭarf*, 225.

136 Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, *al-Amthāl al-sāʾira min shiʿr al-Mutanabbī*, ed. Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1965), 21–22; Fakhr al-Dawla, with the assistance of al-Ṣāḥib (who had been beforehand an opponent of his), assumed power in 373/983 in al-Rayy as the head of the Būyid family and an independent prince: Claude Cahen, "Fakhr al-Dawla, Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan," *EI2*; the honorifics Shāhanshāh and Malik al-Umma added to the title Fakhr al-Dawla by al-Ṣāḥib suggest that this compilation was dedicated after 373/983. Before that date, al-Ṣāḥib had continuously opposed Fakhr al-Dawla.

137 Al-Ṣāḥib, *al-Amthāl al-sāʾira*, 24; al-Barqūqī (ed.), *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 305. The line was extracted from an ode in praise of Shujāʿ b. Muḥammad al-Ṭāʾī l-Manbijī, and "gently" means in the context: "[treat your opponents in battle] gently."

138 Al-Ṣāḥib, *al-Amthāl al-sāʾira*, 32; al-Barqūqī (ed.), *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, IV, 238. The line was extracted from an ode in praise of the *amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ṭughj.

139 Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, I, 282.

140 Julie Scott Meisami, "*ḥikma*," *EAL*.

141 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 183.

142 Briggs and Bauman, "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," 227.

4 The hegemonic taste in the literary field

I Poetry recited at the inauguration event as a test-case

Following al-Ṣāḥib's move to his newly-built mansion in Esfahan, probably in 366/976,[1] a memorable inauguration event took place at which many poets recited odes. The vizier had prompted the poets to describe the mansion in their odes, and this indeed was their key theme, besides the lauded figure of its owner which was often inextricable from the mansion. Twenty selections from this poetry came down to us in a letter sent by Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī. Al-Thaʿālibī, to whom Abū Bakr read the letter, preserved it in *Yatīmat al-dahr*.[2] Despite the fact that the odes have not survived in their complete versions, we still have a significant poetic collection, in which nine odes exceed ten lines, the longest being al-Rustamī's (46 lines). Unfortunately, except for a few general remarks at the beginning of the letter, we have no comments on the performance, which could have enhanced our understanding of the odes and the event. These two limitations of incompleteness and lack of sufficient contextual detail notwithstanding, the surviving material constitutes an important opportunity for the study of the prevalent stylistic tendencies in the field.

My working assumption was that given the great importance of this event, the recited Mansion Odes reflected to a large extent the hegemonic stylistic norms in the literary field of al-Ṣāḥib's court. Given the uneven selections at hand, however, a close comparative study of the poems' structure cannot yield systematic results that could help shed light on their dominant style. Instead, as I will explain, it would be more productive to subject one ode, al-Rustamī's, to a close scrutiny. One of the few structural conclusions we may still draw is that all selections, except the last two, feature the ode's monorhyme at the end of both hemistiches in the first line, and hence it is most likely that they were cited from the start. The Mansion Odes as a whole show a leaning toward the "natural" (*maṭbūʿ*) style rather than the artful/artificial (*maṣnūʿ*), while they do moderately incorporate features from the latter. This is despite the fact that *waṣf* may give itself easily to a mannerist descriptive style.[3] *Maṭbūʿ* and *maṣnūʿ* were binary oppositions used at the time of the "moderns" (*muḥdathūn*) of the ʿAbbāsid period to typify those whose poetry (or the poetry itself) was spontaneous against those whose poetry (or the poetry itself) was "crafted" with rhetorical figures to make the content strange and novel. The poets Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī came to personify (respectively) the *maṣnūʿ* verses *maṭbūʿ* dichotomy.[4]

Of all the Mansion Odes, al-Rustamī's deserves to be scrutinized, since it is the longest selection (46 lines), and the one whose length and structure indicate that it is the closest to its complete form. It is also because Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, as he told al-Thaʿālibī, subsequently emulated al-Rustamī's ode in a *muʿāraḍa*, based on its superiority to all other Mansion Odes.[5] "Emulating" is an act based on artistic appreciation for a model poem (acknowledging, at the least, that it deserves to be challenged). Abū Bakr's eminence as both a literary connoisseur and an esteemed courtier of al-Ṣāḥib at the time, suggests that al-Rustamī's ode was highly valued. Furthermore, al-Ṣāḥib had a remarkably high opinion and admiration for al-Rustamī's poetry. He once said that al-Rustamī was the best poet of his city (Esfahan) and at another time that he considered him the best poet of his period, "and promoted him over the majority of his courtiers and protégés."[6] Al-Ṣāḥib's high opinion of al-Rustamī's verse is manifest in a comment made by the poet Ibn Bābak:

> I heard al-Ṣāḥib saying: I was praised—and God knows [the precise number]—in 100,000 odes in Arabic and Persian … I have never been delighted by poetry and by a poet to the degree that Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī l-Iṣfahānī delighted me in his words [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Waritha l-wizārata kābiran ʿan kābirin*
> *Mawṣūlata l-isnādi bi-l-isnādī*
>
> *Yarwī ʿani l-ʿAbbāsi ʿAbbādun wizā*
> *Ratahū wa-Ismāʿīlu ʿan ʿAbbādī*
>
> He inherited the vizierate, handed down from father to son,
> With its chain of transmission bound with another [=that of the Būyid *amīr*s]
>
> ʿAbbād passes on his vizierate on the authority of al-ʿAbbās
> And Ismāʿīl on that of ʿAbbād[7]

Al-Thaʿālibī presents two considerable pieces of this ode, which I will call A and B (comprising 32 and 14 lines, respectively). It starts with a *nasīb* (A: lines 1–5) in which the poet speaks of his desperate love, followed by a *raḥīl* (A: lines 6–16) describing his tireless pursuit of fast riders whom he believed to be traveling to his patron al-Ṣāḥib. It continues with a *waṣf* (A: lines 17–32) of al-Ṣāḥib's mansion, at which he arrives at the end of his journey. Following it, al-Thaʿālibī introduces the second piece (B) that he finds the best of its kind, being the *waṣf* of water running (in the mansion's garden), which is probably the continuation of the mansion's description (B: lines 1–3). The selection ends with a *madīḥ* (B: lines 4–14) of al-Ṣāḥib, whose last line might well have ended the poem given its emphatic eulogistic declaration. Hence, the two pieces making up this selection form a quadripartite ode (*nasīb*, *raḥīl*, *waṣf*, *madīḥ*).

While we cannot view this selection as a complete poem, it is still necessary to give due consideration to the four parts that are clearly evident in it. For this structure distinguishes al-Rustamī's ode from the prevalent structure of the ʿAbbāsid ode, which was normally bipartite, consisting of *nasīb* and *madīḥ*—the *raḥīl* being omitted or alluded to in a few lines as an introduction to the *madīḥ*. The long Bedouinic *raḥīl* (11 lines), depicting the poet's exertions in reaching his patron, places it with the typical early Islamic or Umayyad panegyric tripartite ode.[8] Like the Umayyad ode, it unfolds (A: line 6) with *wāw rubba* a descriptive narrative of the desert journey addressing directly the patron (*… ilayka*) in this introductory line.[9] The poet emphasizes his perseverance in this journey following and serving fast riders, with the repetitive use of the *wa-in* anaphora twelve times. He ends the *raḥīl* (A: line 16) by alluding to his humiliation ("They think that I beg for the leftovers of their provisions") due to his passionate love (whose effect—crying his eyes out—is seen in A: line 15), in a way that ties the *raḥīl* with the previous *nasīb*, and hints to the suffering of his swift she-camel and those of others traveling to the vizier. Thus concluding the *raḥīl* calls to mind the famous description of the Umayyad ode by Ibn Qutayba, in which the poet—having narrated his hardships as well as those of his she-camel during the journey—justifies his expectation for proper reward from the addressed patron.[10] On the whole, the narrative *raḥīl* is almost completely devoid of figures of speech and gives the poem a dynamic spirit.

Before I proceed to analyze the style of this selection focusing on its metaphors, it is necessary to discuss briefly the nature of this major rhetorical figure. The key feature of *muḥdath* poetry since its beginning in the early ʿAbbāsid period (mid-second/eighth century), distinguishing it from the ancient style, was the bold use of *istiʿārāt* (metaphors). Indeed, in the early days of Arabic literary criticism, the *badīʿ*, the new unexpected poetic element of the *muḥdathūn* ("modern" poets), was a synonym of *istiʿāra*. This type of *istiʿāra* was the one called by Wolfhart Heinrichs "analogy-based," and described as "the intrusion of an element into a context that is foreign to it in the real world—no matter whether or not this element is metaphorically equated with one of the elements of the alien context." He illustrates it by Abū Dhuʾayb al-Hudhalī's line, "When Death sinks its claws in, you will find all amulets of no avail" (*wa-idhā l-maniyyatu anshabat aẓfārahā alfayta kulla tamīmatin lā tanfaʿū*). This, for the ancient authorities, was a case of *istiʿāra* (literally, "borrowing"); Death has no claws and nothing comparable to claws, but the implied beast of prey was understood as the donor of "claws" to the recipient Death, as it were. Thus, the metaphor is based on "an analogy between the inevitable assault of death and the relentless attack of a predatory beast." This metaphor, being based on analogy, is *unlike* the later type which is based on a simile (the "ruby"-for-"lip" kind).[11] Heinrichs counted "three general characteristics which set the *muḥdath* metaphor off against its predecessor" (the "claws of death" being an example for this predecessor):

> [1] …the generating mechanism of the *istiʿāra*: while the ancient poet would start from an analogy and project the analogue onto the topic, thus creating an image which, although possibly containing an imaginary element, would seem natural, the *muḥdath* poet would often construct an imaginary element by taking an already existing metaphor (mostly a verb metaphor) and proceeding on the level of the analogue to an adjacent element with no counterpart in the topic.
>
> [2] …the influx of "new" metaphors (the "ruby"-for-"lip" type) into the formation of "old" metaphors [i.e., *tamthīl* (=analogy)-based metaphors]. This means that the resulting metaphor will at the same time be based on a *tamthīl* "analogy" and a *tashbīh* "simile" or, to put it differently, the *istiʿāra* will not be an imaginary metaphor; rather, it will have a counterpart in the topic to which it will be tied on the basis of a simile. Because of the rich productivity of this type of metaphor it became the favorite of the *muḥdath* poets.
>
> [3] …the poet would very often firmly tie the *istiʿāra* into the line of poetry by introducing a concomitant *istiʿāra* and/or a *muṭābaqa* (antithesis, use of opposites) or a *tajnīs* or any other figure of speech involving repetition, in which the *istiʿāra* would then function as one of the two terms involved.[12]

II Metaphors in al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode

In this section, I will subject all the metaphors in al-Rustamī's selection to an analysis relying on the aforementioned observations made by Wolfhart Heinrichs. Note that the present classification aims at the metaphorical *unit* in a line. Therefore, metaphorical elements that form it, while indicated in the analysis, are not counted separately but as constituents of the unit. For instance, if a line features two type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors paired by an antithesis, I will point to all these constituents, while classifying the unit as type [3]. The conclusions are displayed graphically in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2. The whole surviving Ode is produced and translated in the appendix.

A1
Naṣabna li-ḥabbāti l-qulūbi ḥabāʾilā
ʿAshiyyata ḥalla l-ḥājibātu ḥabāʾilā

The women set snares for the cores of the hearts
On the evening when the female gatekeepers loosened snares

The selection's first line is probably, given the rhyming *ṣadr* and *ʿajuz*, the one opening the *nasīb*, so an amorous narrative is expected. The line contains two semantically-opposed analogy-based imaginary metaphors, "set snares" and "loosened snares," each comprising a verbal and a nominal element. We have two topics and two analogues here: the first topic is the allurement of the poetic persona (represented synecdochically by "cores of the hearts") by attractive women, and the second, the slackening of their supervision by elder women. The first analogue is hunters setting snares for game animals, and the second, other hunters loosening snares allowing the entrapped animals to escape. The metaphors "set snares" and "loosened snares" express the topical ideas of allurement and supervision, but do not have a substratum in the topic. The two topics are connected by an antithesis (*muṭābaqa*)—"set snares" and "loosened snares" are opposites—underscoring the paradox of the ensnared ones turning into ensnaring ones. Unusual for the *nasīb*, the imagery of the line is taken from the vocabulary of hunting. Thus, one may question the aptness of "gatekeepers" (which may not be really counted as a metaphor, because keeping an alert eye on the "gate" and those seeking to see the secluded young women was a responsibility of the elder women) for not matching well with "loosened snares." Moreover, this lacking match may also be explained by the fact that analogy-based metaphors usually work well when applied to recipients which are abstract concepts (e.g., Death), but often not well with concrete recipients (like "gatekeepers" here).[13] The two analogy-based metaphors in this line form a type [3] *muḥdath* metaphor.

A4
ʿUyūnun thakilna l-ḥusna mundhu faqadnahā
Wa-man dhā raʾā qablī ʿuyūnan thawākilā

Eyes that were bereaved of beauty since they lost her
And who has seen before me bereaved eyes?

The topic of the analogy-based metaphor "eyes … bereaved of beauty" (recapitulated as "bereaved eyes" in the second hemistich) is eyes cut off from the view of the beloved. The analogue is a person who became bereaved of his beauty-embodying (or, simply, beautiful) loved one, "bereaved" and "beauty" being the elements carried over to the topic. The nucleus of the metaphor—that is, the verb metaphor "bereaved"—is imaginary as it has no substratum in reality; yet, "beauty" standing for the beloved is a non-imaginary simile-based metaphor.[14] The creation process of this metaphor yields the personification of "eyes," for—as the wondering question of the narrator suggests—only humans can be really bereaved (of a child, friend, etc.). The wonderment (*taʿajjub*) is, of course, a conceit based on the literally-understood metaphor. This type of conceit is an important subcategory of *takhyīl* as described by the literary critic ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī.[15] While there is no feature in this analogy-based metaphor to make it a clearly *muḥdath* one, its combination with the subsequent *takhyīl* entailing repetition of its significance taken for real, does give it a *muḥdath* quality. Hence, it should be subsumed under the category of type [3] *muḥdath* metaphors.

A21
Wa-sāmiyatu l-aʿlāmi talḥaẓu dūnahā
Sanā l-najmi fī āfāqihā mutaḍāʾilā

> And you see below the loftiest of waymarks
> The glistening of the Pleiades waning in its horizons

The non-imaginary metaphor “the loftiest of waymarks” stands for al-Ṣāḥib’s towering and illuminated mansion. It is a metaphor as in reality the mansion was not built to serve as a waymark for travelers. “Waymarks,” *aʿlām* (singular *ʿalam*), are set up for desert travelers to guide them on their way, and may also refer to buildings where travelers alight and are guided by. In addition, *ʿalam* may denote a lighthouse (*manāra*). Metaphorically, *aʿlām* are those stars that are signs for travelers on their journey as in the lexical item *aʿlām al-kawākib*.[16] This metaphor is based on a simile and an analogy (clearly seen when considering the previous and subsequent two lines): just as the towering mansion that guides travelers outstrips its glorious rivals (topic), the loftiest of stellar waymarks outshines the Pleiades (analogue). The waymark simile-based metaphor (the towering and illuminated mansion is like the loftiest star) is a bifurcation point from which the poet proceeds on the level of the analogue. What makes it elegant and easily grasped, however, is the fact that all the analogue elements appearing in the line have counterparts in the topic: “The glistening of the Pleiades waning in its horizons” refers to the outshining of other great waymarks (like the Īwān of Kisrā mentioned in the subsequent line) by al-Ṣāḥib’s mansion. This metaphor is quite similar to type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors (and thus it is classified), although it is not followed by imaginary elements and hence does not really have an artful/artificial character.[17]

> A25
> *Yunāṭiḥu qarnu l-shamsi min shurufātihā*
> *Ṣufūfa ẓibāʾin fawqahunna mawāthilā*
>
> The horn of the sun butts—with respect to its battlements—
> Rows of antelopes; standing erect above them

The poet refers to *qarn*, “horn,” which in connection with the sun forms an everyday metaphor meaning “the first visible part of the rising sun.” Owing to the preceding verb metaphor “butts” (and the zoological descriptions to follow), it is evident that he takes this non-imaginary attributive genitive metaphor literally as “the horn of the sun,” pretending to forget its metaphoricalness (*tanāsī*).[18] Simile-based, it also draws on an analogy, and is therefore a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor: the sun beams on the battlement’s merlons just like a horned animal butts another. “Antelopes” here is a non-imaginary simile-based metaphor standing for a type of merlons[19] that resembles their horns (see below for a more detailed analysis of the imagery in the A25–28 battlement section). When the poet says “rows of antelopes,” he probably means a square-like battlement platform which has antelope-horn-shaped merlons on its four sides. Sharing the same topic and analogue with “the horn of the sun,” “rows of antelopes” is a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor. Since “horn” is by definition a part of the horned animal ("antelopes" in our case), both metaphors are paired by the rhetorical figure of *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* (harmonious choice of ideas or images) to form a type [3] *muḥdath* metaphor.

A26
Wuʿūlun bi-aṭrāfi l-jibāli taqābalat
Wa-maddat qurūnan li-l-niṭāḥi mawāʾilā

Are ibexes on the peaks of the mountains facing each other
And extending horns lowered to butting

Similarly to "antelopes" in A25, "ibexes" is a non-imaginary simile-based metaphor. The substratum is a curved type of merlon (different from the "antelope"-like one) which resembles of the ibex horn (see below). The "ibexes" image is also suitable for they often live "on the peaks of the mountains," another non-imaginary simile-based metaphor for the raised battlement platform of the "ibexes" located higher than that of the "antelopes." The metaphors rely on analogy as well for the curved merlons are lined one aside the other on the battlement platform (topic) just as ibexes with their horns lowered to butting are arrayed against each other (analogue). "Ibexes" and "on the peaks of the mountains" are type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors.

A28
Wa-raddat shuʿāʿa l-shamsi fa-rtadda rājiʿan
Wa-saddat hubūba l-rīḥi fa-rtadda nākilā

They warded off the sun rays, so they reflected back
They blocked the blowing of the wind, so it withdrew dispirited

"Dispirited" is an imaginary analogy-based metaphor used for the blowing of the wind vanquished by the "ibexes" and "antelopes" from A25 and A26. The wind, having been blocked by the merlons, withdrew fast (topic) just as a person defeated in a battle runs away dispirited (analogue).

A30
Kanāʾisu nāṭat bi-l-nujūmi kawāhilan
Wa-ʿādat fa-alqat bi-l-nujūmi kalākilā

Beautiful women who leaned their upper backs on the stars
Returned and rested their breasts on the stars

The non-imaginary simile-based metaphor "beautiful women," including "upper backs" and "breasts" which are parts of their bodies, stands for al-Ṣāḥib's mansion. The substratum is the buildings and the projecting battlements, which bear resemblance to women's upper backs and breasts.[20] The metaphor also draws on an underlying analogy: the elegant building's battlements on its two sides reach a considerable height (topic), just as beautiful women who lean their upper backs and rest their breasts on the stars (analogue). It is a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor.

A31
Wa-fayḥāʾa law marrat ṣabā l-rīḥi baynahā
La-ḍallat fa-ẓallat tastanīru l-dalāʾilā

[It is such] a spacious building that if the East Wind were to pass amidst it
It would go astray and keep seeking illumination for signs

"Go astray" and "seeking illumination" ascribed to the East Wind are imaginary metaphors based on an analogy: the East Wind, were it to pass in the building, would go about without direction due to the building's vastness (topic), just like anyone who passes in this huge mansion goes astray and keeps seeking illumination for signs (analogue). The element of "go astray and keep seeking illumination for signs" was carried over from the analogue to the topic. This is the more typically ancient analogy-based metaphor.

B3
Ka-anna bi-hā min shiddati l-jaryi jinnatan
Fa-qad albasathunna l-riyāḥu salāsilā

As though there was in them [=streamlets in the mansion's garden], with respect to the strong flowing, insanity
For the winds had dressed them with chains

"Chains" is the origin of the image here, since this non-imaginary simile-based metaphor stands for the attached, ring-like shape created on the surface of the streamlets' water by the blowing of the winds. The image requires the verbal metaphor "dressed" in order to describe the action done to the personified streamlets by the personified winds. The poet offers something of an etiological explanation for the chaining, given as a simile ("as though…") and as such acknowledged by the poet as actually unreal: the strong flowing in the streamlets reflects their insanity (like a madman running amok). This comes close to a mock etiology, a conceit of the type subsumed by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī under *takhyīl*;[21] for it relies on a literal understanding of the metaphor (streamlets' surface is dressed with chains because of insanity in them). Yet, the mock etiology is weakened by the poet's choice of a simile and not a metaphor ("as though there was in them … insanity", and *not* "there was in them … insanity"). Albeit secondary to the simile-based metaphor ("chains"), an analogy still underlies this line as a whole: the wind dressed the streamlets with chains just as the physician (or some other person of authority) chains the insane. Being based on *tashbīh* and *tamthīl* the "chains" metaphor should be classified as a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor. It should be noticed, however, that the poet shows some "natural" restraint by offering the reason for the chaining phrased as a simile and not a metaphor, as a more artful/artificial-oriented poet would have it.

> B8
> *Wa-lā gharwa an yastaḥditha l-laythu bi-l-surā*
> *ʿArīnan wa-an yastaṭrifa l-baḥru sāḥilā*
>
> There is no wonder that the lion creates in his night-journeying
> A den, and that the sea makes a shore

This line displays two pairs of a non-imaginary metaphor and a correlated noun to complement the image. Each pair is established on a stock-in-trade metaphor: the lion stands for the courageous man and the sea for the liberal one. These are simile-based metaphors (the vizier is as courageous as a lion and as liberal as the sea) like "ruby"-for-"lip" and "narcissus"-for-"eye." The poet started with these two worn-out-similes-turned-metaphors,[22] commonly used in praise poetry to describe the patron, and moved to complement them with another two nouns that given the context are their logical correlative on the figurative level: the lion goes with the den and the sea with the shore. That is, the simile-based nominal metaphors "lion" and "sea" are also analogy-based ones as they are bifurcation points for a topic and analogue: the courageous and liberal vizier built his abode just as the lion and the sea build their den and shore. Thus, as a whole the line with the two images has actually only one topic this being the appropriateness of the mansion for the vizier. The repetition conveying this idea is rather simple and does not display any additional figure of speech (say, a *muṭābaqa* or *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*) connecting the two elements that form it.[23] Nonetheless, the repetition of the two simile-based and analogy-based metaphors pairs them as a type [3] *muḥdath* metaphor.

> B13
> *Akhadhta bi-ḍabʿi l-arḍi ḥattā rafaʿtahā*
> *Ilā ghāyatin amsā bi-hā l-najmu jāhilā*
>
> You seized the upper arm of Earth to the point that you lifted [Earth]
> To an extremity of which the Pleiades became ignorant in the evening

This line features two imaginary analogy-based metaphors, "upper arm of Earth," and "ignorant." Obviously, Earth has no upper arm which one can possibly seize, but it is ascribed to it in an imaginary manner by borrowing it from humans. This metaphor, therefore, relies on an analogy between the elevation of Earth to an extremely lofty location (the topic) and the raising of an individual by a patron to a high-ranking position (the analogue).[24] In the process of projecting the analogue to the topic one element of the image, namely, "the upper arm," was used to create the image although it has no counterpart in the topic. In that respect, it is similar to the renowned "claws" metaphor in Abū Dhuʾayb al-Hudhalī's line mentioned above. The expression *akhadha bi-ḍabʿihi* is used to refer to a patron's graces toward a protégé, and indeed this layer of meaning delineates al-Ṣāḥib's mastery of Earth. Al-Rustamī applies it to laud the height of the mansion vis-à-vis the sky, the former reaching a point of which the Pleiades know nothing. The Pleiades' "becoming ignorant," is the second metaphor that forms the topic. Naturally, it cannot become "ignorant" for its lack of human (or animal) consciousness, and thus this personification stands for the remoteness of Earth's elevation. The two main elements "Earth" and "Pleiades" forming the one topic of this line (i.e., the elevation of Earth to an extremely lofty location) are opposites in the sense of lowest and highest, and hence we get a *muṭābaqa* connecting the two metaphors. This quality characterizes type [3] *muḥdath* metaphors.

III Analysis of the metaphorical evidence

For a selection consisting of forty-six lines, the use of eleven metaphors and eight similes (see Figure 4.1) is rather economic, and suggests that the poet did not opt for creating an artificial universe of rhetorical figures, as was often done by *maṣnūʿ* poets. Moreover, as expected of a "natural" composition, the great majority of metaphors and similes are concentrated in the *waṣf* part and are only scantily found in the other parts (metaphor occurrences: 2 in *nasīb*, 7 in *waṣf*, 2 in *madīḥ*; simile occurrences: 1 in *raḥīl*, 7 in *waṣf)*. On the other hand, the relation metaphor to simile is 1.37 : 1 disclosing a predilection on the part of the poet for artifice; the preference of metaphors over similes was shown to be an attribute of a "modern," if not a mannerist style (in contrast to "classical").[25] Figure 4.2, displaying the findings considering metaphor typology, adds to that impression too, since it reveals a clear inclination toward *muḥdath* metaphors at the expense of the more typically ancient one ("analogy-based metaphor") with a 4.5 : 1 relation. Yet, this is only apparently a paradox, for al-Rustamī aptly combines in his poetry *muḥdath* imagery moderately—quantitatively and qualitatively—in a way that does not interfere much with its "natural" essence, but at the same time "spices it up." Note that among *muḥdath* metaphors the poet shows a clear predilection for types [2] and [3] (amounting to 4 and 5 occurrences respectively) with no type [0] and type [1]. The absence of type [1] may be related to its having no counterpart in the topic while at the same time not being built on analogy, a detachedness that may often make it more mannerist in nature in comparison to type [2].

Indeed, al-Thaʿālibī mentions al-Rustamī's natural gift for poetry (*ṭabʿ*) and attests to al-Rustamī's bridging the two stylistic contrasts of "natural" and artful/artificial, when he praises his poetry as "bringing to a finish the parts of beauty and skill, perfecting the eloquence of the desert with the sweetness of civilization" (*al-mustawfī aqsām al-ḥusn wa-l-barāʿa al-mustakmil faṣāḥat al-badāwa wa-ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra*).[26] Al-Ṣāḥib himself points out al-Rustamī's natural gift for poetry (*ṭabʿ*) "…saying about him jokingly" [*al-basīṭ*]:

Metaphors	*Similes*
A1. set snares, loosened snares	A10. like a chameleon
A4. eyes . . . bereaved of beauty	A27. like shapes of aquatic birds
A21. the loftiest of way-marks	A29. splendor walks . . . swaying
A25. horn of the sun butts . . . rows of antelopes	A32. you’d think the sky a canopy
A26. ibexes on the peaks of the mountains	A32. (you’d think) the constellations statues
A28. dispirited	B1. air like the days
A30. beautiful women, upper backs, breasts	B2. as if it were plates of silver nuggets molded as streamlets
A31. go astray and keep seeking illumination	B3. as though there was . . . insanity
B3. dressed them with chains	
B8. lion, sea	
B13. the upper arm of earth, became ignorant	
Total = 11	**Total = 8**

Figure 4.1 Spread of metaphors and similes in al-Rustamī’s Mansion Ode.

Notes
The spread of metaphors and similes in the two parts (A and B; number of line follows) of the selection from al-Rustamī’s Mansion Ode (Y, III, 46–8): *nasīb* (A: lines 1–5); *raḥīl* (A: 6–16); *waṣf* (A: lines 17–32; B: 1–3); *madīḥ* (B: lines 4–14).

Analogy-based metaphor	*Muḥdath type [0]: simile-based metaphor*	*Muḥdath type [1]: adjacent element on the analogue level metaphor*	*Muḥdath type [2]: analogy- & simile-based metaphor*	*Muḥdath type [3]: metaphor combined with additional figure(s) of speech*
				A1
				A4
			A21	
				A25
			A26	
A28				
			A30	
A31				
			B3	
				B8
				B13

Figure 4.2 Types of metaphors in al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode.

Abū Saʿīdin fatan ẓarīfun
Yabdhilu fī l-ẓarfi fawqa wusʿih

Yanīku bi-l-shiʿri kulla ẓabyin
Fa-ayruhū fī ʿiyāli ṭabʿih

Abū Saʿīd is a witty young man,
Who does his best, and beyond, at witty speech

He fucks in poetry every gazelle,
For his cock is a dependant of his natural gift [for poetry][27]

Probing al-Rustamī's poetics would benefit from following three interconnected criteria derived from the work of Sperl in his comparative analysis of al-Buḥturī's ship description versus Mihyār's (representing classical vs. mannerist style):[28]

1 The specific *or* generic trait of description is an important indicator for the extent of artfulness/artificiality in a poem. Because when a poem's object of reference becomes poetry and poetic tradition through excess in motifs and images or any sort of type portrayal (e.g., in enigmatic poetry), description turns generic and the particularity of the object in question is compromised. Our poem does not yield a generic description of mansion caught in a play of forms that detach the object from its specificity, and not only for the measured use of images. The figure of al-Ṣāḥib (in second and first person and in his name) is frequently associated with the mansion in the *waṣf* and *madīḥ* parts (l. A18, A19 [Ismāʿīl], A22, A29 [Ibn ʿAbbād], B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B13, B14) thus connecting this specific building with his specific personality. In addition, al-Rustamī's depiction, among other things by distinguishing the mansion, makes it singular—whether explicitly comparing it to other great buildings or not; for example, in l. A22 the mansion is described as taking the place of a great and renowned building, Īwān Kisrā, which alludes to its unparalleled standing among its peers and its eternality (explicitly asserted in B14) in contrast to the great old abandoned building being in ruins: "You replaced by it the Īwān of Kisrā son of Hurmuz for it [=the Īwān] has become destitute in the land of al-Madāʾin." Although any poem must include to some degree conventional signs of the poetic idiom (motifs, images, etc.) in order to communicate successfully with the audience, their quantity and quality do matter. Whereas al-Rustamī's is of course not devoid of these, he nonetheless stylized his poem through image economy and contextualization in such a way that description does not enter the zone of the generic.

2 Dynamic *or* static description. When a poet chooses to emphasize the formal aspect in his description, it necessarily has a bearing on the sense of action and movement. Such descriptions gain a static quality, and may even become abstractions. Sperl makes an apt point in his analysis of Mihyār's

ship, noting that even when the vessel's plowing through the waves is depicted, "the imagery portrays the *form* of movement *in general* rather than its significance at any particular time: the description is static."[29] In our poem no similar static feeling is felt, since in no point a substantially thick metaphorical layer is created that moves the narrative to another figurative universe. In addition, the *raḥīl* (A6–A16) is remarkable for the dynamic spirit it introduces in the poem with a narrative of ongoing action devoid of any object depictions (containing no metaphors and solely one simile) and rich in verbs (and especially those denoting *movement*). In terms of structure, a conditional phrase (mostly in the pattern "if the riders do x, I do the same") recurs fifteen times in the *raḥīl*, a repetition that besides expressing the persona's clear attempt at conforming with the riders, conveys well his routine hardships, stress (especially as a man in love), and the pressures under which he functioned.

3 Ordering of experience process directed toward referent and function thereof, *or* toward body of motifs, the referent being a catalyst only. In other words, the question is whether al-Rustamī's imagery is subservient to the aim of endowing the object with an innate meaning arising from its function, or the object is detached as a form and rendered estranged and extraordinary. A case in place is the four-line section delineating the battlements in the *waṣf* part (A25–A28):

Yunāṭiḥu qarnu l-shamsi min shurufātihā
Ṣufūfa ẓibāʾin fawqahunna mawāthilā

Wuʿūlun bi-aṭrāfi l-jibāli taqābalat
Wa-maddat qurūnan li-l-niṭāḥi mawāʾilā

Ka-ashkāli ṭayri l-māʾi maddat janāḥahā
Wa-ashkhaṣna aʿnāqan la-hā wa-ḥawāṣilā

Wa-raddat shuʿāʿa l-shamsi fa-rtadda rājiʿan
Wa-saddat hubūba l-rīḥi fa-rtadda nākilā

The horn of the sun butts—with respect to its battlements—
Rows of antelopes; standing erect above them

Are ibexes on the peaks of the mountains facing each other
And extending horns lowered to butting

[The ibexes are] like shapes of aquatic birds that extended their wing
And raised their necks and the craws

They warded off the sun rays, so they reflected back
They blocked the blowing of the wind, so it withdrew dispirited

The imagery in this section has to do with the defensive (and decorative) merlons of the battlements. “Antelopes” and “ibexes” are non-imaginary metaphors based on simile and analogy standing for merlons of two types, each being part of an independent battlement, the latter located above the former. The two animals refer to different merlon shapes: “antelope” to a merlon split into two rectangular and straight units (quite like the horns of an antelope), while “ibex” to a merlon split into two curved units (quite like the recurved horns of an ibex)—both shapes possibly with a sharpened edge. The merlons are arranged as “rows” (first type), and “facing each other” (second type), on what seems to be two square battlement platforms. The aquatic birds simile referring to the curved merlons add another dimension of animation to the already animated merlons, for similarly to the “antelopes” and “ibexes” under the sun’s “offensive,” one can think of the birds as disturbed by a threat and consequently flapping their wings with a stretched body ready to defend. The fourth line of the section wraps it up celebrating the victory of the “antelopes” and “ibexes” (the subject of *wa-raddat*) over the sun and the “dispirited” wind. Evidently, the poet in choosing the horned-animals battle imagery for these lines also refers to the height of the battlements, for the sun as a horned animal attacks others on the same level in which it is located.[30] When we look at the imagery in this four-line section, we see that it indeed brings to the surface innate qualities in the object, that is, the height, robustness, strength, and the readiness for battle of the battlements, as well as their elegance (the “antelopes”). All these qualities have to do with the battlements’ defensive function (and secondary decorative one), and as such, the ordering process is directed toward the object itself.

A comparison of this description by al-Rustamī with another by Abū l-Fayyāḍ al-Ṭabarī (a *badīʿ* specialist [*mubdiʿ*] excelling at his praise of al-Ṣāḥib),[31] consisting of four lines as well, which clearly exemplifies the mannerist style, will show the more classical nature of the former in an even clearer light. The objects described here by al-Ṭabarī are an inkwell, pens, and a knife (essentials among a secretary’s stationery), and the description is extracted by al-Thaʿālibī from an ode in praise of al-Ṣāḥib [*al-basīṭ*]:

Wa-muṭfilin min banāti l-zanji murḍiʿatin
Man lam talidhu wa-lam yukhlaq la-hā raḥimū

Ḥattā idhā waḍaʿat ʿādat ajinnatuhā
Ilā ḥashāhā fa-lā ṭalqun wa-lā waḥamū

Iʿjab li-aṭfālihā tabkī ʿuyūnuhumū
In arḍaʿathum wa-lā yabkūna in fuṭimū

Ullāfu madhrūbatin in tābaʿat la-humū
Fī l-dhabḥi ṣaḥḥū wa-in aʿfathumū saqimū[32]

There is a mother of toddlers, from the daughters of the blacks, suckling

> Those whom she did not give birth to, a womb not having been created for her
>
> Even when she gives birth her embryos return
> To her belly without labor pains and pregnancy craving[33]
>
> Be astonished about her children whose eyes cry
> When she suckles them and do not cry when they are weaned!
>
> [They are] lovers of a sharpened knife, if she proceeds to
> Slaughter them (by slitting the throat), they are healthy, and if she spares them, they are ill[34]

It is noticeable that the topical level of description (the inkwell, the pens, and the knife) is almost entirely abandoned for the metaphoric analogue level (the black mother, her children, etc.), which although mostly non-imaginary (as the metaphors have counterparts in the topic), is leading to a complete personification of the objects with their human motivations. I will concentrate on the third line ("Be astonished about her children whose eyes cry when she suckles them and do not cry when they are weaned!") to demonstrate two typical *maṣnūʿ* aspects in a more detailed way: (a) "her" [=suckling black mother] and "children" are simile-based and analogy-based type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors standing for the inkwell and pens already introduced in the first line. Likewise, "eyes" is a nominal metaphor with a counterpart in the topic, namely, the longitudinal slits in the pens' points and thus is non-imaginary and built on a simile (the slits are like eyes) *and* analogy. The poet starts with "eyes" and stays on the analogue level with the verb metaphors "cry," "suckles," and "weaned" to form a total image based on analogy: the pens' points' slits discharge ink in writing if charged by the inkwell and do not when not (topic), just like children who cry when suckled and do not when weaned (analogue). As the "be astonished" starting the line suggests, the image we end up with is paradoxical, but generated as a *takhyīl*, it was absolutely intended; (b) *takhyīl*: one of the phenomena of this figure is a feigned wonderment conceit (*taʿajjub*), in which the metaphor is understood literally, in this case, with regard to the secretary's stationery. When al-Ṭabarī says, "Be astonished about her children whose eyes cry when she suckles them and do not cry when they are weaned!," the poet uses the metaphor of children for pens and the suckling black mother for inkwell. In reality, children do not cry while suckled, but they do when weaned. The poet, staying on the metaphorical plane, thus wonders why the opposite is the case here; that is, the reed-pens' points' slits ("the children's eyes"), charged with ink in the inkwell ("suckled"), discharge ink while writing ("cry"), and do not ("do not cry") while dried, being kept away from the ink in the inkwell ("weaned"). The feigned wonderment is, therefore, created because of the logical tension between the topical and the analogue, the real and the metaphoric.

Unlike al-Rustamī's section where the battlements are explicitly mentioned, the objects inkwell and pens, with the exception of the "sharpened knife," are not mentioned at all in al-Ṭabarī's section. That gives the latter's section a genuine enigmatic quality. Having in mind Sperl's three criteria, we see that al-Ṭabarī's *waṣf* is utterly generic; the objects depicted by him possess no specific features whatever, and as such gain universality that may allow us to recite the lines as a riddle and expect the addressee to guess—following some hard thinking, to be sure—that we aimed at "an inkwell, pens, and a knife." At the same time, al-Rustamī's battlement description explicitly refers to this *specific* mansion's battlements (*min shurufāti*hā). Moreover, he delineates a particular pattern of crenellation, shaped like antelopes' and ibexes' horns, and topographically-speaking, indicates that the location of the latter is higher than the former (namely, specific location in *this* mansion). Al-Ṭabarī's stationery description is oriented toward its characteristics of usage (the aspects of charging, keeping, writing, and nibbing) and as such amounts to an itemized list static in nature for lacking any linear narrative development. In contrast, al-Rustamī presents a dynamic mini-narrative of a battle between the "antelopes" and "ibexes" and the sun (and wind), where the development of action starts with the sun's assault, goes through the horned animals' reaction, and finally winds up with their victory. Lastly, reading al-Ṭabarī's *waṣf* one easily notices that the referent is completely overruled by the overwhelming imagery in the sense that it has become more the portrayal of the black suckling woman and her children than the stationery's which was reduced to a mere catalyst given its form and characteristics. Indeed, unless we are familiar with the "black suckling mother" and her "children" motifs from the literary tradition,[35] the referent objects may even be unrecognizable as overly transformed by metaphor. The tension between the real and figurative layers (i.e., the "world" of stationery and that of mothers and children) creates a normative extraordinariness, which is the origin of several intended paradoxes: a wombless mother who nurses children she did not give birth to; even when she does give birth [=pens kept in the inkwell were taken out to be used], "her embryos return to her belly without labor pains and pregnancy craving"; her children weep when nursed and do not when they are weaned; they love the knife whose slaughter makes them healthy and refraining from it ill. Each of these four paradoxes appears in a line and reflects an unusual universe operating according to strange rules. Al-Rustamī's description, on the contrary, maintains the referents of the scene (battlements, sun, and wind) in their real names with the exception of the merlons that are the elements carried over from the analogue to the topic. When only one main element is treated persistently on the figurative level, the scene is closer to its topic and subsequently easier to understand. In addition, the imagery that al-Rustamī chose, despite being—of course—unrealistic (the sun does not really assails horned animals with its horn, etc.), is quite easy to conceive; for, unlike al-Ṭabarī who focuses on many formal and functional aspects of stationery, what leads to a descriptive density (or, some may say, congestion), al-Rustamī really concentrates only on one major aspect of the horned animals, to wit, their defensive quality, strength, and readiness for battle. This is exactly the major function of the substratum, the merlons, and by extension the battlements as a whole. The choice of the horned animals' imagery for that aspect is indeed exact and "natural" and does not give rise to paradoxes which in the case of al-Ṭabarī are evidently meant to provoke a sense of wonderment for their playfulness and extraordinariness. Indeed, Sperl's remark on Mihyār's mannerist ship description fits well al-Ṭabarī's stationery: "Rather than highlighting the extraordinary, Mihyār's metaphorical register makes extraordinariness the norm."[36]

As another instance of "natural" versus artful/artificial style, it would be interesting to compare the two *takhyīl*s we have encountered in al-Rustamī's l. A4 and al-Ṭabarī's third line:

ʿUyūnun thakilna l-ḥusna mundhu faqadnahā
Wa-man dhā raʾā qablī ʿuyūnan thawākilā

Eyes that were bereaved of beauty since they lost her
And who has seen before me bereaved eyes?

Iʿjab li-aṭfālihā tabkī ʿuyūnuhumū
In arḍaʿathum wa-lā yabkūna in fuṭimū

Be astonished about her children whose eyes cry
When she suckles them and do not cry when they are weaned!

In both cases, eyes are at the core of the *takhyīl*, but whereas those in al-Rustamī's line are the real referents, the ones in al-Ṭabarī's are a metaphor standing for the reed-pens' points' slits. In each case the wonderment effect of the *takhyīl* is achieved through an implicit comparison with real human eyes whose normal functioning is other than the one presented ("bereaved eyes" or children whose eyes cry when suckled). Yet, in the former, a simple adjective is the element that produces the wondering while in the latter a more complicated process operates; that is, in the first case the audience should just bear in mind that eyes are not animate and hence cannot be bereaved, while in the second it has to figure out first what these eyes stand for and then compare their functioning to that of real children's eyes which of course do not cry when the children are nursed. Due to the fact that the mannerist poet's *takhyīl* demands an initial translation phase from the figurative to the real level, it becomes more complex and in need of further thinking in contrast to the significantly greater simplicity and easiness of the former *takhyīl*. It follows from here that despite the fact that *takhyīl* is a figure mostly appearing in artful/artificial poetry, it is likely to be shaped differently in poetry leaning to the "natural" style, like that of al-Rustamī.[37]

The comparison with al-Ṭabarī's description style as well as the discussion that preceded it show that in this poem by al-Rustamī the ordering of experience process is mostly directed toward the referent and function thereof. More generally, we have seen that al-Rustamī's poem reveals a style oriented toward "natural" poetry, even if it also manifests—in a moderate way—features normally associated with *muḥdath* poetry. Looking at the other Mansion Odes, one reaches pretty much the same conclusion; namely, that while the poems in general do display *muḥdath* metaphors, they do not add up—quantitatively and qualitatively—to make the poems' style *maṣnūʿ*.[38] Rather, while these metaphors enrich them, when we consider these poems with the three criteria of Sperl in mind (as applied above to al-Rustamī's poem), they still show a leaning toward the *maṭbūʿ* style.

IV The literary taste of al-Ṣāḥib

We now turn to al-Ṣāḥib's views on poetry in general as well as to his poetry itself. By the end of this section we will become familiar with his explicit and implicit theoretical positions and be able to examine the degree to which his own poetry lived up to them. This will give us an idea of his literary taste, and we will be better equipped to ask whether there exists an overlap between it and the style displayed by his poets. A theoretical point of departure is *al-Kashf ʿan masāwī shiʿr al-Mutanabbī* (*The Disclosure of al-Mutanabbī's Poetry's Shortcomings*), a treatise composed by al-Ṣāḥib sometime between 354/965 and 360/970, that is, before he became a vizier. The latter time limit, as the editor Āl Yāsīn notes in his introduction, derives from the fact that the vizier Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970) was still alive, as attested by al-Ṣāḥib's salutations. The former time limit is set because al-Mutanabbī's praise of Ibn al-ʿAmīd and ʿAḍud al-Dawla took place in 354/965. Following the poet's praise of these two figures, al-Ṣāḥib sent him a message, which was never answered, expressing his wish to be praised, too.[39] Apparently, al-Ṣāḥib's *al-Kashf* had nothing to do with hurt feelings and anger owing to the poet's slighting disregard, although according to the medieval sources he was driven to write it exactly because of this experience.[40] Al-Ṣāḥib wrote to the addressee of *al-Kashf*[41] that his goal was to respond to a challenge set to him by an anonymous littérateur. The latter was stirred up by al-Ṣāḥib's opinion that al-Mutanabbī "is far-reaching in his poetry and frequently hitting the mark in his verse, but often produces a brilliant best line (*fiqra*) accompanied by a bad utterance."[42]

Having stressed that he only chose to analyze a few of al-Mutanabbī's numerous errors, he mourns the scarcity of sound literary criticism and the multitude of would-be foolish critics of his day. He then goes on to highlight his own twenty years of study with great scholars and poets, stressing that none equals al-Ustādh al-Raʾīs Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd as a genuine connoisseur of poetry:

> For he goes beyond the criticism of lines to that of particles and words, and he is not satisfied with putting the meaning in a good shape, to the point that he demands the [proper] choice of rhyme and meter. It is from his session—may God exalt him—that I took away what I present on this subject.[43]

To further solidify his claim for having the qualifications for criticism (without explicitly saying so) he adduces two anecdotes. In the first, al-Jāḥiẓ concludes from his experience that the only real authorities in the knowledge of poetry (*ʿilm* *al-shiʿr*) are literary scholars among the secretaries (*udabāʾ al-kuttāb*) and not the philologists. In the second anecdote al-Buḥturī argues that only those engaged in poetry *as poets*—again, unlike philologists or transmitters—really know poetry to the effect that they can make observations with regard to it.[44] According to these two anecdotes, al-Ṣāḥib and his patron and model Ibn al-ʿAmīd appear as the ideal critics; after all, both men were literary scholars (among other things) with a formative background of secretaries and were active poets on top of that.[45] Before heading to his own criticism of al-Mutanabbī, al-Ṣāḥib bolsters his critical authority once more with various snippets on Ibn al-ʿAmīd's exemplary criticism of poetry.[46] These snippets indeed attest to the finesse of Ibn al-ʿAmīd's critical observations revolving around such diverse aspects as the phonological, prosodic, stylistic, grammatical, semantic, and even the pragmatic. Al-Ṣāḥib does not only argue indirectly for his own critical capacity by displaying the masterly performances of his teacher; rather, in several snippets he focuses on his own performance when replying (almost always successfully) to questions posed by the master.

Throughout *al-Kashf* al-Ṣāḥib's critical remarks are full of irony and sarcastic humor aimed against al-Mutanabbī.[47] In one case the animosity he harbors toward the poet is laid bare completely, when instead of commenting on the line he found flawed he cannot help but cursing him:

> He has [the following line, revealing that] he dove and brought out a stone [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Law lam takun min dhā l-warā l-ladh minka hū*
> *ʿAqimat bi-mawlidi naslihā ḥawwāʾū*
>
> If you were not from this mankind which is from you
> Eve would be barren, [unable] to give birth to her offspring[48]
>
> And I say: Would that Eve had been barren and had not brought into the world someone like him! Rather, would that Adam had abstained from her, and so he (=al-Mutanabbī) had not been among his offspring! How nice are the words of al-Ḥasan [*al-sarīʿ*]:
>
> *Fa-raḥmatu llāhi ʿalā ādamā*
> *Raḥmatu man ʿamma wa-man khaṣṣaṣā*
>
> *Law kāna yadrī annahū khārijun*
> *Mithluka min iḥlīlihī la-khtaṣā*
>
> Thus may the mercy of God be on Adam
> The mercy of Him who embraced all and singled out
>
> Had he known that someone like you
> Would come out of his urethra, he would have castrated himself[49]

The criticism made by al-Ṣāḥib in the body of *al-Kashf* is not topically organized. It usually only briefly indicates the shortcoming of a line without a detailed explication.[50] In a few cases al-Ṣāḥib did not even go beyond averring his disapproval of a line, leaving the readers to their own devices in their attempt to detect its flaw. In order to gain a better understanding of al-Ṣāḥib's criticism, I outline in what follows his points and present them under the rubrics of stylistic flaws, grammatical and metrical flaws, and ethical and religious flaws (followed by page numbers in the Āl Yāsīn edition). In the few cases that al-Ṣāḥib's criticism is pertinent to two rubrics, the same point is subsumed under each of them:

Stylistic flaws

- Combining good and bad poetry in one line (44).
- Lack of harmony between good and bad lines (54).
- Lack of harmony between the two hemistichs in a line (59–60).
- Ṣūfī-like obscurity of meaning (45, 52).
- Incomprehensibility ("…poetry entered in charms and written in talismans") (60, 62–3).
- Unequaled knotty style (*taʿqīd*) (51).
- Loathsome change of letters in a word (Jibrīl → Jibrīn), with the line's meaning being unlawful, too (60).
- Disorder of expressions and corruption of themes (*aghrāḍ*) (62).
- Unsound reasoning (50–1, 53).
- Failure to derive the praise's content from the name of the praised (62).
- Employment of distasteful odd and rare Bedouin expressions, unfitting for a village-born person like al-Mutanabbī, in order to feign eloquence (48–9, 73–4).
- Odd and "heavy" words, or words unfit for poetry (54, 55–6, 59–60).
- "Heavy," abominable, and "cold" expressions (63).
- Excessive paronomasia (*jinās*) (48).
- Distasteful excessive repetition of the same word in a line (68).
- Affectation and uninformed use of vocabulary (*takalluf*, *taʿassuf)* (58–9).
- Feigned skillfulness (*taḥādhuq*) (55).
- Bad expressions, meaning (*maʿnā*), artifice (*ṣanʿa*), and grammatical form (*ṣīgha*) (56).
- Bad choice of metaphor (49).
- Bold treatment of metaphor (*istirsālātuhu ilā l-istiʿāra*), and distasteful opening of the *qaṣīda* (59).
- Bad improvisation, opening, and meaning (*maʿnā*) in addition to ineloquent expressions (53–4).
- Failing in matching similes harmoniously (71).
- Beginnings of poems shedding fear and blocking joy (56).
- Exaggeration and going against poetic conventions while taking over (*akhdh*) another's motif (56–7).

* "Literary theft" (*sariqa*) and taking over (*akhdh*) of motifs with a result inferior to the original (54–5, 64–5, 66–7).
* Line falling short of Abū ʿUbāda al-Buḥturī's two lines on the same motif of praise (64).
* Ineffective oaths in his poetry attempting to imitate others (50).
* Vain-glorious line falling short of al-Farazdaq's (66).
* Line falling short of its model (70).
* Ineffective horse description (51–2).
* Artistically weak description of his poetry and showing contempt to others (58).
* Composing two lines which are nothing but a comprehensive lexicographical list (61–2).
* Poetry disclosing a lack of understanding of the battlefield and its terror (65–6).
* Bad poetry composed under the influence of wine (61).
* Unsuccessful line (68–9).
* Unpleasing line (*laysa bi-ḥulw*) (70).

Grammatical and metrical flaws

* Bad expressions, meaning (*maʿnā*), artifice (*ṣanʿa*), and grammatical form (*ṣīgha*) (56).
* Transgressing grammatical rules (*takhfīf* of a stressed consonant) beyond license (71–2).
* Wrong declension (*taṣrīf)* of a noun (*taqyīs* instead of *qiyās*) (69).
* Narcissism, erring in meter (67–8).

Ethical and religious flaws

* Lack of decorum and adequate sensitivity in choosing literary forms and expressions out of place (45–8).
* Lack of chastity evident in his use of explicit instead of euphemistic language (75).
* Narcissism, erring in meter (67–8).
* Despicable haughtiness (71).
* Disgraceful presumptuousness and arrogance (74).
* Over-confidence in his genius leads him to ludicrous results in a poem with a difficult rhyme (72–3).
* Line disclosing al-Mutanabbī's admission in people's enmity to him (70).
* Artistically weak description of his poetry and showing contempt to others (58).
* Shameful line suggesting the *mamdūḥ* (object of praise) is worth more than all creation (69).
* Loathsome change of letters in a word (Jibrīl→Jibrīn), with the line's meaning being unlawful, too (60).

Al-Ṣāḥib's exposition of what he considered to be al-Mutanabbī's errors indirectly sheds light on his own view of poetry. Based on some of the major stylistic points just outlined we find out the following: harmony (*tanāsub*; in the sense of the quality balance between good and bad poetry, and thematic agreement and cohesion) is mandatory both between the two hemistichs of a line and the lines themselves. The meaning of a verse should be clear without impediments for understanding rising from twisted syntax, and vague and odd expressions. It should also be logical, in the sense that the argument's conclusion be adequately inferred (but not necessarily realistic). Alliteration or excessive repetition of the same expression in one line is not at all elegant or pleasing. One should adhere to vocabulary that characterizes one's own background (Bedouin, village, or city dweller, etc.) without feigning another for the purpose of achieving eloquence.[51] Affectation in poetry in general is in bad taste.

All these preferences add up to create an inclination to a "natural" style. Still, in order to advance our comprehension of al-Ṣāḥib's taste, and in particular, his assessment of the poetic tradition and opinion of the major stylistic trends and controversies, we have to explore two issues in *al-Kashf* in greater detail. These are: (i) "literary theft" (*sariqa*), and (ii) al-Ṣāḥib's approach to metaphors, especially in connection with the poets al-Mutanabbī, Abū Tammām, and al-Buḥturī.

(i) When al-Ṣāḥib is about to commence his criticism of selected lines by al-Mutanabbī, he makes an important remark considering *sariqa*.

> As for *sariqa*, [al-Mutanabbī] should not be blamed for it, owing to the agreement of the poets of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods on it. He should be blamed, however, for taking over (*yaʾkhudhu*) from the "modern" poets like al-Buḥturī and others the majority of poetic motifs (*al-maʿānī*), and then saying: "I do not know them and have not heard of them"; then, their poems were recited and he would say: "This is poetry on which there exists influence of earlier motifs" (*athar al-tawlīd*).[52]

Unfortunately, al-Ṣāḥib's statement that *sariqa* is legitimate comes without elaborating further in order to shed light on what he exactly means by the term; moreover, the nature of the "ancient" poets' "agreement on it" and their reasons are not disclosed. Nevertheless, the term here is not used negatively as "plagiarism," but unmistakably in a neutral light as quotation, allusion, or borrowing of pre-existing poetic motifs.[53] The problem with al-Mutanabbī, says al-Ṣāḥib, is not his employment of already existing poetic motifs in his poetry, but his false denial that he took them over from "modern" poets like al-Buḥturī. It should be noticed that the "modern" poets (*muḥdathūn*) are here understood *temporally* as those following the pre-Islamic and early Islamic ones and not qualitatively; we learn it not only from the chronological element in al-Ṣāḥib's argument, but especially from his choice of al-Buḥturī as an example for a "modern" poet. Qualitatively speaking, al-Buḥturī's poetry was considered "natural" and classical, and he was often positioned against "modern" poets, Abū Tammām in particular, whose "modernity" finds expression in the artful/artificial style of their works (besides their temporal position in the history of Arabic poetry).[54] According to al-Ṣāḥib, al-Mutanabbī goes beyond false denial to unfair denigration of the poetry of the "moderns" claiming that they extract their motifs from earlier ones. The implication of his words is manifest: unlike himself, the "moderns" are unoriginal. As for al-Ṣāḥib's position, we learn from this discussion that he viewed *sariqa* as *akhdh*, namely, taking over a poetic motif from an earlier poet, and *not* plagiarism. In fact, he does use *yaʾkhudhu* interchangeably with *sariqa*,[55] averring that *sariqa* is not reproachable, but given al-Mutanabbī's false denial his *akhdh* is.

According to al-Ṣāḥib, al-Buḥturī was not the only poet from whom al-Mutanabbī "stole," and then untruthfully denied it; he did the same with the output of the poet who represents al-Buḥturī's stylistic opposite, namely, his teacher Abū Tammām. Once again, al-Ṣāḥib uses *sariqa* synonymously with *akhdh*:

> It has come to my knowledge that whenever the poetry of Abū Tammām was recited, [al-Mutanabbī] would say: "This is a badly-woven fabric and poetry whose motifs were extracted from old ones (*hādha nasj muhalhal wa-shiʿr muwallad*), and I do not know this Ṭāʾī of yours," while he was exerting himself "stealing" and taking over [his motifs] from him (*wa-huwa dāʾibun yasriqu minhu wa-yaʾkhudhu ʿanhu*).[56] He would then bring out what he "stole" (*yasriquhu*) in the ugliest form like a virgin dressed with a Bedouin sleeveless robe and a bride shown in an ascetic woolen garb.[57]

Owing to space limitations, al-Ṣāḥib declines to display an exhaustive list of al-Mutanabbī's numerous "literary thefts" (*sariqāt*), but he still presents two examples of al-Mutanabbī's *sariqāt*/*akhdh* from Abū Tammām, from which we can learn what exactly he means by these terms:

> Among that [considerable group of al-Mutanabbī's *sariqāt*/*akhdh*] is his saying [*al-ṭawīl*]:
>
> *ʿAẓumta fa-lammā lam tukallam mahābatan*
> *Tawāḍaʿta wa-hwa l-ʿuẓmu ʿuẓman ʿani l-ʿuẓmī*[58]
>
> You are great, and since you were not addressed out of fear
> You became humble—and it is *the* greatness—out of holding yourself above haughtiness
>
> How many are the bones (*ʿiẓām*) in this line! If an owner of dogs came across it with all his dogs hungry, they would have in it [enough] sustenance. It, nonetheless, originates from the words of [Abū Tammām] Ḥabīb b. Aws al-Ṭāʾī [*al-ṭawīl*]:
>
> *Taʿaẓẓamta ʿan dhāka l-taʿaẓẓumi fīhimū*
> *Wa-awṣāka nublu l-qadri allā tanabbalā*

You held yourself above this haughtiness on their part
And nobleness of rank determined that you did not simulate nobleness[59]

Apart from ridiculing the repetition of words denoting greatness from the root *ʿ.ẓ.m.* for their morphological resemblance of bones (derived from the same root: *ʿaẓm*, pl. *ʿiẓām*), and indicating the provenance of al-Mutanabbī's line from another by Abū Tammām, al-Ṣāḥib does not furnish us with an analysis of this *sariqa/akhdh*. Still, scrutinizing these two lines (composed in the same meter) can give us an idea about the motif employed by al-Mutanabbī and Abū Tammām, and then enable us to evaluate their relationship. Al-Mutanabbī's line is based on the seemingly paradoxical idea that the *mamdūḥ*'s humbleness is greatness: although one would think that greatness finds expression in haughtiness, the awe-stricken subjects of this *mamdūḥ* did not even address him, which made him humble and disdaining of haughtiness. Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075) comments that being humble about one's greatness is *the* greatness, "for the eminent man's (*al-sharīf)* humbleness about his eminence is more eminent than his eminence."[60] What is therefore aesthetically pleasing in this line, which concludes al-Mutanabbī's ode, is the paradox that lies in it.

Abū Tammām's line—drawn from an ode in praise of the vizier Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt[61]—may hardly be comprehended without the previous one in mind:

Idhā aḥsana l-aqwāmu an yataṭāwalū
Bi-lā niʿmatin aḥsanta an tataṭawwalā

While peoples excel in making a show of benefaction
Without a favor, you excel in benefaction

Al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī (421–502/1030–1109) explicates in his commentary that in contrast to Form V *taṭawwala* (namely, bestowing benefits on someone), *taṭāwala*—on account of Form VI—has here the idea of affectedness (i.e., affecting benefaction).[62] Returning to Abū Tammām's line in question, we see that the praised vizier Ibn al-Zayyāt is depicted as looking disdainfully at those affecting this unjustified haughtiness; his already achieved noble rank means that he is not in need of simulating nobleness.

When the two lines are compared the shared motif that constituted for al-Ṣāḥib the evidence for al-Mutanabbī's *sariqa/akhdh* is pretty plain: the elevated man's holding himself above haughtiness (Abū Tammām: *taʿaẓẓamta ʿan dhāka l-taʿaẓẓumi*; al-Mutanabbī: *ʿuẓman ʿani l-ʿuẓmi*). Obviously, this is not a case of outright plagiarism for the phrasing has some variation and more importantly the motif is embedded in different contextual environments. With Abū Tammām the motif is merely subsidiary to the idea of affectedness characterizing others but not the (more) elevated vizier commenced in the previous line. Indeed, in the same vein, the second hemistich of our line goes on to laud the lack of any need to simulate nobleness on the part of the already noble vizier. Al-Mutanabbī, however, amplifies the motif to become of central importance in the line by developing a strong paradox connecting humbleness with greatness in the *mamdūḥ*. The recurrence of words derived from the root *ʿ.ẓ.m* derided by al-Ṣāḥib is of course a part of that process.

Before providing his second example for a *sariqa*/*akhdh* from Abū Tammām made by al-Mutanabbī, al-Ṣāḥib remarks that the literary scholars (*al-udabāʾ*) believe Abū Tammām went too far with the line [*al-khafīf*]:

> *Shāba raʾsī wa-mā raʾaytu mashība l-*
> *Raʾsi illā min faḍli shaybi l-fuʾādī*
>
> My head became hoary and I have only believed the hoariness of
> The head to stem from the excess of the heart's hoariness
>
> This man [=al-Mutanabbī] made this motif (*maʿnā*) his object, took it over (*akhadhahu*), and carried hoariness away to the liver. He attributed to it henna [to dye its hoariness] and fading, saying [*al-basīṭ*]:
>
> *Illā yashib fa-la-qad shābat la-hū kabidun*
> *Shayban idhā khaḍḍabathū salwatun naṣalā*
>
> Even if he did not grow old, his liver had become hoary
> In such a way that if comfort dyes it, it [=the dye] fades[63]

The poetic persona in Abū Tammām's line ascribes the origin of his head's hoariness not to old age but to that of his heart (due to its worries, as explained by al-Tibrīzī, Abū Tammām's commentator). Abū Tammām elaborates on this idea in the line that follows saying that the hearts are the vanguards of the bodies in any matter—good or bad. Similarly to al-Ṣāḥib, al-Wāḥidī (al-Mutanabbī's commentator) points to al-Mutanabbī's transfer of the heart's hoariness to the liver noting that Abū Tammām's "heart's hoariness" metaphor was disapproved of in the first place.[64] Again, as we saw in the previous case, there is no question of real plagiarism here; despite the fact that the motif underwent a negligible semantic change with the move from the heart to the liver, it was significantly protracted. A negligible change because the lover's liver was believed to be consumed, wasted away, and burned, due to his sorrows.[65] The suffering of this organ when its possessor is in love (note that both poets' lines with the motif in question are extracted from the *nasīb*) is not unlike the heart's which was conceived as the seat of the lover's passion, and for which the lovers' tears were said to be the tongues.[66] While Abū Tammām gave the human heart the vanguard role in the human body, three lines before, he placed the hearts and livers together as yet heated (or cooled, according to another reading) by the tears of the agonized lover.[67] It is not impossible that given the mention of livers in this previous line of Abū Tammām's ode and the identical psychological situations associated with both heart and liver, added to the need to distinguish himself from his predecessor, al-Mutanabbī opted for the liver and not the heart in his line. In comparison to Abū Tammām's line, al-Mutanabbī's manifests a protraction of the motif; whereas the common denominator between the two is the hoariness of a lover's internal organ in premature age, al-Mutanabbī introduces the new element of unceasing and prevailing whitening process against the dyeing of comfort. The persistent whitening takes place due to the anguish of the inconsolable lover.

Before we draw conclusions about al-Ṣāḥib's view of *sariqa*, it would be profitable to examine the third occurrence of this critical observation in *al-Kashf*. This time al-Mutanabbī is accused of "stealing" from the poet Bashshār b. Burd:[68]

> [al-Mutanabbī] has a line of which I am not sure whether it praised or cast a spell on the addressee [*al-ṭawīl*]:
>
> *Shawāʾila tashwāla l-ʿaqāribi bi-l-qanā*
> *La-hā maraḥun min taḥtihī wa-ṣahīlū*
>
> [The horses] raising the spears [they carry] the way scorpions raise [their tails];
> They have joy and neighing beneath it [=the spear][69]
>
> He was not content with "stealing" (*bi-an saraqa*) from Bashshār his words [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Wa-l-khaylu shāʾilatun tashuqqu ghubārahā*
> *Ka-ʿaqāribin qad raffaʿat adhnābahā*
>
> And the horses are raising [the spears they carry] cutting through their dust
> Like scorpions that had raised their tails[70]
>
> Until he destroyed the appropriate simile (*tashbīh*) among expressions like disasters. I have no doubt that a multitude of those who stand up for him believe that *shawāʾila tashwāla* is more wondrous in describing horses than the words of Imruʾ al-Qays [*al-ṭawīl*]:
>
> *La-hū ayṭalā ẓabyin wa-sāqā naʿāmatin*
> *Wa-irkhāʾu sirḥānin wa-taqrību tatfulī*
>
> It has the flanks of a gazelle, the shanks of an ostrich,
> The fast running of a wolf, and the slow trot of a fox cub[71]

The resemblance between the spear raising motif in Bashshār's line and al-Mutanabbī's is closer than the other two examples we have seen. It should be noted that leaving out the word "tails" (for scorpions), al-Mutanabbī is less explicit than Bashshār with regard to the tail raising of the scorpion, suggesting that he trusts the audience's literary baggage to make the necessary associations. The former is more economic opting for a *mafʿūl muṭlaq* structure that conveys the simile in a more condensed fashion in one hemistich (*shawāʾila tashwāla l-ʿaqāribi bi-l-qanā*). Bashshār, despite not mentioning the indirect object of *shāʾilatun* (*bi-l-qanā, bi-l-rimāḥ*, etc., which he might have done previously in the unknown lines), spreads the simile to the second hemistich as well (*ka-ʿaqāribin*…) forming it in a more straightforward and detailed manner. Besides the shared idea of the galloping horses raising high the spears they carry as part of the warriors' gear, each poet stresses a different nuance of the image: Bashshār highlights the horses' speed outstripping the enemies ("cutting through their dust"), while al-Mutanabbī dwells on their "psychological" feeling of being in high spirits and ready for battle ("they have joy and neighing beneath it").

When we turn to al-Ṣāḥib's remark, which is more argumentative than critical, it is hard to miss its conservative overtone finding Imruʾ al-Qays's classical model of horse description an invincible one. Notwithstanding his evaluation of Bashshār's simile as "appropriate," it appears that al-Ṣāḥib (in spite of not saying it unequivocally) did not find the *muḥdath* scorpion simile very appealing, manifesting his preference for a classical model. Indeed, he especially took issue with the way the motif was fleshed out by al-Mutanabbī, whom he reprimanded for destroying Bashshār's simile with his phrasing. It was the choice of the scorpion simile that led al-Ṣāḥib to say sarcastically about al-Mutanabbī's line: "I am not sure whether it praised or cast a spell on the addressee" (*a-madaḥa l-maqūl la-hu am raqāhu*). *Ruqyat al-ʿaqrab*, a magical spell against scorpion bites, has already been used by him to refer to an incomprehensible line by al-Mutanabbī.[72] The employment of *raqāhu* here, besides having the overtone of incomprehensibility and bad phrasing, also scornfully reduces it to some popular incantation.[73] It is indeed interesting that a *ruqya* against scorpion bites cited by Lane mentions the scorpions' "raising the joints of the tails." If this was a characteristic trait of such spells, it may be the major reason for al-Ṣāḥib's negative opinion of the scorpion simile used by al-Mutanabbī.[74]

Since the aforementioned are the only three examples of *sariqa* raised against al-Mutanabbī by al-Ṣāḥib (two from Abū Tammām and one from Bashshār b. Burd), it is possible to conclude that what al-Ṣāḥib meant by this term was legitimate borrowing and not plagiarism.[75] We reached this conclusion by subjecting his poetic evidence (*shawāhid*) to examination, but it is also supported by the interchangeable use of *sariqa* and *akhdh* in his comments, and his statement regarding the legitimacy of the practice in the views of pre-Islamic and early Islamic authorities. In none of the three examples have we seen word-for-word plain plagiarism. What we have seen is amplification, protraction, and nuancing of the motifs respectively. Therefore, at least in our case, placing "theft" or "to steal" between quotation marks when translating *sariqa* or *saraqa* is apposite. Likewise, I placed above a slash between *sariqa* and *akhdh* to express the identity of "theft" and taking over of a motif, given the terms' role in al-Ṣāḥib's *al-Kashf*. From al-Ṣāḥib's remarks and examples, one infers that a *sariqa*, in which the already existent poetic idea is thematically developed in an apt manner or shows improvement in wording, is not only legitimate but commendable. This goes hand in hand with the opinion of other critics, who called such *sariqa*: *sariqa ḥasana* (a good "literary theft," i.e., a good borrowing). In contrast to that, the argument in al-Ṣāḥib's annotated examples goes, the fault of al-Mutanabbī's unacknowledged *sariqāt* is his poor judgment with regard to the motifs deserving to be "stolen," and the deterioration observed in his employment of them compared to their original occurrence.

(ii) We do not have in *al-Kashf* a positive definition of metaphor and a critical evaluation of its types. In order to find out what was al-Ṣāḥib's view of this major figure of speech (whose bold use was the fundamental characteristic of the *muḥdath* style), we have to look at relevant critical comments he made. These accumulate to give us some picture of his point of view and stance vis-à-vis stylistic controversies, in which the supporters of the *muḥdath* and classical styles were involved. First, let us examine his view of what constituts a metaphor:

> When [al-Mutanabbī] applied *badīʿ* (*abdaʿa*; referring to the *lafẓ*) in this elegy and invented (*ikhtaraʿa*; referring to the *maʿnā*), he said [*al-wāfir*]:
>
> *Ṣalātu llāhi khāliqinā ḥanūṭun*
> *ʿAlā l-wajhi l-mukaffani bi-l-jamālī*[76]
>
> The prayer of God, our Creator, is a corpse perfume
> On the face shrouded in beauty
>
> And one of those who go too far with [their admiration of] him had told me: "This is a metaphor (*istiʿāra*)." I replied: "You are right, but it is a metaphor of black garments of mourning in a wedding" (*istiʿārat ḥidād fī ʿurs*). I do not know whether this metaphor is better, or his attribution of beauty to the face of a king's mother he elegized, or his words while describing her entourage and slave-girls."[77]

Our line includes two metaphors, "corpse perfume" and "shrouded," although al-Ṣāḥib's comment treats both collectively as *a* metaphor. The problem for al-Ṣāḥib with this metaphor (and more generally, with the poet's approach in this and other lines of the elegy) is al-Mutanabbī's irreverent and improper treatment of an elegized woman—and a noble one, to be sure—in a way resembling love poetry; bringing together "corpse perfume" and "shrowded" and applying it to a beautiful face of a woman is an ethical failure and consequently a generic dissonance. Having quoted another line in this ode, he goes as far as to blame him for "rending the veil" (*intihāk al-sitr*), that is, transgressing the sacred zone of one's protected female relatives.[78] Thus, he does not find fault with the metaphor except for its being out of place given the circumstances ("black garments of mourning in a wedding"). Al-Mutanabbī's insensitivity to the pragmatic meaning of this amatory style of description made al-Ṣāḥib comment after citing the first line of the ode:

> He yearns for her and commits an unprecedented offense; only he who elegizes a member of his family speaks like that. As for his use of it (namely, amatory style) in this place, it points to the weakness of [his] insight in regard to the impressions of speech (*mawāqiʿ al-kalām*) [on the audience].[79]

The present line features a pair of analogy-based imaginary metaphors forming a type [3] *mūḥdath* metaphor. Al-Wāḥidī grasps the analogical nature of the first metaphor when he comments (emphasis is mine):

> The prayer of God is his forgiveness and mercy. *He invokes God in favor of her to the effect that His mercy to her be in the place* (manzila) *of corpse perfume to the dead person*. He made her face shrouded in beauty, as if beauty were a shroud to her face, and as if he were saying 'may God have mercy on her beautiful face!'[80]

The first analogy can be rephrased thus: let it be that God's prayer ameliorate her spiritual standing (topic), just as corpse perfume ameliorates the physical condition of the dead person (analogue). From here it seems that the poet went on through *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* to the concomitant element of shrouding. The second analogy: her face is molded in beauty (topic) as the dead body is shrouded in a winding sheet (analogue). The only typical element of *muḥdath* metaphors we find in this line is the pairing of the two analogy-based metaphors through *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*. Given the fact that each metaphor per se is of the more typically ancient style, this pairing may still not be considered bold or outrageous enough in the view of critics leaning to the classical style.

Following this line's analysis, it is possible to say that by his affirmative reply to the anonymous interlocutor, al-Ṣāḥib takes for the term *istiʿāra* an analogy-based metaphor. We also see that he reveals no stylistic reservations with regard to this figure of speech, except for taking the poet to task for using it out of context. As we shall see soon this is not the case with other types of metaphors, namely the more typically *muḥdath* ones.

In two places, al-Ṣāḥib disapproves of metaphors—in his use, *badīʿ* (or *abdaʿa* as a verb) and *istiʿāra* interchangeably[81]—in the poetry of al-Mutanabbī, which upon examination turns out to be type [1] and [2] *muḥdath* metaphors. Here is the first case:

> When [al-Mutanabbī] heard the poets before him who had applied *badīʿ* (*abdaʿū*) and said [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Bi-yadi l-simāki khiṭāmuhā wa-zimāmuhā*
> *Wa-la-hū ʿalā ẓahri l-majarrati markabū*
>
> Its halter and nose-rein are in the hand of al-Simāk
> And it has a riding animal on the back of the Milky Way

> He imitated them and attributed sweetness to sons saying [*al-ṭawīl*]:
>
> *Wa-qad dhuqtu ḥalwāʾa l-banīna ʿalā l-ṣibā*
> *Fa-lā taḥsibannī qultu mā qultu ʿan jahlī*[82]
>
> And I had tasted the sweetness of sons in my youth
> Thus, by no means suppose that I said what I said out of ignorance
>
> We were still wondering about the words of Abū Tammām [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Lā tasqinī māʾa l-malāmi fa-innanī*
> *Ṣabbun qadi staʿdhabtu māʾa bukāʾī*[83]
>
> Do not make me drink the water of blame, for I am
> Ardently enamored; I have found the water of my crying sweet
>
> When they became more palatable for us through "the sweetness of sons." True indeed is what was said by Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: "There exists no calamity except there is another one worse than it."[84]

This piece of criticism puts together three lines, and like other examples in *al-Kashf*,[85] it is arranged as a case in which al-Mutanabbī "got something wrong" from an earlier poetic model—in this case, in the realm of metaphors. The first anonymous line, which I was not able to identify, has a *badīʿ*—here in the meaning of a metaphor—which was said to be imitated by al-Mutanabbī's metaphor "the sweetness of sons."[86] Although al-Ṣāḥib does not say that explicitly, it seems logical that the metaphor he has in mind as the source for al-Mutanabbī's "imitation" is "the hand of al-Simāk," both being attributive genitive metaphors. "The hand of al-Simāk" is a metaphor based on analogy, whose topic has to do with the supreme position of al-Simāk star in connection with the Milky Way. The analogue is the command of a riding animal by its rider. Note that the second hemistich rephrases and elucidates the motif introduced in the first without adding essentially new information. What makes this a type [3] *muḥdath* metaphor is the pairing of "hand" with "halter" and "nose-rein," two other metaphors. The motif we have here is actually already present in a celebrated line by the *mukhaḍram* poet Labīd b. Rabīʿa (d. 40/660–61), considered exemplary for the analogy-based metaphor of the ancients it features ("the hand of the northwind").[87] It is the imaginary ascription of a "hand" to al-Simāk and "sweetness" to sons that forms the basis for al-Ṣāḥib's comparison between the two metaphors. Yet, it is the latter case of *badīʿ* he disapproved of; to al-Ṣāḥib, al-Mutanabbī's metaphor is outrageous to a degree that it diminishes the outrageousness of Abū Tammām's "water of blame." Al-Mutanabbī's metaphor is related to the first rhetorical question asked by the poet in the previous line:

Hal-i l-waladu l-maḥbūbu illā taʿillatun
Wa-hal khalwatu l-ḥasnāʾi illā adhā l-baʿlī[88]

Is the beloved child anything other than a diversion?
And is intimacy with a beautiful woman anything other than a harm for the husband?

Al-Wāḥidī interprets that the child one loves is only a diversion for one's soul "and the sadness derived from him is bigger than the happiness he causes" (we should bear in mind that al-Mutanabbī tried to comfort Sayf al-Dawla who had lost his son). In the following line the poet stresses that he said what he said about children out of his own experience at the time of his youth. The metaphor seems to be generated by al-Mutanabbī thus: The poet started with the already existing verb metaphor "tasted" (which in its metaphorical use as "experienced" is not exclusively poetical but also a lexical term)[89] continuing on the analogue's level to an adjacent element with no counterpart in the topic, that is, "sweetness." This is, therefore, a type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor.[90]

When we look at Abū Tammām's "water of blame," we find that it is also a genitive attributive metaphor. Like "the sweetness of sons," it constitutes a type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor, the "water" element springing from the verb metaphor *tasqinī* (it is customary in Arabic to use "make someone drink it" in context of criticism and blame).[91] Al-Ṣāḥib, lamentably, does not elaborate on the reason for his negative view of al-Mutanabbī's and Abū Tammām's metaphors. Still, given his juxtaposition of these two metaphors which, as shown, are similar in their generation process (each based on an already existing verb metaphor) and type, it appears in all likelihood that he deemed the added imaginary elements in these *muḥdath* metaphors ("sweetness" and "water" respectively) distasteful. These elements have no counterpart in the topic, and the lack of similarity obstructs a spontaneous and easy understanding of the metaphors. The fact that he did not censure the anonymous line for its metaphor, which he cited as the origin for al-Mutanabbī's, is telling; its metaphor ("the hand of al-Simāk") is of the analogy-based type characteristic of the ancients (albeit paired with another two in a more *muḥdath* fashion). Thus, although it projects an imaginary element from the analogue ("hand") without a counterpart on the topical level, it still seems natural for setting out *directly* from an analogy. Moreover, the fact that the motif is rephrased in an elucidative way in the second hemistich renders it even easier to grasp.

Al-Ṣāḥib's negative view of these metaphors by Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī should be ascribed—I believe—to their being of a secondary nature (built on another) without anything connecting them to the topic's semantical context.[92] Al-Thaʿālibī, in a somewhat more detailed fashion, seems to refer to this point of connectedness with the topic. Having cited this line by al-Mutanabbī (and others with apparently outrageous metaphors) and right before producing al-Ṣāḥib's comment on the "sweetness" metaphor making Abū Tammām's "water of blame" more palatable, he remarks: "These are metaphors (*istiʿārāt*) which are not guided by close or distant likeness (*shabah*). A metaphor is only sound and good [when based] on an aspect among the corresponding aspects (*al-wujūh al-munāsiba*) and on ways of likeness and closeness (*muqāraba*).”[93]

We should now examine the second case where al-Ṣāḥib finds fault with a metaphor of al-Mutanabbī for stylistic reasons:

> And among his bold treatments of metaphor (*istirsālātihi ilā l-istiʿāra*), with which no intelligent person would be content, and to which no learned person would turn, are his words [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Fī l-khaddi an ʿazama l-khalīṭu raḥīlan*
> *Maṭarun tazīdu bi-hi l-khudūdu muḥūlā*[94]
>
> Over the cheek, because the beloved decided to depart,
> Rain [pours down], due to which the cheeks increase [its] barrenness
>
> This is because barrenness in the cheeks is among the rejected metaphors (*al-badīʿ al-mardūd*). Furthermore, this opening (*ibtidāʾ*) of the ode is so repulsive that it causes a constriction in one’s chest.[95]

This piece of criticism by al-Ṣāḥib gives us the opportunity to understand what the “bold metaphors” he disliked were. There are two simile-based metaphors in this line, both in the second hemistich: “rain” and “barrenness.” “Rain,” standing for tears, is the starting point for “barrenness” that, to cite al-Wāḥidī, stands for “the wanness of the cheeks, the furrowing of its flesh, and the vanishing of its fresh beauty.”[96] Underlying the two metaphors lies an analogy with a contradiction between the topic and the analogue: the pouring down of tears makes the cheeks dry and furrowed (topic) *in contrast* to the pouring down of rain that makes the ground invigorated and fertile (analogue). The combination of these two type [2] metaphors connected with antithesis (*muṭābaqa*) makes them a pair of type [3] *muḥdath* metaphors.

The effect of the line is created through the paradox of rain taken literally, whose outcome is opposite to the one naturally expected. Al-Ṣāḥib did not find it pleasing at all noting that “barrenness (*muḥūl*) in the cheeks is among the rejected metaphors,” yet without explaining why. It is likely that the association of barrenness with cheeks driven by “rain” (the bifurcation point of the topic and analogue in the image) seemed outrageous to him; after all, *muḥūl* (or other morphological permutations derived from the root) is lexically associated mostly with ground (*arḍ*) as well as place (*balad*), time (*zamān*), and even humans who suffer from drought (or are of no use).[97] The fact that there is no conventional lexical association of *muḥūl* and *khudūd* (and probably no poetical precedent, too) as it exists for example in English with furrow,[98] might have made it seem artificial to al-Ṣāḥib. Alternatively, or in addition to that, because *muḥūl* has also the meaning of “withholding of rain” (*iḥtibās al-maṭar*),[99] that is, drought, al-Ṣāḥib could have found it nonsensical that in this line it was associated with the cheeks over which the rain poured down.

The cases we studied above attest to al-Ṣāḥib's recognition of *istiʿāra* as an analogy-based metaphor (even if paired in a more typically *muḥdath* fashion) in our terms, and show no objection to this type which characterizes more ancient or classical style. At the same time he censured harshly examples of the two characteristic *muḥdath* metaphors, types [1] and [2]. Although he does not elaborate on the reasons for his criticism, his choice of the poetic evidence and terse remarks are our best possible guide in evaluating his position on metaphors. Therefore, the close examination of the poetic evidence above sheds light on what may be described as a rather conservative taste.[100]

In order to further solidify these findings about his stylistic inclinations, we may benefit from assessing the place of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī, the paragons of *muḥdath* and *maṭbūʿ* poetry respectively, in his *al-Kashf* and beyond. The presence of al-Buḥturī's poetry in *al-Kashf* and the almost entirely positive, frequently laudatory, references to it are quite remarkable: Al-Buḥturī (in a similar way to al-Jāḥiẓ who was cited before him) is brought as a specialist authority insisting that only those creating poetry actively—unlike those who solely memorize it—are able to pass a critical judgment on verse; in the preliminary part where al-Ṣāḥib sets out to depict through various snippets the exemplary criticism of his patron and model Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, al-Ṣāḥib says: "[Ibn al-ʿAmīd] did full justice to him [=al-Buḥturī], which he deserved for the purity of his expression, the uniformity of his weaving, the profusion of his natural gift, and the sweetness of his poetry" (*jazālat lafẓihi wa-tashābuh nasjihi wa-ghazārat ṭabʿihi wa-ḥalāwat shiʿrihi*). When someone said that he refrained from indicating an error of the poet for his familiarity with Ibn al-ʿAmīd's love of him, Ibn al-ʿAmīd rejected any status of immunity (*ʿiṣma*) from poetic errors for al-Buḥturī, despite his excellence (*faḍl*). He spotted defects (*al-kasr*), absurdities (*al-iḥāla*), grammatical mistakes (*al-laḥn*), and deviation from the meter in his poetry, showing his flaws (even a case of affectation!) in several examples. (Al-Ṣāḥib clearly seeks to show here his master's fairness and remoteness from blind partisanship, aside from his dexterity as a critic); Ibn al-ʿAmīd remarks that most poets do not know how to compose a poem, which requires one to take into consideration the aimed genre (*gharaḍ*), the poetic idea (*maʿnā*) relied upon, and the best meter and rhyme in terms of flowing. He then gives a poem of al-Buḥturī (and the story connected with it) as an instance for such a way of composition; al-Ṣāḥib takes al-Ṣūlī[101] to task for claiming that his poetry is on a par with al-Buḥturī's. He then quotes a poem by Ibn al-ʿAmīd that glorifies al-Buḥturī (one line of which is: "Loftiness pulled up his upper arm and shifted him to an abode between the Milky Way and the Simāk"), and ridicules a man who alleges to have challenged him.[102] Al-Ṣāḥib's high appreciation for the verse of al-Buḥturī is observable also when he cites lines of al-Mutanabbī, and then adduces other lines on the same topic by al-Buḥturī, which in his view are superior.[103]

The predilection of al-Ṣāḥib for the style of al-Buḥturī, probably acquired while he was a protégé of Ibn al-ʿAmīd's, did not preclude him from expressing his passionate love for a line by Abū Tammām, and from considering a line by the latter superior to al-Mutanabbī's.[104] It is clear that al-Ṣāḥib was familiar with Abū Tammām's poetry as it constituted an object of critical discussion between him and Ibn al-ʿAmīd and appeared in his own criticism throughout the treatise.[105]

There could hardly be any clearer expression for al-Ṣāḥib's predilection for al-Buḥturī and the "natural" style in general than al-Thaʿālibī's. In the first chapter of *Yatīmat al-dahr*'s first part, titled "The Superiority of Greater Syria's Poets over Those of the Rest of Lands and the Reason for That," al-Thaʿālibī states that ever since pre-Islamic times the Arab poets of Greater Syria (*shuʿarāʾ ʿarab al-shām*) and its surrounding areas have been superior to those of Iraq and its surrounding areas. He proceeds to enumerate the different generations of poets that include the ancients (*mutaqaddimūn*), early moderns (*muḥdathūn*), late moderns (*muwalladūn*), and contemporaries (*ʿaṣriyūn*), and mentions some distinguished names to support his argument (like the towering two Ṭāʾīs—Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī—among the *muḥdathūn*). According to al-Thaʿālibī the explanation for this phenomenon lies in: (i) the proximity of the Syrians to the lands originally inhabited by Arabs (*khiṭaṭ al-ʿarab*) and especially to the people of *ḥijāz*; (ii) their distance from the lands of the Persians (*bilād al-ʿajam*); and (iii) for the fact that their tongues were unharmed by the nearness of Persians and (Syriac-speaking) Nabataeans,[106] who corrupted those of the Iraqi Arabs who intermingled with them. Since the contemporary Syrian poets combine the eloquence of nomadism and the sweetness of civilization (*faṣāḥat al-badāwa wa-ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra*) and endow their poetry to the best Arab kings and *amīr*s (namely, Āl Ḥamdān and Banū Warqāʾ), who love poetry and subject it to criticism, they excel and achieve mastery of poetry. Al-Thaʿālibī then says:

> A group among the friends of al-Ṣāḥib Abū l-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād told me that he used to admire their exemplary way, which is the way of al-Buḥturī in purity, sweetness,[107] eloquence, and fluency (*al-jazāla wa-l-ʿudhūba wa-l-faṣāḥa wa-l-salāsa*). He strived to obtain their new poems, and kept taking from dictation from those coming to him from that land [=*al-shām*] the wonderful and subtle poems (*al-badāʾiʿ wa-l-laṭāʾif*) they memorized, until he had a big volume recording them. This book would not leave his seat and no one except him would fill his eyes with it. [The poetry] he collected in it became on the tip of his tongue, and on the nib of his reed pen; sometimes he would readily quote it (*yuḥāḍiru bi-hi*) in his conversations and disputations, at other times he would unravel it into prose (*yaḥulluhu*) or cite it in his epistles.[108]

A contemporary of al-Ṣāḥib, al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī quotes his somewhat romantic statement explaining the change poetry underwent with the Arabs' move from nomad to urban setting. Far from offering an impartial analysis, al-Ṣāḥib views this historical process in a negative light as deterioration of both poetry and poets, and does not hide his disparaging view of modern poets and their inferior linguistic competence in contrast to their ancient predecessors:

> Al-Ṣāḥib wrote: poetry left the hair [tents] (*wabar*) and inhabited the clay [houses] (*madar*) [i.e., left the desert in favor of urban civilization]. Therefore, the market assemblies [of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times; *mawāsim*] do not stir [the poets'] natural dispositions, and the great wars (*malāḥim*) do not stimulate their geniuses. You will only see among them the inarticulate (*muʿjim*), the unsuccessful (*mujbil*), and the failing (*mukdī*).[109]

The secretary al-Ḥasan b. Bishr al-Āmidī (d. 371/981) was a contemporary of al-Ṣāḥib working in both Basra and Baghdad, and is mostly known for his work of literary criticism *al-Muwāzana bayn shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī* ("The Weighing of the Poetry of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī").[110] This work, designed to objectively compare and evaluate the poetry of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī, opens with a lucid exposition of the two poets' different styles and—most importantly—speaks of the taste preferences of each one's following in social terms:

> And I found … most transmitters of the later poets alleging that the good poetry of Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws al-Ṭāʾī outstripped the good poetry of his peers, while his bad poetry was rejected and disapproved of. His poetry was, therefore, disparate and unequal. [On the other hand, they alleged] that the poetry of al-Walīd b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Buḥturī had a sound molding (*ṣaḥīḥ al-sabk*) and was stylistically elegant (*ḥasan al-dībāja*); it had no bad, corrupt, or rejected [parts] in it, and thus became equal, one part of which resembling the other. I found them comparing the two poets to determine who was superior, because of the profusion of their poetry, and the abundance of the good and wonderful [in it] (*jayyidihimā wa-badāʾiʿihimā*), without agreeing on the best poet among the two. Likewise, they did not agree on the identity of the best among the pre-Islamic, early Islamic, or later poets (*shuʿarāʾ al-jāhiliyya wa-l-islām wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn*). Those who preferred al-Buḥturī and attributed to him sweetness of expression, beauty of transition (*ḥusn al-takhalluṣ*),[111] placement of words in their [right] place, soundness of utterance, easy comprehension (*qurb al-maʾtā*), and clarity of motifs are the secretaries, the Bedouins, the "natural" poets (*al-shuʿarāʾ al-maṭbuʿūn*), and the people of eloquence (*ahl al-balāgha*). The ones who preferred Abū Tammām and attributed to him vagueness and subtlety of motifs, in addition to many other poetic characteristics requiring derivation, exegesis, and elicitation (*istinbāṭ wa-sharḥ wa-stikhrāj*), are those after conceits (*ahl al-maʿānī*), the mannerist poets (*al-shuʿarāʾ aṣḥāb al-ṣanʿa*) and those leaning to sophistication and speech philosophical (*al-tadqīq wa-falsafī l-kalām*). Although many people believed the two [poets] to be of one class and were of the opinion that they were on the same footing, they are indeed different: Because al-Buḥturī is Bedouinic in his poetry (*aʿrābī l-shiʿr*), "natural" (*maṭbūʿ*), pursuant to the way of the ancients, did not part with the famous mainstay of poetry (*ʿamūd al-shiʿr*),[112] would stay away from syntactic complication, forced expressions and uncouth speech (*al-taʿqīd wa-mustakrah al-alfāẓ wa-waḥshī l-kalām*), he is more entitled to be

> compared with Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī, Manṣūr al-Namarī, Abū Yaʿqūb al-Khuraymī l-Makfūf and their likes among the "natural" poets;[113] because Abū Tammām was rigorously affectatious (*shadīd al-takalluf*), a master of conceits (*ṣāḥib ṣanʿa*), forcing expressions and meanings, and his poetry did not resemble the poems of the ancients and not in accordance with their way for its far-fetched metaphors and the motifs extracted from old ones (*al-maʿānī l-muwallada*), he should be rather included in the sphere of Muslim b. al-Walīd and those following his example.[114] I, nevertheless, do not find anyone to associate him with, for he was below the rank of Muslim given the soundness of the latter's poetry, the beauty of its molding and the faultlessness of its motifs, while he was above the rest of those who went this way and traveled this road, for the abundance of his embellishments, novelties, and inventions (*maḥāsinihi wa-badāʾiʿihi wa-khtirāʿātihi*).[115]

According to al-Āmidī, the supporters of al-Buḥturī characterized his poetry, among other things, as "stylistically elegant" (*ḥasan al-dībāja*). This very characteristic was associated with the poet and those who followed him by al-Ṣāḥib himself, as we can learn from the account of the secretary ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan (translated and discussed in Chapter 2). Approving of the secretary's verse, al-Ṣāḥib exclaims: "You did well. Adhere to this technique (*fann*), for it is stylistically elegant (*ḥasan al-dībāja*), and it is as if al-Buḥturī had appointed you as a successor!"[116] Contextualized by al-Āmidī's discussion, this enthusiastic comment provides another piece of evidence for the inclination of al-Ṣāḥib to al-Buḥturī's poetry.

The sources we have seen clearly show al-Ṣāḥib's leaning to the "natural" style whose paragon was al-Buḥturī. This stylistic preference went hand in hand with Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd's, al-Ṣāḥib's acknowledged master, and in general—as we learn from al-Āmidī—suited the taste of the secretaries. Therefore, it is in this light that we should read the statement that "al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād was mad about the poetry of al-Buḥturī, and was excessive in lauding and admiring him."[117] The question in place now is: how representative is this express theoretical stance of al-Ṣāḥib's own poetry? In order to answer it, three poetic examples will be examined, the first of which is a monothematic poem composed by al-Ṣāḥib on the Būyid ruler Fakhr al-Dawla "after he built his palace in Jurjān." Note that this *qiṭʿa* shares its theme with the Mansion Odes, namely, praising a leader who has built a new house [*al-sarīʿ*]:

Yā bāniyan li-l-qaṣri bal li-l-ʿulā
Hammuka wa-l-farqadu siyyānī

Lam tabni hādhā l-qaṣra bal ṣughtahū
Tājan ʿalā mafraqi jurjānī

Wa-qaṣruka l-mabniyyu min qablihī
Mulkuka wa-llāhu huwa l-bānī

Fa-qbal nithāra l-ʿabdi bal naẓmahū
Fa-innahū wa-l-durra mithlānī

Wa-smaʿ maqālan lam yuqal mithluhū
Mudh kānati l-dunyā li-ʾinsānī

Law kāna li-l-khalqi ilāhānī
La-kāna fakhru l-dawlati l-thānī

O builder of the palace, rather, of sublimity
Your design and the Farqad are two likes[118]

You have not built this palace, rather, you have molded it
As a crown on the middle of the head of Jurjān

And your palace built before it
Is your kingdom, and God is the builder

Hence, accept the scattering of the slave, rather, his poetry
For it and pearls are two equals[119]

And listen to a proposition whose like has not been said
Since the world was for man:

If creation had two Gods
Fakhr al-Dawla would be the second one[120]

The figurative language of this short piece includes only two metaphors, "crown" and "middle of the head" (l.2; both are type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors), outnumbered by three similes, "sublimity" (l.1), "your kingdom" (l.3), and "the scattering" (l.4). It is indeed simple, and the pattern of "x rather y" simile occurring twice (l.1: "O builder of the palace, rather, of sublimity"; l.4: "Hence, accept the scattering of the slave, rather, his poetry") exemplifies it well. This is because in each of these cases we are actually told *explicitly* what is the real object for which an analogue is supplied: the palace is like sublimity, the poetry is like a scattering. This overt and clarifying analogy is by definition of the nature of simile, but here it is also nicely arranged with the idea of the duality of sameness: the ruler's design (=the palace) and the Farqad; al-Ṣaḥib's poem and pearls; God and the other god (=Fakhr al-Dawla). All these pairs are said to be equals. On top of that, the semantic idea of the duality of sameness is reinforced phonologically with the poem's rhyme –*ānī*, evoking the nominative dual case ending (which it practically is in the first and fourth lines). As for the last line, al-Ṣāḥib refrained from a bold (and impossible) hyperbole by phrasing it as a hypothetical conditional sentence. Over all, the two *muḥdath* metaphors do not make this poem an artful/artificial one, but are rather outweighed by the dominant "natural" style of the poem.[121]

At the same time it is feasible to cite examples for clear-cut artfulness/artificiality in the poetry of al-Ṣāḥib like the following *ghazal* line produced by al-Thaʿālibī [*al-ṭawīl*]:

La-in huwa lam yakfuf ʿaqāriba ṣudghihī
Fa-qūlū la-hū yasmaḥ bi-tiryāqi rīqihī

If he does not restrain the scorpions of his temple,
Ask him to liberally grant the antidote of his saliva[122]

The "scorpions" metaphor refers to the love-lock(s) of the beloved's temple(s), bearing similarity in their curliness to the curved tails of scorpions. In addition to a simile, it is also based on an analogy: the unrestrained love-locks of the beloved's temples inflict sickness on the lover just as unrestrained scorpions do when they bite their victims. It is therefore a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor, which al-Ṣāḥib—as it often happens with this type—took literally and proceded to "antidote." Similarly to the former, "antidote" is a type [2] *muḥdath* metaphor based on a simile (the saliva looks like the liquid antidote)[123] and an analogy (the saliva in the kiss of the beloved heals the ailing lover just as the antidote cures the bitten victim of the scorpion). Note, however, that while the former metaphor is attributive genitive, the latter is identifying genitive (in "the antidote of his saliva" the antidote *is* his saliva). The two metaphors "scorpions" and "antidote" are tied by *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* and *muṭābaqa* (being two opposites), thus constituting an overarching type [3] *muḥdath* metaphor. On top of that, another rhetorical figure is added, namely, paronomasia (*tajnīs*) seen in the partial phonetical identity between *tiryāq* and *rīq*. Al-Thaʿālibī remarks elsewhere that the motif of the temple's scorpion is customary "especially when there was artifice (*ṣanʿa*) in it," and exemplifies it with this line of al-Ṣāḥib (among others).[124] Indeed, stylistically speaking, it is not difficult at all to see that this line is evidently artful/artificial.

The following is a similar case; this eulogistic *qiṭʿa* by the vizier was said about Fakhr al-Dawla who had let blood [*al-basīṭ*]:

Yā ayyuhā l-shamsu illā anna ṭalʿatahā
Fawqa l-samāʾi wa-hādhā ḥīna yaqtaṣidū

Lammā ftaṣadta qaḍaynā li-l-ʿulā ʿajaban
Wa-mā ḥasibtu dhirāʿa l-shamsi yaftaṣidū

O sun! Even if its aspect is
Above the sky, and this [happens] when he acts moderately

When you let blood we were full of amazement because of [your] eminence
And I did not think that the arm of the sun would let blood[125]

Al-Ṣāḥib starts with the non-imaginary simile-based metaphor "sun" applied to Fakhr al-Dawla (standing for the ruler's might and benevolence). In stating that the ruler is the sun seen above the sky when it acts moderately, al-Ṣāḥib employs a hyperbole (*mubālagha*), which is impossible (*ghuluww*) without meeting the conditions of an acceptable hyperbole (*mubālagha maqbūla*).[126] He continues in the second line with a *takhyīl*, which is here a conceit based on literal understanding of the sun metaphor and pretended forgetting of its metaphoricalness, which leads to the eulogist's wonderment (*taʿajjub*). In fact, al-Ṣāḥib opted in this case for a mannerist estrangement that even increases the wonderment, since not only that the real sun does not let blood, it obviously has no arm at all. Indeed, if he had so wished, he could have effectively created the *takhyīl* figure with the sun only (i.e., by saying: "and I did not think that the sun would let blood"). The semantic superfluity of the imaginary "arm" is an indication of type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor, derived from the verb metaphor *yaftaṣidu* without recourse to an underlying analogy (unlike the more typically ancient analogy-based imaginary metaphor). Note that the process of wonderment is created when the ruler–sun is compared to a real sun, which in a more schematic way may be described thus: the ruler is the sun; the (arm of the) ruler lets blood → the arm of the sun lets blood; yet, the arm of the *real* sun *does not* let blood. Therefore, the figurative language in this two line *qiṭʿa* is very rich consisting of a simile-based metaphor, an "unacceptable" hyperbole, a *takhyīl*, a type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor and a verb metaphor. All these make it undoubtedly a typically artful/artificial piece.

Although al-Ṣāḥib, as it turned out from our examination of *al-Kashf* above, was critical of type [1] and [2] metaphors, these examples from his poetry demonstrate that he did use them in his own poetry. He also paired metaphors in a quintessential *muḥdath* manner. Granted, the figurative language of the *qiṭʿa* praising Fakhr al-Dawla and his new palace leans over all to the "natural," despite featuring two type [2] *muḥdath* metaphors. Still, the other *qiṭʿa* praising Fakhr al-Dawla after letting blood, and the *ghazal* line featuring *muḥdath* metaphors, display unmistakable artful/artificial style. This evidence is corroborated by al-Ṣāḥib's penchant for self-imposed unprescribed rules, attested by his voluntarily undertaking the composition of lipogram odes. A formal exercise and a language game, each of these odes exclude completely one letter of the alphabet. Thus, al-Ṣāḥib started with "*alif*, the most common letter in poetry and prose and the first [letter of the alphabet]" in an ode in praise of the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), and followed it with others devoid of the other letters. The only ode of this series he did not compose was one exclusive of *wāw*, a challenge successfully met by his son in law Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAlī.[127] The lipogram, like other language games assuming constrained writing (e.g., palindromes), gives precedence to expression over meaning (or the signifier over the signified) as an ordering principle of a certain composition. By definition, this self-imposed letter-dropping game is not "natural," but rather an artifice similar in essence to *luzūm mā lā yalzam*.[128]

While in prose, as we have seen in Chapter 3, al-Ṣāḥib's style is utterly artful/artificial in the secretarial *inshāʾ* tradition, the findings on al-Ṣāḥib's poetic taste reveal a more complicated picture: Whereas his literary criticism and other historical and biographical evidence show a clear preference for the "natural" style, one finds in his poems—even in those that may over all be characterized as "natural"—elements which are undoubtedly artful/artificial (figurative language, motifs, and practices typical of artful/artificial poets). Moreover, aside from those "natural" poems, one comes across plainly artful/artificial poems in his output. We must, therefore, question further what al-Ṣāḥib meant by the commendable "natural" style and its relation with the artful/artificial. The only piece of evidence, to my knowledge, in which the vizier addresses this question, even if fleetingly, is a paragraph from the recommendation letter supplied to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nawqātī (fully translated in Chapter 1). Among his merits, highlighted by al-Ṣāḥib, are natural gift and poetry. Since, according to the vizier, these two characteristics (in addition to others) required his co-optation as one of the closest courtiers, we can be sure that they resonated well with his own aesthetic preferences:

> [al-Nawqātī's] natural gift (*ṭabʿ*) is an overflowing spring, a place of sweet waters. As for the poetry, it is extremely bountiful and features brilliant opening lines (*mushriq al-maṭlaʿ*); it is plentiful of *badīʿ* (*kathīr al-badīʿ*), lively, and the water of beauty flows in it easily (*yataraqraqu fī-hi māʾ al-qabūl*); its purity (*jazāla*) has been protected from the stiffness of harshness (*ṣalābat al-qaswa*), and its fluency (*salāsa*) from the softness of weakness (*riqqat al-rikka*).[129]

The complexity we noticed before, trying to make sense of the various apparently conflicting pieces of evidence, is condensed in this short, albeit meaningful, extract. That is, plenty of *badīʿ* in poetry of easy flow prompted by an overflowing natural gift, while not necessarily a contradiction, attest to a style that brings together what is often conceived of as contrasts. For the excess of rhetorical figures of the ornamented *badīʿ* may easily require extra intellectual digestion for comprehension, obstructing the easy flow of a "natural" style. Al-Ṣāḥib's highly appreciative opinion of al-Nawqātī's poetry, then, points to an ideal combination of "natural" and artful/artificial stylistic elements, in which the two complement each other in harmony.

In addition to that, we gain here a significant clarification considering the desirable "natural" style for a contemporary poet. While al-Ṣāḥib lauds the Bedouin style, he definitely does not expect an urban poet of his time to include certain vocabulary of the nomads. In fact, in *al-Kashf* he slashed and ridiculed al-Mutanabbī's use of such Bedouin vocabulary calling it "distasteful expressions and odd words" (*al-alfāẓ al-nāfira wa-l-kalimāt al-shādhdha*) unfitting for a city-dweller like him.[130] This is why he states that in al-Nawqātī's poetry "purity (*jazāla*) has been protected from the stiffness of harshness (*ṣalābat al-qaswa*)," referring to the rough phonology of many Bedouin expressions. The Bedouin "stiffness of harshness" is the pitfall of an urban poet intending "feigned eloquence (*tafāṣuḥ*)," as al-Mutanabbī was blamed by al-Ṣāḥib.[131]

Whereas al-Nawqātī kept away from it, he also shunned its equally bad opposite, namely, the fluency (*salāsa*) of his poetry is devoid of "the softness of weakness (*riqqat al-rikka*)." Out of wish to refrain from stiff Bedouin vocabulary, one may end up with excessive smoothness, simplification, and facility of expression, which is not considered as admirable fluency. Al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, in a literary-historical presentation studied in more detail below, addressed exactly this sort of unfavorable fluency in the speech and poetry of city-dwellers. Seeking to rid their language of rough and even repugnant Bedouin expressions, they exceeded proper bounds and compromised it to the point of allowing for ungrammatical mistakes (*laḥn*) that made it weak.[132] Al-Nawqātī, therefore, was credited by al-Ṣāḥib also for composing fluent poetry while at the same time maintaining solidity and keeping it free from weakness.

In sum, the "natural" style of which al-Ṣāḥib speaks highly as the model for the contemporary poet is a perfected hybrid. Easy flowing despite being rich in *badīʿ*; pure like the ancient Bedouin style without using archaic and uncouth expressions; fluent but devoid of the weak excessive facility of "modern" urban poetry and hence preserving the solidity of the Bedouin style. This remarkable statement outlines an ideal poetic style, which may hardly materialize in practice, but was nonetheless aspired to by al-Ṣāḥib and others. This was probably the "natural" style shown to him as a model by his admired master Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, and the one preferred by his social group of the secretaries (according to al-Āmidī). Likewise, this seems to be the highly praised style of the contemporary Syrian poets, admired by al-Ṣāḥib according to al-Thaʿālibī, combining "the eloquence of nomadism and the sweetness of civilization" (*faṣāḥat al-badāwa wa-ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra*).[133] Given the fact that in the history of Arabic literature *maṭbūʿ* and *maṣnūʿ* were not really exclusive literary schools with rigid rules, but inclinations or tendencies that could yield inclusive and mixed production, the position of al-Ṣāḥib should not be very surprising after all. Indeed, the notable critic Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī (390–456/1000–63) describes both Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī as poets given to artifice (*ṣanʿa*). In this respect, the difference between the two is only in the way each of them applies it. Abū Tammām is taken to task by the critic for his affected and difficult artifice, whereas al-Buḥturī is praised for his graceful artifice and discourse, which is free of affectation and difficulty. Ibn Rashīq endorses measured use of artifice as a virtue, while condemning exaggerated use as a deficiency (*ʿayb*) indicative of the lack of a natural gift.[134]

Lastly, the fact that al-Tawḥīdī's total attack against al-Ṣāḥib included a harsh and extensive criticism of his literary taste in *prose* but nothing against his *poetic* style is telling. As we shall see in Chapter 5, al-Tawḥīdī (and other men of letters he apparently interviewed) relentlessly slashed the ornate prose of al-Ṣāḥib from a stylistic point of view for its alleged artificiality. Al-Tawḥīdī supplied copious examples to convince the reader that his criticism was valid. It is hard to believe that al-Tawḥīdī, who disapproved of artfulness/artificiality in speech in general and held al-Ṣāḥib in especially low esteem, would have not seized the opportunity to attack his poetry too for stylistic grounds, had it been "excessively" ornamented. This fact, I believe, gives further support to the observation I made about the attempt on the part of al-Ṣāḥib to reach a "natural" style perfected by the artful/artificial.

V The response of the court poets to al-Ṣāḥib's taste

We have already seen that despite a general leaning to the "natural" style, al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode reveals a moderate influence of the artful/artificial style through its figurative language. It was al-Rustamī, whose poetry was commended by al-Thaʿālibī as "bringing to a finish the parts of beauty and skill, perfecting the eloquence of the desert with the sweetness of civilization" (*al-mustakmil faṣāḥat al-badāwa wa-ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra*).[135] Another important critical observation to the same effect comes from ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, commenting before the presentation and discussion of the *takhyīl* in al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode line B3 ("As though there was in them…"): "Manifestly superior compared to other verse, for the beauty of ornamentation (*ibdāʿ*) without being damaged by affectation (*takalluf*), is…"[136]

In what follows, I will try to demonstrate that these stylistic choices on the part of al-Ṣāḥib's poets were not accidental at all. In other words, such a stylistic hybrid with a leaning to the "natural" was the way in which the court poets responded to al-Ṣāḥib's taste. We find more than one statement concerning poets of al-Ṣāḥib's speaking of their ability to combine the good aspects of both the natural *and* artful/artificial styles. Al-Thaʿālibī opens his entry on Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bābak thus:

> A poet whose banner is the command of molding (*iḥsān al-sabk*), mastery of patterning (*iḥkām al-raṣf)*, and excellence in description (*ibdāʿ al-waṣf*). At times, his poetry resembles in its purity and clarity (*al-jazāla wa-l-faṣāḥa*) the speech of the wonderful among the ancient poets (*al-mufliqīn min al-shuʿarāʾ al-mutaqaddimīn*). At other times, it is similar in its beauty and elegance (*al-rashāqa wa-l-malāḥa*) to that of the excellent among the early "moderns" and late "moderns" (*al-muḥdathīn wa-l-muwalladīn*). Describing his poetry, he said [*al-wāfir*]:
>
> *Azartuka yā bna ʿAbbādin thanāʾan*
> *Ka-anna nasīmahū shariqun birāḥī*
>
> *Wa-lafẓan nāhaba l-ḥalya l-ghawānī*
> *Wa-ahdā l-siḥra li-l-ḥadaqi l-milāḥī*
>
> I have covered you, O Ibn ʿAbbād, with praise
> Whose breeze, as it were, blends with the sun
>
> And with an expression that robbed pretty women of [their] ornament
> And granted magic to beautiful pupils[137]

Al-Thaʿālibī's choice of poetic selection illustrates well his observation considering the poet's stylistic vacillation between "the purity and clarity" of the ancients and the "beauty and elegance" of the "moderns." For Ibn Bābak, addressing Ibn ʿAbbād with a description of the poetry he composes in his praise, highlights exactly this point with well-chosen motifs and imagery. In the first line, he proudly parallels his praise for the vizier to a breeze blending harmoniously with the sun (the vizier). These two similies—natural objects by definition—evoke distinctive features of "natural" poetry, to wit, pleasantness and gentleness (breeze) on the one hand, and conspicuousness and clarity (sun) on the other.[138] The poet matches between his pleasant praise and the conspicuous vizier as two natural objects in close agreement. In the second line, his expression (*lafẓ*) is said to have plundered the ornament, a metaphor standing for figurative embellishments, from pretty women. Similarly, the poet boasts of his expression as granting magic, namely, rhetorical and technical artifices that transform reality, to beautiful pupils.[139] The imagery in this line, as a whole, suggests that the poet's expression is rich in artful/artificial stylistic devices. It is probably not accidental that when describing the "natural" aspect of his poetry in the first line, Ibn Bābak mostly uses similes (except the metaphor "covered"), whereas in the second line, when its artful/artificial aspect is described, he uses metaphors. Each of these two tropes is more characteristic of each style respectively.

As we shall momentarily see, this idea is expressed by al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī in even clearer terms. Al-Thaʿālibī, speaking highly of al-Qāḍī's erudition and excellence in all the disciplines he studied, also says that "he combines the calligraphy (*khaṭṭ*) of Ibn Muqla with the prose of al-Jāḥiẓ and the poetry of al-Buḥturī."[140] In another place he explains al-Qāḍī's literary fineness by his stay in Syria, just as he did in respect to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī (following his account of al-Ṣāḥib's admiration for the Syrian style epitomized by al-Buḥturī's poetry): "…for he [=al-Qāḍī] reaped its [=Syria's] fruits and held fast to its traditions, to the point that he rose to the lofty position and assumed the natural gift of al-Buḥturī" (*taṭabbaʿa bi-ṭabʿ al-Buḥturī*).[141] We, therefore, learn that al-Qāḍī was classified as a "natural" poet, who similarly to Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī owes it to his Syrian training. Based on what we know about al-Ṣāḥib, this reputation must have helped him to win the vizier's esteem. At the same time al-Qāḍī gives a slightly different description of his poetic style that we should consider carefully. The *Yatīmat al-dahr*'s entry dedicated to him includes a section titled "Pearls from his Poetry on the Description of Poetry," where we find the following selection from an ode which in all likelihood was addressed to al-Ṣāḥib [*al-kāmil*]:

Ahdat li-majdika ḥullatan mawshiyyatan
Taksū l-ḥasūda kaʾābatan wa-dhubūlā

Aḥyat ḥabīban wa-l-walīda fa-faṣṣalā
Minhā washāʾiʿa nasjihā tafṣīlā

Fa-afādahā l-Ṭāʾiyyu diqqata fikratin
Wa-l-Buḥturiyyu damāthatan wa-qabūlā

It [=the ode] presented an embroidered garment to your glory
That covers the envious person with grief and wilt

It revived Ḥabīb [=Abū Tammām] and al-Walīd [=al-Buḥturī] and both of them did cut
From it the hems of its texture

Al-Ṭāʾī [=Abū Tammām] benefited it fineness of thought
And al-Buḥturī easiness of nature and grace[142]

Priding himself upon taking the best of both worlds, that is, "fineness of thought" and "easiness of nature and grace," al-Qāḍī evokes the two paragons of the *maṣnūʿ* and *maṭbūʿ* styles, Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī, who are said to have tailored his ode.[143] Luckily, a close look at al-Thaʿālibī's tracing of a motif in another place allows us to see an example illustrating the statement of al-Qāḍī in this selection. Al-Thaʿālibī presents the following motif genealogy in the entry on Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Mustahām al-Ḥalabī, a student (*ghulām*) of the poets al-Mutanabbī and al-Babaghāʾ. It starts with two lines from a eulogy al-Mustahām composed for an unspecified *amīr* [*al-sarīʿ*]:

Tuṭribuhu l-ashʿāru fī madḥihī
Wa-lam yaṣugh qāʾiluhā laḥnā

Fa-laysa yadrī in atā shāʿirun
Yunshiduhū anshada am ghannā

He is transported with joy by the odes in his praise
While their composer did not set them to music

For he does not know, when a poet comes
To recite [his poetry] to him, whether he recites or sings

This is a beautiful motif artfully employed by the discerning (*al-ʿuqalāʾ*), among whom Abū Tammām—perhaps the first to come up with it—when he says [*al-wāfir*]:

Wa-naghmatu muʿtafin taʾtīhi aḥlā
ʿAlā udhunayhi min naghmi l-samāʿī

The recitation sound of a favor-seeker reaching him is sweeter
To his ears than the sound of music

> Then al-Buḥturī, when he says [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Nashwāna yaṭrabu li-l-madīḥi kaʾannamā*
> *Ghannāhu Māliku Ṭayyiʾin aw Maʿbadū*
>
> Intoxicated, he is transported with joy by the praise section of the ode as if
> Mālik of Ṭayyiʾ or Maʿbad sang it
>
> Then Ibn al-Rūmī, when he says [*al-basīṭ*]:
>
> *Kaʾannahū wa-hwa masʾūlun wa-mumtadaḥun*
> *Ghannāhu isḥaqu wa-l-awtāru fī l-ṣakhabī*
>
> When asked for favor and praised, he looks as if
> Isḥāq [al-Mawṣilī] sang to him while the [lute's] strings sending forth loud sounds
>
> Then al-Qāḍī Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, when he says about al-Ṣāḥib [*al-kāmil*]:
>
> *Nashwāna yalqā l-muʿtafī mutahallilan*
> *Yahtazzu min madḥin bi-hī ʿiṭfāhū*
>
> *Wa-idhā aṣākha ilā l-madīḥi raʾaytahū*
> *Wa-kaʾanna Māliku Ṭayyiʾin ghannāhū*
>
> Intoxicated, he receives the favor-seeker beaming with joy
> His whole body sways for the praise to him
>
> When he listens to the praise section of the ode, he looks
> As if Mālik of Ṭayyiʾ sang it
>
> And the words of al-Mustahām are more beautiful and graceful than all of these.[144]

Abū Tammām's motif focuses on the generosity of the patron, his welcoming reception of the favor-seeking poet, through a comparison: The melodious recitation of the favor-seeker resonates better with the patron than the melody of singing. At the same time, al-Buḥturī's employment of the motif does not refer explicitly to this aspect, but instead he elaborates on the euphoric feeling that possesses the praised patron, who is as if moved by the singing of one of the two great musicians named. Ibn al-Rūmī, concentrating on the patron's feeling, is influenced by al-Buḥturī (note also his use, like the latter, of the verb + suffixed pronoun *ghannāhu* in exactly the same location), although the word *masʾūl* ("asked for favor") discloses that he paid some attention to Abū Tammām, too. In his turn, al-Qāḍī expands the motif to two lines and plainly gives more weight to al-Buḥturī's realization in his detailed depiction of the patron's euphoric feeling and body language. His debt to al-Buḥturī is greater than Ibn al-Rūmī's, as formally he follows his meter (*al-kāmil*), opens with "intoxicated" (*nashwān*) as did al-Buḥturī, and—while making an analogy to the same musician through simile (*kaʾannamā*/*wa-kaʾanna*)—reproduces the bigger part of al-Buḥturī's second hemistich in that of his second line (al-Buḥturī: *ghannāhu Māliku Ṭayyiʾin aw Maʿbadū*; al-Qāḍī: *wa-kaʾanna Māliku Ṭayyiʾin ghannāhū*). Yet, al-Qāḍī's use of the very expression chosen by Abū Tammām for "favor-seeker" (*al-muʿtafī*) bears evidence to his desire to infuse his lines with Abū Tammām's stress on the generosity of the patron. And the patron is al-Ṣāḥib, who—as we already know—would welcome poetry that while leaning to the side of al-Buḥturī, pays tribute to Abū Tammām. Indeed, al-Qāḍī's reputation as a "natural" poet following the tracks of al-Buḥturī in the Syrian style, while not refraining from a measured use of the artful/artificial style, resembles the approach of al-Ṣāḥib. In addition, this suggests that a moderate employment of *maṣnūʿ* features did not affect a poet's classification as "natural."

It is in his literary critical work *al-Wasāṭa*, where al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī elaborates on the "natural" style he espouses following a presentation of general trends in the history of Arabic poetry. A major differentiation he makes is between the stiffness and roughness of Bedouin expression on the one hand, and the excess of facility and smoothness in that of urban people. Al-Qāḍī mostly focuses on these two characteristics in a diachronic way that reflects the wider socio-cultural change undergone by Arabic speakers with the move from nomad to urban life following the appearance of Islam. Through this civilization process, the characters of Arabic speakers have become urbane and refined (*taʾaddub*, *taẓarruf*),[145] and consequently their language has softened and become more delicate and simplified. This process changed poetry to the point that any civilized person wishing to turn his back on his urbane nature and follow the tracks of the ancient poets had to resort to affectation (*takalluf*), which ended up with aesthetically distasteful results. Among those poets was Abū Tammām who attempted to emulate the expressions of the ancients, and—what made his poetry even more difficult—applied to it *badīʿ* extensively and drew on vague motifs. It was impossible for Abū Tammām and his followers, however, to persist in this manner in a poem without occasionally being attracted by their civilized nature (*al-ṭabʿ al-ḥaḍarī*) and led to produce "an effeminate line" (*al-bayt al-khanith*). This unevenness between the rugged and difficult, and the smooth and facile, brings about weakness (*rakāka*) of style. The affectation and unevenness of Abū Tammām's poetry notwithstanding, al-Qāḍī is quick to announce his great admiration for Abū Tammām in the language of religious devotion:

> I do not say this to detract from Abū Tammām, not to excoriate his poetry, and not for zealous partisanship with another against him. How can it be so, while I profess his distinction and precedence, and embrace clientship and glorification of him (*adīnu bi-tafḍīlihi wa-taqdīmihi wa-antaḥilu muwālātahu wa-taʿẓīmahu*)!? I consider him the ideal of those after conceits

> and the model for the adherents of *badīʿ* (*qiblat aṣḥāb al-maʿānī wa-qudwat ahl al-badīʿ*).[146]

Al-Qāḍī emphasizes that when he calls upon the "modern" poet to follow his natural gift (*ṭabʿ*) and smoothen (*tashīl*) his poetic style, he by no means has in mind "the smooth and easy which is flabby and weak" (*al-samḥ al-sahl al-ḍaʿīf al-rakīk*); nor—what he derogatively genders—"the delicate and elegant which is effeminate and feminine" (*al-laṭīf al-rashīq al-khanith al-muʾannath*). What he does aim at is the middle way (*al-namaṭ al-awsaṭ*) "that is above the [speech of the] vulgar rabble (*al-sāqiṭ al-sūqī*) and below the uncouth Bedouin (*al-badawī l-waḥshī*)."[147] When he urges to abandon affectation (*takalluf*, *taʿammul*) and give one's natural gift free rein (*al-istirsāl li-l-ṭabʿ*), he clarifies:

> I do not mean by that every natural gift, but the refined one (*al-muhadhdhab*) that *adab* had polished, transmission (*riwāya*) had honed, and intelligence (*fiṭna*) had burnished; that which had been inspired by the division between bad and good, and had conceived of examples of beauty and ugliness.

The poet, whose poetry exemplifies this *ṭabʿ*, says al-Qāḍī, is al-Buḥturī (and in case one wants to become acquainted with it in the poetry of an ancient poet, he is referred to Jarīr).[148]

Through this presentation we come closer to understanding al-Qāḍī's position as a critic who supports "natural" poetry and a poet known for composing in this style. To him, natural gift and consequently "natural" poetry deserve to be thus dubbed only when polished by thorough and active knowledge of poetry,[149] its heritage and general cultural refinement (*adab*), in addition to being honed by intelligence. Yet, it should not become too crafted to the effect that fluency and ease get obstructed. The desideratum is, therefore, nature perfected by culture, a balanced middle-ground. It is for this reason that he rejects the crudeness of the Bedouins on the one hand and the over-smoothness of the civilized on the other, each of which represents nature and culture in its pure form. While Abū Tammām is taken to task for his excessive affectation, he is still highly-prized by al-Qāḍī for his poetic achievements in the realm of motifs and rhetorical figures. Indeed, the latter speaks ardently of his indebted adherence to him. We gather, then, that the "natural" poet of the time should take the model of al-Buḥturī, but benefit as well from the innovation, wit, and playfulness in the artful/artificial style of Abū Tammām.

We previously viewed how al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī flaunted the names of al-Buḥturī and Abū Tammām in a poem as signs of literary styles. Making use of a celebrated poet's name as a sign was, however, not limited in its application to the poet himself but could also be connected with the patron. We see that in the last line of Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim's Mansion Ode [*al-ṭawīl*]:

Wa-illā jararta l-dhayla fī sāḥati l-ʿulā
Wa-qulta l-qawāfī qad uʿīda jarīruhā

> And were it not for your dragging along the hinder skirt at the court of sublimity
> And reciting poetry, its [=poetry's] Jarīr would be returned[150]

Abū ʿĪsā based the line's argument nicely on a *jinās* connecting the verb *jararta* (long skirt denotes metonymically wealth and pride)[151] with Jarīr. As shown and exemplified by the traditionist and philologist of the Basra school Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (139–231/756–845), of the two notable poets Jarīr and al-Farazdaq (both classified among the first generation of early Islamic poets), the former was judged by the Bedouins themselves as the superior.[152] Likewise, the choice of al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī to illustrate with an ode of Jarīr the good type of "natural" poetry written by an ancient (*qadīm*) poet bears evidence to his reputation as an exponent of the excellent "natural" Bedouin style.[153] That Abū ʿĪsā opted for putting al-Ṣāḥib as a poet on the same footing with Jarīr should be taken as a well-thought-out choice. This is especially because the last line of the recited ode constitutes its climax, and the choice of a certain model-poet, and not another, for comparison with the publicly addressed patron necessarily draws much attention in performance. It is to respond to al-Ṣāḥib's known appreciation for the (good) Bedouin style and its exponents that Abū ʿĪsā appears to have done so.

Given what we saw so far, the case of Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī might possibly set a challenge to our developing understanding of the poets' response to al-Ṣāḥib's taste, and it therefore deserves careful consideration. Despite his known preferences, al-Ṣāḥib highly appreciated and favorably received the mannerist poet al-Maʾmūnī in al-Rayy as a protégé. The latter and his poetry were depicted by al-Thaʿālibī, our cardinal source on the poet,[154] thus: "His mind overflowing with poetry of *badīʿ* artifice (*shiʿr badīʿ al-ṣanʿa*), of beautiful molding (*malīḥ al-ṣīgha*), cast in the mold of beauty and excellence."[155] While no indication exists that his utterly mannerist ekphrastic poetry was recited to the vizier,[156] we do know that "he praised al-Ṣāḥib with singular odes (*qaṣāʾid farāʾid*) that amazed him, and by which he was dazzled with astonishment."[157] As we saw in Chapter 2, al-Maʾmūnī's final failure with al-Ṣāḥib is ascribed by al-Thaʿālibī to schemes of envious courtiers, with no explicit word on stylistic issues related to that. Unfortunately, the only extant ode addressed to al-Ṣāḥib by al-Maʾmūnī—the one in which the poet asked for permission to leave—is presented to us as three selections (marked here as [A], [B], [C]) and not in its full form [*al-basīṭ*]:

> [A]
> *Yā rabʿu law kuntu damʿan fī-ka munsakiban*
> *Qaḍaytu naḥbī wa-lam aqḍi l-ladhī wajabā*
>
> *Lā yunkiran rabʿuka l-bālī bilā jasadī*
> *Fa-qad sharibtu bi-kaʾsi l-ḥubbi mā sharibā*
>
> *Wa-law afaḍtu dumūʿī ḥasba wājibihā*
> *Afaḍtu min kulli ʿuḍwin madmaʿan saribā*

ʿAhdī bi-ʿahdika li-l-ladhdhāti murtabiʿan
Fa-qad ghadā li-ghawādī l-suḥbi[158] *muntaḥibā*

Fa-yā saqāka akhū jafni l-saḥābi ḥayan
Yaḥbū rubā l-arḍi min nawri l-riyāḍi ḥibā

Dhū bāriqin ka-suyūfi l-Ṣāḥibi ntuḍiyat
Wa-wābilin ka-ʿaṭāyāhū idhā wahabā

O abode, if I were tears shed over you,
I would dry up without completing what was due

Your obliterated abode should not find my emaciated body strange,
As I had drank in the goblet of love what it drank

If I were to shed my tears in accordance with their duty,
I would make a streaming channel of tears flow from each member [of my body]

My thinking back is to your first rain, pasturing over delights,
As [the rain] had come because of morning clouds weeping

Let the brother of the clouds' eyelid drench you with rain
That gives the hills of the land garden flowers as a gift

Possessors of lightning [=clouds] like the swords of al-Ṣāḥib unsheathed
And of heavy downpour like his awards when granted

[B]
Fa-kuntu yūsufa wa-l-asbāṭu hum wa-abū l-
Asbāṭi anta wa-daʿwāhum daman kadhibā

Wa-ʿuṣbatin bāta fī-hā l-ghayẓu muttaqidan
Idh shidta lī fawqa aʿnāqi l-ʿidā rutabā

Qad yanbaḥu l-kalbu mā lam yalqa laytha Sharan
Ḥattā idhā mā raʾā laythan qaḍā rahabā

Arā maʾāribakum fī naẓmi qāfiyatin
Wa-mā arā liya fī ghayri l-ʿulā arabā

ʿAddū ʿani l-shiʿri inna l-shiʿra manqaṣatun
Li-dhī l-ʿalāʾi wa-hātū l-majda wa-l-ḥasabā

Fa-l-shiʿru aqṣaru min an yustaṭāla bi-hī
In kāna mubtadaʿan aw kāna muqtaḍabā

I was Joseph, they were the Children of Israel, the father of the
Children was you, and their claim was false blood[159]

There is a group of people in which wrath was set ablaze
Since you erected for me standing positions over the enemies' necks

The dog may bark as long as it does not meet the lion of Sharan[160]
When it sees one, it is extremely terrorized

I see your wants in composing a poem,
While I do not see me in want of anything but glory

Turn away from poetry! Indeed, poetry is a deficiency
For he who has high standing, and let me have grandeur and esteem!

For poetry falls short of being beneficial,
Even if it is innovative or improvised

[C]
Asīru ʿanka wa-lī fī kulli jāriḥatin
Famun bi-shukrika yujrī miqwalan dharibā

Wa-man yaruddu ḍiyāʾa l-shamsi idh sharaqat
Wa-man yaruddu ṭarīqa l-ghaythi in sakabā

Innī la-ʾahwā maqāmī fī dharāka ka-mā
Tahwā yamīnuka fī l-ʿāfīna an tahabā[161]

Lākin lisāniya yahwā l-sayra ʿanka li-an
Yuṭabbiqa l-arḍa madḥan fī-ka muntakhabā

Aẓunnunī bayna ahlī wa-l-anāmu humū
Idhā taraḥḥaltu ʿan maghnāka mughtaribā

I will go away from you having in each member of the body
A mouth that gives thanks to you putting in motion an eloquent tongue[162]

Who rejects the sun's light when it shines?!
And who drives away the rain when it pours down?!

Indeed, I like my position at your court
As your right hand likes to award the seekers of favors

But my tongue would like to leave you to
Spread throughout the land selected praise of you

I consider myself among my people, and they are mankind,
If I leave your abode for a foreign land[163]

Thematically, these three selections from an ode are respectively: *nasīb* (delimited by *ḥusn al-takhalluṣ* in its last line starting with *dhū bāriqin*); *fakhr* in which the poet voices his complaint and contends with his enemies; and *madīḥ* where the poet praises the vizier and excuses his wish to leave. Whereas the *nasīb* elaborates on the traditional theme of the lover standing by the beloved's traces of deserted encampment and crying, it has one feature which is remarkably mannerist. That occurs when the poet says in the third line, "If I were to shed my tears in accordance with their duty, I would make a streaming channel of tears flow from each member [of my body]." The estrangement of the human body and the extraordinary form observable in "…a streaming channel of tears flow from each member [of my body]" is a typical mannerist technique (as we saw above), which appears here in a restrained form due to the hypothetical conditional sentence. Al-Maʾmūnī reiterates this very technique in the first line of the *madīḥ*, now without restraining the hyperbole saying: "I will go away from you having in each member of the body a mouth that gives thanks to you putting in motion an eloquent tongue."[164] Nevertheless, the most characteristic feature of the *maṣnūʿ* style, to wit, bold use of metaphors is not present in these selections, although al-Maʾmūnī excelled in it.

There is therefore not enough, quantitatively and qualitatively, in the available selections to consider them on the whole *maṣnūʿ*. One should note that in its present form this ode does not include a *waṣf* part. If it has ever had one, in the light of al-Maʾmūnī's mannerist ekphrastic pieces, it might have tipped the balance toward the artful/artificial style.[165] In the selections we have in hand, however, there is a possible hint that could explain the lack of a clear-cut *maṣnūʿ* character. The last line of the *fakhr* ("For poetry falls short of being beneficial, even if it is innovative or improvised") has the particle *in* opening the second hemistich, which may be understood as "if" or "even if." If we opt for the former—the conditional "if"—and especially if we take *mubtadaʿan* to mean "ornamented" (i.e., in *badīʿ* style), we may hear a complaint of the poet about poetry's not paying off when thus composed: "For poetry falls short of being beneficial, if it is ornamented or improvised." Despite conveying different and irreconcilable meanings, this reading is as legitimate grammatically and lexically as the other (preferred) reading. Since this ode was recited to al-Ṣāḥib while the young al-Maʾmūnī was his protégé, a possible complaint about undeserving treatment due to the poet's stylistic and performative preferences should have been directed to him. If this indeed was the case, the absence of clear-cut artfulness/artificiality from the ode selections would be more understandable.

It would be too risky then to pass a judgment on the response of the poets to al-Ṣāḥib's taste relying on al-Maʾmūnī's case alone. A more prudent approach would be to consider the limited conclusion we can draw from it, namely, that the evidence we possess does not show that al-Maʾmūnī's praise to the vizier had a clear-cut *maṣnūʿ* character, together with other pieces of evidence. When we do that, we find al-Maʾmūnī's case not standing against our prior findings; rather, stylistically speaking, his ode selections appear to be not much different from al-Rustamī's and from those of other poets who recited Mansion Odes, and along the same lines with Ibn Bābak and al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī who spoke of enriching their "natural" poetry with artful/artificial features, and acted upon it. Thus, it is possible to speak about a dominant taste of the patron—"natural" style perfected by the artful/artificial—that received a response along the same lines from his protégé poets.

That there was a constant dialogue between the poetic output of the poets and al-Ṣāḥib's aesthetic judgment we learn *inter alia* from the last three lines of Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Asadī's Mansion Ode [*al-kāmil*]:

Hādhī l-ʿaqīlatu min banī asadin
Tujlī wa-taḥdharu ṣawlahā l-usudū

Bikrun fa-lam yaʿriḍ la-hā basharun
Qablī wa-lam yaqdaḥ la-hā zandū

Zuffat ilayka wa-ḥalyuhā adabun
Wa-zakat ladayka wa-mahruhā naqdū

This noble woman of the Banū Asad [tribe]
Is left alone by the lions who are wary of her assault

A virgin, no human being has attended to her
Before me, and a stick (of a fire drill) has not struck her

She was given in marriage to you, her ornament being *adab*
And she throve with you, her dowry being criticism[166]

The poet describes his ode figuratively as a noble bride (*ʿaqīla*) he married off to al-Ṣāḥib. By boasting of the bride's virginity (nicely paralleled with the other meaning of *ʿaqīla*: "a pearl" or "a pearl in its shell"; hence, a pearl unpierced or unopened in its shell), al-Asadī refers to the ode's originality. When al-Asadī speaks of his giving the bride–ode in marriage to the vizier adorned with *adab*, he transmits two messages by playing with two meanings of *naqd*: cash money; and assaying of poetry, that is, literary criticism.[167] While the former alludes to his desire to be rewarded for the ode (figuratively rendered as the bride's dowry), the latter expresses his confidence that the ode be subjected to the criticism of the discerning vizier and be met with a favorable reception. Since in these lines the ode is the topic and the bride is the analogue, I give preference to *naqd* as "criticism" in my above translation for it conveys the chief message. Thus, the significance of these three lines for us lies in their indicating *from the poet's vantage point* the dialogic process of his submission of creation to the patron–connoisseur's critical judgment. The fact that the poet anticipated as part of this process criticism from a specialist who was also the patron on whose reward he relied, entails that he must have taken seriously the latter's taste attempting to agree with it in his production.

Notes

1 The date is unspecified, but my assumption above is based on the following clues. Praising Esfahan as a center of learning and literature, al-Thaʿālibī writes (Y, III, 124–5):

> After it produced al-Ṣāḥib Abū l-Qāsim and many of his friends and protégés, and *became the center of his power*, the gathering place of his courtiers, and the destination of his visitors, it deserved to be called the congregation place of learning and assembling place of *adab*.

The italicized text seems to indicate the year 366/976 in which al-Ṣāḥib was reinstated as Muʾayyid al-Dawla's vizier, consolidating and securing his power until the end of his life. The last line of al-Zaʿfarānī's Mansion Ode ("I shall not mention Iraq as long as I live until I see him aiming at it among soldiers": Y, III, 50) makes it inconceivable that the event took place after 379/989, for in this year al-Ṣāḥib and Fakhr al-Dawla actually aimed at it and failed. It is also impossible that such a line was recited between 367/977 and 372/983, that is, between the conquest of Baghdad (and Iraq) by the powerful Būyid overlord ʿAḍud al-Dawla and his death in it (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, VII, 358, 388). Apart from that, between 367/977 and 370/980, as we learn from al-Tawḥīdī's account, al-Ṣāḥib's court was located in al-Rayy (see below). There is additional evidence suggesting that al-Ṣāḥib's court was in Esfahan at the very beginning of his tenure. This city is mentioned by al-Thaʿālibī first in sequence, before al-Rayy and Jurjān, as the location of his court (Y, III, 32). Moreover, a letter sent to him by Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābī is addressed to "al-Ṣāḥib … the vizier of the *amīr* Muʾayyid al-Dawla … in Esfahan" (*al-Mukhtār min rasāʾil Abī Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl b. Zahrūn al-Ṣābī*, ed. Shakīb Arslān [Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-Ḥadītha, {1966}], 404). Muʾayyid al-Dawla died in 373/983, not long after ʿAḍud al-Dawla (Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 114–15). While theoretically one still cannot rule out completely the possibility that the event took place between 373 and 379, another piece of evidence makes it improbable. Al-Ṣāḥib remarked that Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī l-Iṣfahānī, the poet whose Mansion Ode surpassed the others', "was counted among the group of our friends in Esfahan." He mentioned the deterioration of al-Rustamī's poetry and the end of his affection to the vizier that occurred *later*, bitterly noting the poet's unjustified abandonment of his service (Y, III, 130). Since al-Rustamī's Mansion Ode was considered the best of many good others' (Y, III, 54), he was indubitably in his prime at the time of its recitation. That, according to al-Ṣāḥib's passage, was in the early phases of his career in Esfahan. Given all that, it is probable that the event took place in 366/976; according to Yāqūt, Esfahan was known for making its inhabitants misers due to its climate and character, and so whenever al-Ṣāḥib wanted to enter the city, he would say: "Whoever has a need, let him ask me for it before I enter Esfahan. For when I enter it, I find in myself stinginess, I do not find in other cities": *Muʿjam al-buldān*, I, 209; writing between 465–85/1072–92, Mufaḍḍal b. Saʿd al-Māfarrukhī mentioned al-Ṣāḥib's mansion as inhabited at some point after his death by al-Shaykh al-Jalīl Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-wazīr: *Kitāb maḥāsin Iṣfahān*, ed. al-Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṭihrānī (Tehran: Majlis, 1933), 90.

2 Y, III, 44–55.

3 See, for instance, the ship description of Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1036) as analyzed by Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1989, 64–70.

4 W.P. Heinrichs, “*maṭbūʿ* and *maṣnūʿ*,” *EAL*.

5 Y, III, 54, 47; in the anthology entry al-Thaʿālibī dedicated to al-Rustamī, he considered the poet “someone who recited poetry at the highest level, and was among the greatest class of the period’s poets”: Y, III, 129.

6 Y, III, 129.

7 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 699; Y, III, 33; al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, XI, 123 and XV, 206 (the selection presented in the latter source has four more lines); I opted above for *mawṣūlata* in the first line instead of *marfūʿata* that only appears in Yāqūt’s text.

8 See R. Jacobi, “*qaṣīda*,” *EAL*; idem, “The Camel Section of the Panegyrical Ode,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982): 20–2; Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 26.

9 Jacobi, “The Camel Section,” 16.

10 Ibn Qotaïba, *Introduction au livre de la poésie et des poètes: muqaddimatu kitābi š-šiʿri wa š- šuʿarāʾ*, ed. De Goeje and tr. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1947), 13–14.

11 Wolfhart Heinrichs, “*Istiʿārah* and *Badīʿ* and their Terminological Relationship in Early Arabic Literary Criticism,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, Bd. 1 (1984): 180; idem, “Paired Metaphors in *Muḥdath* Poetry,” *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies*, no. 1 (1986): 3–4 (the quotations are from the latter source).

12 Heinrichs, “Paired Metaphors,” 5, 7–8, 9.

13 On that, see Heinrichs, “Paired Metaphors,” 10–11.

14 Other examples for similar non-imaginary simile-based metaphors brought by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī are “lion” for a (courageous) man, “antelopes” for (beautiful) women, and “light” for right guidance (*hudā*) and elucidation (*bayān*). He makes the point that what renders these easy to grasp is the underlying substratum on the topic level, which is not found in analogy-based metaphors like “the hand of the North Wind,” for instance: *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat Wizārat al-Maʿārif, 1954), 42–5.

15 W.P. Heinrichs defines *takhyīl*, according to ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, thus: “Briefly put, it consists in a kind of make-believe in the form of giving, to a fact stated in the poem, a fantastic interpretive twist which on the surface explains and supports that fact, but on closer inspection turns out to be an illusion”: “Takhyīl,” *EI2*.

16 See Lane, “*ʿ.l.m.*.”

17 Cf. Heinrichs, “Paired Metaphors,” 7–9.

18 The *tanāsī* of the metaphor (i.e., the poet’s pretending to forget its metaphoricalness and taking its content literally) was noted by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī as one of the important procedures that may produce *takhyīl* conceits: Heinrichs, “Takhyīl.”

19 Merlon is “a part of a crenellated parapet between two embrasures; a raised section of a battlement”: John Simpson (ed.), “merlon, *n.*” *OED Online*, June 2008, Oxford University Press, 10 April 2009 http://dictionary.oed.com.cgi/entry/00306357; cf. the battlements’ descriptions in the Mansion Odes of al-Ḍabbī, l.6; al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan, l.4–5; Al-Zaʿfarānī, l.14; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ghuwayrī, l.3; al-Khwārazmī (second short poem), l.1: Y, III, 45, 50, 52, 55.

20 In identifying the mansion’s buildings as the substratum of “beautiful women,” we are supported by line 6 of al-Ḍabbī’s Mansion Ode, “Battlements branch out on its [=the mansion’s] shoulders, which drive back the dim-sighted who looks at them”: Y, III, 45.

21 Indeed, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī adduces this line (and the one preceding it) in his discussion of *takhyīl* examples: *Asrār al-balāgha*, 265; he also studies cases of *takhyīl* in verse by al-Ṣāḥib (ibid., 267. The line is misattributed to [Jaʿfar b.] ʿUlba; see H. Ritter’s note and cf. Y, III, 95, 108) and by several poets who were at some point his courtiers: Ibn Bābak (*Asrār al-balāgha*, 266; other examples from Ibn

Bābak’s poetry on pp. 255 and 260 are clearly addressed to other patrons), al-Shāshī (ibid., 260; from an ode addressed to al-Ṣāḥib: Y, III, 203), al-Maʾmūnī (*Asrār al-balāgha*, 274; praising a vizier in Bukhara).

22 Tropes of the type “narcissus”-for-“eye” were not considered metaphors but similes by the medieval critics for a long time. This is because they are based on worn-out similes (“the eye is like a narcissus”) and in spite of the fact that they have long lost the particle of comparison and the *primum comparationis*. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078 or 474/1081) was the first to regard them *tashbīh* (simile-based) metaphors alongside the *tamthīl* (analogy-based) ones, but those who later relied on his work extended *tashbīh* as the rationale to all types of metaphors: Heinrichs, “*Istiʿāra* and *Badīʿ*,” 187.

23 In terms of imagery use, this line bears resemblance to one by Dhū l-Rumma adduced by Wolfhart Heinrichs which despite featuring one topic and two analogues (like many *muḥdath* lines) does not parallelize them with a figure of speech. Heinrichs preceded this line by Dhū l-Rumma to another by Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī that does tie two images by *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*: “Paired Metaphors,” 12–13.

24 Lane (*ḍ.b.ʿ.*) glosses *jadhabahu bi-ḍabʿayhi = akhadha bi-ḍabʿayhi = madda bi-ḍabʿayhi* thus: “he raised him, or set him up, and rendered his name famous”; on this expression, see also Wright, *A Grammar*, II, 160; in *Akhlāq*, 182, for example, al-Ṣāḥib promises to extend patronage to ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Kātib in exchange for his service, using “setting you up” (*al-jadhb bi-ḍabʿika*); compare the power given to the patron al-Ṣāḥib over earth in this line to another with the same metaphor by Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd speaking highly of the poet al-Buḥturī raised to greatness by “loftiness” [*al-kāmil*]: “Loftiness pulled up his upper arm and shifted him to an abode between the Milky Way and the Simāk” (*jadhaba l-ʿalāʾu bi-ḍabʿihī fa-aḥallahū bayna l-majarrati wa-l-simāki ribāʿā*): al-Ṣāḥib, *al-Kashf ʿan masāwī shiʿr al-Mutanabbī*, ed. Muḥammad Āl Yāsīn (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1965), 43 (henceforth, *al-Kashf)*. Al-Simāk may refer to one of the two bright stars *al-simāk al-aʿzal* (α Virginis) or *al-simāk al-rāmiḥ* (α Bootis). The former is the fourteenth among the twenty-eight lunar mansions: Paul Kunitzsch, “al-Nudjūm,” “al-Manāzil,” *EI2*; idem, *Untersuchungen zur Sternnomenklatur der Araber* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), 105; Lane, *s.m.k.*; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī, *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1954), 189, 193.

25 Sperl found that metaphor *overwhelmingly* dominated at the expense of simile in Mihyār al-Daylamī’s mannerist poetry: *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 59; when it came to the classical style (that of the Bedouins, *al-ʿarab*), success at creating similies was counted among the essential and desirable qualities, while the use of metaphors (and other tropes) was considered to be of a lesser importance: al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 38.

26 Y, III, 129; regarding *faṣāḥat al-badāwa wa-ḥalāwat al-ḥaḍāra*, cf. al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb zād*, 77; al-Thaʿālibī writes (Y, III, 130) that “when the dawn of hoariness shone on Abū Saʿīd and the haughtiness of eminence came upon him, he composed little poetry: either for deeming himself above it, or for the deterioration of *his natural gift* [for poetry] (*ṭabʿihi*).”

27 Y, III, 129–30. Al-Ṣāḥib seems to poke fun at al-Rustamī, reducing his sexual prowess to the domain of poetry—essentially saying that he is good at talking rather than doing. This teasing is in line with the report on the vizier’s penchant for poetic banter with al-Rustamī: al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, XV, 205.

28 Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 65–70.

29 Ibid., 66 (italics are mine).

30 The height of the battlements was lauded also by other poets among those describing the mansion, as in the fourth line of al-Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan’s ode (Y, III, 45): “Above it there are battlements whose lowest reaches the hand of the Pleiades, thus tell me how far its highest [battlements] go!”.

31 Y, III, 282.

32 Y, III, 283; other description sections in this ode focus on horses led to al-Ṣāḥib from Fāris, his robe of honor and sword, and finally the desert; for technical details and other information on materials, preparation, types, usage, and maintenance of inkwells, pens, knives, and ink, see Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1928), II, 440–77. As for the crying metaphor of the pen, al-Qalqashandī cites (ibid., 447) the adage "with the *crying* of the pen, the books smile" by the secretary and poet Kulthūm b. ʿAmr al-ʿAttābī (d. *c.*220/835). He also adduces (ibid., 449) the line by the literary critic Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. after 400/1010) "[the pen] appears to its beholder of yellow color, black *tear channels*, and thin body"; the children of the black mother—pens—are the "lovers of a sharpened knife," and indeed, when it comes to the secretary's craft, nibbing them properly was considered the most basic and indispensable action. Al-Qalqashandī cites many authorities who spoke to that effect (ibid., 455–7), but ends by commenting that there was someone who went against this injunction, namely, al-Ṣāḥib. He recounts an anecdote from al-Ghazālī's *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, which varies to some degree from the available source. According to the Persian and medieval Arabic translation (the two differ only slightly—I preferred the original Persian whenever they show minor discrepancies), Shāhanshāh ("king of kings"; among the Būyids, this honorific was especially applied to ʿAḍud al-Dawla) had ten viziers, al-Ṣāḥib being one of them. When all agreed to instigate against him, they claimed that he could not nib his pen. When the king heard about it, he summoned all of them, and al-Ṣāḥib averred that his father taught him the secretary's craft and not that of a carpenter. He added that he knows least about sharpening the pen's point, and challenged them all to write a complete letter with a pen whose point is broken. They were unable to respond to the challenge, and the king urged al-Ṣāḥib to do that himself. He took a pen, broke its nib and wrote a complete letter, after which all acknowledged his excellence: *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (Persian), 191–2; *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Damaj (Beirut: ʿIzz al-Dīn, 1996), 238–9; Bagley provides a slightly different translation of this anecdote: *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings*, 115; Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṣūlī's (d. 335/947) treatment of inkwells, pens, and other writing materials in *Adab al-kuttāb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Atharī (Baghdad: al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1922), 92–117, is more literary and linguistic compared to al-Qalqashandī's more technically informative presentation. The motif of the inkwell as a mother of children appears in a poem without reference to blackness, which appears separately (*min banāt Ḥām*) in the poem to follow (both written by scribes): al-Ṣūlī, *Adab al-kuttāb*, 92–3; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī cites an anonymous line on the inkwell described as a black woman with a child (or children) [*al-mutaqārib*]: "Many a black woman has not been given birth to by females and in whose belly there is a child (or children) from another" (*wa-zanjiyyatin lam talidhā l-ināthū wa-fī jawfihā min siwāhā walad*): *Majmaʿ al-balāgha*, ed. ʿUmar al-Sārīsī (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1986), I, 172; for another literary entry comprising poetry and prose pieces on writing and writing utensils, see Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb diwān al-Maʿānī*, ed. Aḥmad Ghānim (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003), 816–31; for a discussion of ekphrastic stationery motifs in the poetry of Kushājim and other ʿAbbāsid poets, see Alma Giese, *Waṣf bei Kušāǧim: eine Studie zur beschreibenden Dichtkunst der Abbasidenzeit* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1981), 270–3; al-Maʾmūnī's fragments on this topic are translated and annotated in J. Christoph Bürgel, *Die ekphrastischen Epigramme des Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 258–60.

33 Note that in *fa-lā ṭalqun wa-lā waḥamu* both substantives after *lā al-nāfiya* are in the nominative. That is possible when the *lā* is repeated and the conjunctive *wāw* connects the two negated substantives. See Wright, *A Grammar*, II, 97.

34 Cf. al-Ṭabarī's stationery descriptions to those of Abū Ṭālib al-Maʾmūnī on the pen

holder and pens (*miqlama wa-l-aqlām*), where the pregnant mother and children's motif is used, and on the tailed knife (*al-sikkīn al-mudhannab*) which "embraces in the inkwells spears of reed and what seeks protection from sickness lasts": Y, IV, 108–9; Bürgel, *Die ekphrastischen Epigramme*, 259–60; there is no reference that connects these *qiṭaʿ* to al-Ṣāḥib, although al-Maʾmūnī was his protégé as a young man: Y, IV, 84.

35 See above for some notes on these motifs.

36 Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 60.

37 Similarly, al-Rustamī shows some restraint in his quasi-*takhyīl* in line B3: "As though there was in them [=streamlets in the mansion's garden], with respect to the strong flowing, insanity, for the winds had dressed them with chains." As analyzed above, a *maṣnūʿ* poet would have opted for a metaphor instead of a simile ("as though…") in order to make it a real etiological explanation conceit.

38 Here are two examples for *muḥdath* metaphors in the Mansion Odes. The first is line 16 of Abū l-Qāsim al-Zaʿfarānī's poem (Y, III, 50; [*al-khafīf*]): "May I not encounter Time, except for in a face whose water does not go about a rock" (*lā laqītu l-zamāna illā bi-wajhin māʾuhū lā yajūlu fī julmūdī*). *Māʾ al-wajh* means the luster of one's face, and hence his honor or reputation: Lane, *ḥ.q.n.* (*ḥaqana māʾa wajhihi*). Therefore, speaking of al-Ṣāḥib's face, the poet uses water as a non-imaginary metaphor for its luster. From this bifurcation point he moves onto the analogue's level to aver that the water does not go about a rock, which is an imaginary metaphor based on an analogy for a miser; it is an allusion to the proverb said of a miser *rashaḥa jalmaduhu* (=*julmūduhu*) "his rock sweated," that is, "he gave something": Lane, *r.sh.ḥ.*, and *j.l.m.d.* The total analogy is: al-Ṣāḥib's luster is honorable unlike that of the stingy person who gives a trifle, just like water which is not going about a rock. The image is dominated by "water" which is a *muḥdath* type [2] metaphor. Al-Zaʿfarānī's establishing the line on the pretense that the luster of the face is real water is similar to Abū Nuwās's way in "in the area of a cheek whose water has not trickled away and which the eyes of people have not waded in." The imagery in this line is micro-analyzed in Heinrichs, *Paired Metaphors*, 7–9 (the translation of Abū Nuwās's line is Heinrichs's). The second example is line 5 of Abū ʿĪsā b. al-Munajjim's ode (Y, III, 51; [*al-ṭawīl*]): "Thus, the eye of Time has not dreamt of its like, and its like [=the mansion's] is far from being perceived" (*fa-mā ḥalamat ʿaynu l-zamāni bi-mithlihā wa-ḥāshā la-hā min an yuḥassa naẓīruhā*). Here the verb metaphor "dreamt" is the origin of "the eye" nominal metaphor, the latter being an adjacent element on the analogue's level. That it was thus "artificially" constructed and not through an underlying analogy (as in analogy-based metaphors), we can deduce from the semantic superfluity of "eyes"; dropping it and having instead "Thus, Time has not dreamt of its like" would still leave the proposition valid syntactically (cf. Heinrichs, *Paired Metaphors*, 6). The "eye" is then a type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor.

39 Al-Ṣāḥib, *al-Kashf*, 19–20; the formulations al-Ṣāḥib uses to salute Ibn al-ʿAmīd "may God perpetuate his life and strengthen His favor bestowal upon him" and "may God exalt him" leave no doubt that he was alive at the time: ibid., 31 (see other similar salutations on pp. 34, 35, 41).

40 Y, I, 86–7; al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, IX, 135 (a different version of the story, showing even greater belittlement of al-Ṣāḥib by al-Mutanabbī, following which the former wrote his treatise).

41 One, Abū l-Ḥusayn Ḥamza b. Muḥammad al-Iṣbahānī, whose name—says Āl Yāsīn—does not appear in the text itself but added in the title by the Escorial manuscript's copyist: al-Ṣāḥib, *al-Kashf*, 19.

42 *Al-Kashf*, 29–30; this is a recurrent critical point made by al-Ṣāḥib in *al-Kashf*, for example, ibid., 44, where he argues that "there is no clearer proof for the oscillation of the natural gift (*ṭabʿ*) than bringing together good and bad poetry in one line" (an example follows).

43 *Al-Kashf*, 31.

44 *Al-Kashf*, 30–2; on the key role played by secretaries in the development of literary criticism, see W.P. Heinrichs, “Naḳd,” *EI2*.

45 According to his biography in *Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, 136–9, not only was Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd “the greatest secretary of his time and the holder of the biggest stationery collection,” but besides being a great poet he also possessed unparalleled proficiency in lexicography and rare words, grammar and prosody, etymology and metaphors (*istiʿārāt*), in addition to his deep knowledge of the Qurʾān. His prodigious memory and memorization of *dīwān*s of poets from pre-Islamic and Islamic times are illustrated in several anecdotes narrated, among others, by Miskawayh.

46 *Al-Kashf*, 34–41.

47 See, for instance, *al-Kashf*, 45, 47, 50, 53, 54, 56, 69 (irony); 66 and 72–3, 74 (sarcasm).

48 *Dīwān Abī l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī wa-fī athnāʾi matnihi sharḥ al-imām al-ʿallāma al-Wāḥidī* (henceforward: al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*), ed. Friedrich Dieterici (Berlin: Mittler, 1861), 201; al-Wāḥidī interprets this line, the last in an ode praising Abū ʿAlī Hārūn b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Awārijī l-Kātib, thus:

> he says “if you were not from this mankind, which is as if from you (for you are its beauty, its honor, and its best), Eve would be as good as a barren woman who would not give birth. Nevertheless, thanks to you she eventually had descendants.”

49 *Al-Kashf*, 68–9; al-Ḥasan’s (i.e., Abū Nuwās) two lines are extracted from a lampoon: *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, I, 48; instead of *iḥlīl*, we find *jurdān* (“penis”) in the *Dīwān*’s text.

50 Note that al-Thaʿālibī, within the long entry dedicated to al-Mutanabbī in *Yatīmat al-dahr*, presents many selections from *al-Kashf*. These, in addition to criticism made by the anthologist and others, are topically arranged: Y, I, 105–26.

51 Cited by Ibn Rashīq (*al-ʿUmda*, I, 133), al-Jāḥiẓ, too, emphasizes that one’s background and audience determine the expression he may use. Hence, only a Bedouin may use uncouth (*waḥshī*) expressions. In another place (ibid., II, 266), Ibn Rashīq criticizes Abū Tammām’s affectation for his frequent use of crude uncouth vocabulary. Likewise, al-Mutanabbī’s affected use of rare vocabulary, says Ibn Rashīq, was meant to show off his knowledge; Abū l-Qāsim al-Āmidī (d. 371/981), discussing a censured line by Abū Tammām, expresses an idea similar to al-Ṣāḥib’s in greater detail: An urban poet (*al-shāʿir al-ḥaḍarī*) has to employ in his poetry the expressions in current use among city dwellers. If he does choose to use expressions of the Bedouin, these should not be uncouth (*al-waḥshī*) ones which they hardly use, he should scatter them within his expressions (unlike Abū Tammām who condensed in one hemistich Bedouin words only), and put them in their right place. This would be approved of and telling of his eloquence. Even the Bedouin poet (*al-shāʿir al-aʿrābī*), if he employs in his poetry uncouth expressions rarely used in his normal prose, makes it faulty. “Except if he is in need of one or two expressions, making use of a little and not much, for speech is of [various] sorts; if something appears with another not of its sort, the former separates itself from the latter, avoids it, and brings to light its ugliness”: *al-Muwāzana bayn shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), I, 443–4.

52 *Al-Kashf*, 42; *tawlīd* as the extraction of new poetic motifs from old ones may have a negative connotation: W.P. Heinrichs, “Muwallad,” *EI*2. Al-Mutanabbī, as reported above, clearly uses it negatively.

53 Al-Ṣāḥib’s neutral view of *sariqa* goes hand in hand with the findings of Wolfhart Heinrichs, who demonstrated how unlike the negative meaning of literary theft, the collections of *sariqāt* lead one to regard *sariqa* as “a whole gamut of possibilities

from quotation via allusion, borrowing, and plagiarism.” To a great extent, he notes, *sariqa* lost its original negative connotation of theft to be used in the sense of *akhdh*, namely, “taking over the poetical idea of an earlier poet”: “An Evaluation of *Sariqa*,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (1987–88): 358–9, 368; one of al-Ṣāḥib’s most famous protégés, al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 392/1002), voices a view similar to his patron’s in a line of poetry, legitimizing *sariqa* as the lending and borrowing of women’s ornaments [*al-wāfir*]: “Indeed, poetry is like an ornament in my view: It is permissible for it to be lent and borrowed” (*wa-inna l-shiʿra mithlu l-ḥalyi ʿindī ḥalālun an yuʿāra wa-yustaʿārā*): al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Majmaʿ al-balāgha*, I, 125.

54 J.S. Meisami, “al-Buḥturī” and “Abū Tammām,” *EAL*; likewise, al-Buḥturī is taken as a *muḥdath* poet by Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī with the approval of al-Ṣāḥib in Y, III, 91; thus, in connection with the definition given by W.P. Heinrichs to *muḥdath* (“ancients and moderns,” *EAL*), it seems to me important as well to highlight that a *muḥdath* poet may denote: a modern poet exclusively from a temporal point of view, regardless of his stylistic preferences (“natural” or artful/artificial), or a modern poet whose poetry is characterized as artful/artificial (specialist in *badīʿ*).

55 Such interchangeable use is observable also in Y, II, 285, where al-Thaʿālibī says “he took over (*akhadha*) the motif (*maʿnā*) … and indeed he performed a good ‘literary theft’ (*aḥsana l-sariqa*, i.e., “good literary borrowing”), ameliorated the expression (*lafẓ*) and extended the motif.”

56 The poet Abū Tammām (*c.*189–*c.*232/805–45), whose father was a Damascene Christian wine-seller, altered the latter’s name Thādhūs to Aws and made up a pedigree connecting him with the Ṭayyiʾ tribe. He was hence called al-Ṭāʾī (“The Ṭayyite”): H. Ritter, “Abū Tammām,” *EI2*; J.S. Meisami, “Abū Tammām,” *EAL*.

57 *Al-Kashf*, 64–5; al-Thaʿālibī remarks in the same vein that “Abū l-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī] used to take over a lot [of motifs] (*kāna … kathīr al-akhdh*) from Ibn al-Muʿtazz, while neglecting to acknowledge that he examined the poetry of the moderns.” He adds a few examples: Y, I, 98–9.

58 The poem is an encomium addressed to al-Ḥusayn b. Isḥāq al-Tanūkhī: al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, IV, 165; the cited line is the last one of the ode: ibid., 178; in the second hemistich I relied on a reading differing from Āl Yāsīn’s text which has “… *ʿuẓmun mina l-ʿuẓmi*.” “… *ʿUẓman ʿani l-ʿuẓmi*” is the reading found in Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī l-Bisāṭī’s edition of *al-Kashf* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961; appended to al-ʿAmīdī, *al-Ibāna ʿan sariqāt al-Mutanabbī*), 243, al-Barqūqī’s *Sharḥ* and in al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 135. Given the context, *ʿuẓman* makes more sense adverbially related to the verb *tawāḍaʿta*, and *ʿan* fits better for the idea of the *mamdūḥ*’s holding himself *above* greatness (see the discussion below).

59 *Al-Kashf*, 65; Āl Yāsīn’s text reads Abū Tammām’s second hemistich “…*an tatanabbalā*.” This reading, aside from being unlikely for not having the contextual paradox (see my analysis of the line), differs from al-Bisāṭī’s text of *al-Kashf*, 244 and from *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, III, 100 (where the first hemistich as well has *minhumū* instead of *fīhimū*, which does not make a real difference for the meaning). Both of these sources read *allā tanabbalā*, which was also preferred by me.

60 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 135; al-Wāḥidī interprets *ʿuẓman ʿani l-ʿuẓmi* as “*taʿaẓẓuman ʿani l-taʿaẓẓumi*” (“out of holding yourself above haughtiness”); note that *ʿaẓumta* is clearly positive (al-Wāḥidī comments “he says: ‘you are great in rank, spirit, and ambition’ ”) and so are the following two occurrences of *ʿuẓm* to the exclusion of the last one (glossed *taʿaẓẓum* by al-Wāḥidī), which was therefore translated as “haughtiness.”

61 Ibn al-Zayyāt, a secretary and man of letters, was appointed as a vizier by the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim *c.*221/833. Reputed for his harshness and cruelty, he was executed by al-Mutawakkil in 233/847: D. Sourdel, “Ibn al-Zayyāt,” *EI2*.

62 *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, III, 100; al-Tibrīzī marked (with the letter *ʿayn*) this comment as derived from his teacher the distinguished poet, critic, and thinker Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (363–449/973–1057); *taṭāwala* may also mean "to behave haughtily" as indicated by al-Tibrīzī (in al-Maʿarrī's comment) and in Lane, *ṭ.w.l.* It is less likely to be the primary meaning here because of the contrast drawn in the line between Form V and VI in the context of benefaction. It is likely, however, that *taṭāwalū* in its additional meaning of haughty behavior yielded Abū Tammām's reference to *dhāka l-taʿaẓẓumi fīhimū* in the following line.

63 *Al-Kashf*, 66–7; Abū Tammām's line is taken from an ode in praise of his patron the Muʿtazilī judge Abū ʿAbdallāh Aḥmad b. Abī Duʾād: *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, I, 360; al-Mutanabbī's line is from an ode in praise of Saʿīd b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Kilābī composed in his youth: al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 24; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 283.

64 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 24.

65 See M. Rodinson, "Kabid," *EI2* (under "Primitive and popular psycho-physiology of the liver").

66 See J.C. Vadet, "Ḳalb," *EI2*; an anonymous line reads: "The tears of lovers when shed continuously in secret are the tongues of the hearts": Jaʿfar al-Sarrāj, *Maṣāriʿ al-ʿushshāq*, ed. Basma al-Dajānī (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 2004), 592.

67 *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, I, 358.

68 Abū Muʿādh Bashshār b. Burd (*c*.95–*c*.167/714–84) was considered by the Arab critics to be the first among the "modern" poets and one of the pioneers of *badīʿ*. Bashshār was of Persian descent, and was said to be a *shuʿūbī* and a *zindīq* (a heretic with Zoroastrian tendencies). As the result of a plot against him, he was charged with heresy and executed by order from Caliph al-Mahdī: J.S. Meisami, "Bashshār Ibn Burd," *EAL*.

69 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 516; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 221; the line is from an ode in praise of Sayf al-Dawla (and his exploits) recited in 342/953; al-Wāḥidī remarks on this line:

> he meant raising the spears the way scorpions do with their tails (*shawāʾilu bi-l-qanā tashwāla l-ʿaqāribi bi-adhnābihā*). He likened (*shabbaha*) the lances [carried] on the horses with the tails of scorpions when they raised it. It is said: *shāla l-shayʾu* (something rose up) when it goes up (*irtafaʿa*);

according to al-Barqūqī the suffixed pronoun in *taḥtihī* goes back to spears (*qanā*) or possibly to the *mamdūḥ*. The latter possibility seems to me less likely, since the pronoun in the fronted predicate *la-hā* (continuing the description from the previous line) refers to the horses in plural and not the specific horse of the *mamdūḥ*. Because *taḥtihī* has a masculine referent, we should assume that the poet refers to a singular spear (*qanāt*), although the context requires that we conceive of each horse carrying a single spear on its back.

70 Bashshār b. Burd's line appears neither in his *Dīwān*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Hawwārī (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1998), nor in *al-Mukhtār min shiʿr Bashshār: ikhtiyār al-Khālidiyayn*, ed. Muḥammad al-ʿAlawī ([Cairo:] Maṭbaʿat al-Iʿtimād, [1934]).

71 *Al-Kashf*, 54–5; Imruʾ al-Qays's line is from his *muʿallaqa*: Ibn al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-qaṣāʾid al-sabʿ al-ṭiwāl al-jāhiliyyāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1963), 89 (line 60).

72 *Al-Kashf*, 45; *ruqya* means "magical chant," the pronouncing of magical formulas for procuring an enchantment. Since it was among the licit magical practices of the Prophet himself, it is permitted in exceptional cases, only if it benefits people and does not harm anyone. One may resort to it against poison, bites, fever, and the evil eye: T. Fahd, "Ruḳya," *EI2*.

73 According to T. Fahd, although the educated were unanimous in formally forbidding

the practice of magic, *ruqya*s prospered among "the more backward milieux of society": "Ruḳya," *EI2*.

74 Lane cites the following line (under *ʿ.q.r.b.*; produced here in his translation), without, however, dubbing it explicitly *ruqya* [*al-rajaz*]: "I seek protection by God from the scorpions, raising the joints of the tails" (*aʿūdhu bi-llāhi mina l-ʿaqrābī al-shāʾilāti ʿuqada l-adhnābī*).

75 That is, cases when al-Ṣāḥib actually employs *sariqa*. He sometimes refers to al-Mutanabbī's following others' tracks with verbs like *iqtafā*, *tashabbaha bi*, *ṣabba ʿalā qawālib*, *iḥtadhā ʿalā ṭarīq* (*al-Kashf*, 70, 49–50, 53). These are disregarded here for they have more to do with imitating other tendencies or models in a general way; on the various sorts of imitation, see Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3: 4 (1944): 246.

76 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 390; the line is from an elegy on Sayf al-Dawla's mother recited in 337/948.

77 *Al-Kashf*, 47; Y, I, 122.

78 *Al-Kashf*, 46; see the remarks to the same effect made by al-Thaʿālibī and (especially) Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī about another elegy by al-Mutanabbī celebrating the sister of Sayf al-Dawla (Y, I, 121). Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī's emphatic comment cited by al-Thaʿālibī is from a letter the former wrote to al-Ṣāḥib following the death of the vizier's sister. Given what al-Ṣāḥib thought of al-Mutanabbī, Abū Bakr's comment must have pleased him: "If someone were to console me over the death of a sister of mine in this way, I would make him follow her and decapitate him on her grave": *Rasāʾil Abī Bakr al-Khwārazmī* (Beirut ed.), 106/*Rasāʾil al-Khwārazmī*, ed. Pūrgul, 258–9.

79 *Al-Kashf*, 46.

80 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 390.

81 *Al-Kashf*, 47, 59.

82 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 413; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 178; the line is taken from an elegy in which al-Mutanabbī celebrated the son of Sayf al-Dawla in 338/949.

83 *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, I, 25; this is the second line of an ode in praise of Muḥammad b. Ḥassān al-Ḍabbī. Abū Tammām previously praised Yaḥyā b. Thābit with it: ibid., 22; on this line, see Heinrichs, "Paired Metaphors," 6–7, 20 (Note 17: references to the medieval critics' discussions of the line).

84 *Al-Kashf*, 49; The Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's saying "there exists no calamity except there is another one worse than it" (*mā min ṭāmma illā* [*wa-*] *fawqahā ṭāmma*) is also cited by Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, IV, 2705 (*ṭ.m.m.*)

85 For example, *al-Kashf*, 54–5.

86 In addition to al-Ṣāḥib's interchangeable use of *badīʿ* and *istiʿāra* (*al-Kashf*, 47), al-Thaʿālibī discusses this line of al-Mutanabbī (citing part of al-Ṣāḥib's criticism) with others under the headline "Making Far-Fetched Metaphors (*ibʿād al-istiʿāra*) and Exceeding Their Limit" (Y, I, 117–18). It would be, then, safe to assume that in our context *badīʿ* is *istiʿāra*.

87 Ibn al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-qaṣāʾid al-sabʿ*, 578 (line 61 of Labīd's *muʿallaqa*); al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī included "the hand of the northwind" in his list of examples for good metaphors: *al-Wasāṭa*, 39; see Heinrichs, "Paired Metaphors," 10; idem, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1977), 1, 9, 49.

88 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 413.

89 See Lane, *dh.w.q*.

90 As indicated by Wolfhart Heinrichs ("Paired Metaphors", 6–7) it may be very difficult at times to distinguish between the analogy-based metaphor (more typical to the ancient poets) and the type [1] *muḥdath* metaphor. The litmus test he suggests is to

drop the imaginary metaphor and see whether or not it is semantically superfluous. Now, if we drop *ḥalwāʾ* and are left with *wa-qad dhuqtu l-banīna*, we are still left with a meaningful sentence, which does not alter significantly the meaning of the line in its context. Indeed, Lane (*dh.w.q.*) glosses *dhuqtu fulānan* (and *dhuqtu mā ʿinda fulān*) as "I knew, or tried or tested, what [qualities etc.] such a one possesses."

91 Heinrichs, "Paired Metaphors," 6–7.

92 Wolfhart Heinrichs shows that the uneasiness critics had with these type [1] *muḥdath* metaphors stems from this reason: "Paired Metaphors," 7.

93 Y, I, 117; see in contrast al-Āmidī's defence of this line: *al-Muwāzana*, I, 261–2 (summarized in Heinrichs, "Paired Metaphors," 6–7).

94 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 224; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, III, 349; al-Mutanabbī recited this *qaṣīda* following the *amīr* Badr b. ʿAmmār al-Kharshānī's fight with a lion. Badr was the governor of Damascus who became al-Mutanabbī's patron for about a year and a half at the beginning of 328/939 (on Badr, see R. Blachère and C. Pellat, "al-Mutanabbī," *EI2*).

95 *Al-Kashf*, 59; al-Bisāṭī ed. (p. 240) shows a slight variation in the last sentence: "…this opening of the ode has flaws (*ʿuyūb*) constricting one's chest."

96 Al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 224.

97 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4147–8 (under *m.ḥ.l.*).

98 As one sees in the *OED Online* entry "furrow," the word having the original meaning of "a narrow trench made in the earth with a plough, esp. for the reception of seed," may also mean "on the face: A deep wrinkle." The latter meaning (numbered 4b) is demonstrated there for instance with the quotation: "Habitual discontent had fixed the furrows of their cheeks."

99 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4147 (under *m.ḥ.l.*).

100 Yet another evidence for al-Ṣāḥib's conservative leaning is found in two places where he insists that accepted conventions and motifs should be followed: al-Ṣāḥib slashes al-Mutanabbī for the oscillation between good and bad elements in the line "May I waste away like the ruins of the abandoned encampment, if I do not stand over them like a miser whose ring was lost in its soil!" (al-Wāḥidī, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 374–5). Still, he avers, "more astonishing than that is his assault on a theme (*bāb*), which had passed from mouth to mouth, was taken up by minds (*qarāʾiḥ*) and alternated by thoughts, which is the *tashbīb* (i.e., *nasīb*), in the most insulting way": *al-Kashf*, 44 (cf. al-Bisāṭī ed., 231). Plainly, the miser's long search for his lost ring, a motif strange to those associated with the *nasīb*—and even worse—one that could be seen as deriding it, was taken by al-Ṣāḥib as a charge on the well-established theme and its conventions; among al-Mutanabbī's "unbearable exaggerations" is the line "O he who massacres whoever he wants with his sword! I became among your killed ones through benefaction" (al-Wāḥidī comments "i.e., you awarded me to the point that you enslaved me by favor and benefaction": *Sharḥ dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 599). The poet, says al-Ṣāḥib, took over (*akhadha*) the anonymous hemistich "you made me prosper through liberality, rather you corrupted me" and changed corrupting to killing "out of impotence and foolhardiness." He did it although "the way (*madhhab*) of the poets is to praise [the patron] with reviving when bestowed upon, and [to speak of] letting die when a gift is withheld." Al-Ṣāḥib supported his argument with verse and turned to show a superior employment of the motif by al-Buḥturī: *al-Kashf*, 56–7 (cf. the slightly different text in al-Bisāṭī ed., 239). It is noteworthy that al-Ṣāḥib does not accept the legitimacy of introducing changes to the motif (by amplification, in this case) because it runs against poetic convention; nonetheless, this conservatism did not preclude al-Ṣāḥib from attacking those who follow al-Mutanabbī blindly. Finding fault with a poem of the latter, al-Ṣāḥib remarks: "How is the claim of precedence in poetry laid for him, whose product of genius (*qarīḥatihi*) in describing [his] poetry is this?! That happens only

because blind imitation (*taqlīd*) has become the disease of minds and the malady of intellects": *al-Kashf*, 58 (cf. al-Bisāṭī ed., 239).

101 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947) was a man of letters, courtier of several caliphs, and expert on poetry and chess: S. Leder, "Al-Ṣūlī," *EI2*.

102 *Al-Kashf*, 32, 35–9, 42–3; the poem censuring the would-be challenger of al-Buḥturī (ibid., 42–3) is quoted also in *Akhlāq*, 384. It is preceded there by the following description, which is absent from *al-Kashf* but attests to his admiration of al-Buḥturī: "Abū l-Faḍl [b. al-ʿAmīd] was commending al-Buḥturī, amazed at his *ghazal* and *tashbīb* (i.e., the amatory *nasīb* opening the *qaṣīda*) and finding his manner smooth over all (*wa-yastashilu fī l-jumla ṭarīqatahu*). A man present countered him on that, and Abū l-Faḍl said [the poem that shamed and silenced the man]."

103 *Al-Kashf*, 57, 64.

104 Ibid., 70–1, 51.

105 Ibid., 34, 38, 49, 64–7.

106 The Nabateans mentioned here (*al-nabaṭ*) are those of Iraq, that is, *nabaṭ al-ʿirāq* (to be distinguished from *nabaṭ al-shām* of Petra). For the medieval Arabs, the Iraqi Nabataeans were the native inhabitants of Mesopotamia before the Islamic conquest, who spoke Syriac and excelled in agriculture and magic: T. Fahd, "Nabaṭ," *EI2*.

107 "Sweetness" (*ʿudhūba*), the *maṣdar* of Form I, is attributed to poetry metaphorically probably after the original meaning connected with water, "it was, or became, sweet; or it was, or became, easy and agreeable to be drunk or swallowed": Lane, *ʿ.dh.b.*; it refers, then, to poetry which is easily and smoothly received.

108 Y, I, 6–7; the private anthology of Syrian poets prepared by al-Ṣāḥib and mentioned above may be the one named *al-Safīna*. Al-Thaʿālibī referred to it elsewhere as a volume (*daftar*), in which al-Ṣāḥib collected valuable poetry (*fawāʾid*) in his own handwriting withholding it from others. Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin obtained furtively some poems from it (*min al-fawāʾid allatī saraqtuhā min Safīnat al-Ṣāḥib*…) and later recited them to others. Al-Thaʿālibī produces several of these in the entries dedicated to their three composers (two of whom are included in the section on Syrian poets and one in that on Iraqi poets), noting that the poems were originally collected in the *Safīna*. The identification of al-Ṣāḥib's anthology of Syrian poetry with the *Safīna* may find further support in al-Khāzin's report that the vizier

> wrote on the back of a volume of his, consisting of valuable poetry: This is a book of collected valuable poetry, collected thanks to the toil of body limbs/And to continuous night travel in darkness crossing the land from one side to another.

Similarly to the above-mentioned comment by al-Thaʿālibī (Y, I, 6–7), al-Ṣāḥib referred in this line to traveling poets as the *raison d'être* of the *Safīna* anthology: T, I, 27–8 (source of citations), 42–3, 70; in fact, it is possible that the vizier had more than one anthology of poetry aptly called *Safīna* ("ship," for carrying on its board—as it were—various poems). When the *dīwān* of Abū Miṭrān al-Shāshī (or Abū Muḥammad al-Miṭrānī al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Miṭrān, as he is called in Y, IV, 45–52) reached al-Ṣāḥib, he valued less than ten lines from it, and marked them to be copied to a *Safīna* collecting delightful poetry for him: al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 147. Al-Shāsh, the Central Asian region and town whose name has later changed to Tashkent (see W. Barthold *et al.*, "Tashkent," *EI2*) is of course far away from Greater Syria. For this reason, "the poet of al-Shāsh"—as al-Miṭrānī is praised by al-Thaʿālibī (Y, IV, 45)—could not have possibly hailed from Greater Syria, and it does not seem likely that his poetry was added to a volume dedicated to Syrian poetry; al-Ṣāḥib's non-extant *Safīna* (*GAS*, II, 76), a *Safīna* owned by Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāmidī (T, I, 42) and yet another dated to the late eighth/fourteenth century (*GAS*, II, 80–1) suggest that at least since the fourth/tenth century *safīna* was a generic name for a poetry anthology recorded and owned by individuals.

109 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Majmaʿ al-balāgha*, I, 114.

110 W.P. Heinrichs, "Naḳd," *EI2*; for a discussion of *al-Muwāzana*, see ibid. (under "The controversy around Abū Tammām").

111 *Takhalluṣ* is the transition from the introduction of the polythematic *qaṣīda* to the subsequent themes. From ʿAbbāsid times onwards transitions of one or few lines connecting the two sections have been preferred: G.J.H van Gelder, "Takhalluṣ," *EI2*.

112 First attested in al-Āmidī's *Muwāzana* (besides the mention above, see also ibid., I, 18), *ʿamūd al-shiʿr*, "the mainstay of poetry," refers to an aggregate of essential qualities of good poetry. The mainstay idea appeared as a reaction to the more outrageous manneristic features of *muḥdath* poetry: W.P. Heinrichs, "*ʿamūd al-shiʿr*," *EAL*; al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī elaborated on the quality criteria of the Bedouin style and its adherence to *ʿamūd al-shiʿr*: *al-Wasāṭa*, 38.

113 The poet al-Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī (d. *c.*195/811), born in al-Yamāma and brought up in Basra, was a panegyricist and courtier of Hārūn al-Rashīd: P.F. Kennedy, "al-Ashjaʿ al-Sulamī," *EAL*; Manṣūr al-Namarī (d. 190/805) from the Banū Rabīʿa ibn Nizār was a court poet of Hārūn al-Rashīd: P.F. Kennedy, "Manṣūr al-Namarī," *EAL*; from a Turkish/Persian family of Soghdia, Abū Yaʿqūb al-Khuraymī (d. 214/829) was also a court poet of Hārūn al-Rashīd and later of al-Maʾmūn. He was principally an author of panegyrics and dirges: P.F. Kennedy, "Abū Yaʿqūb al-Khuraymī," *EAL*.

114 Muslim b. al-Walīd (*c.*130–207/748–823) was born and brought up in Kūfa and moved to Baghdad before 187/794, where he had several high ranking patrons and was introduced to al-Rashīd. He was one of the finest poets of the early ʿAbbāsid era, and as one of the first masters of *badī*, he is believed to have been profoundly influential on Abū Tammām: P.F. Kennedy, "Muslim Ibn al-Walīd," *EAL*.

115 Al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, I, 5–6; I preferred the reading *ḥalāwat al-lafẓ* ("sweetness of expression") to *ḥalāwat al-nafs* ("sweetness of the soul"), as established in the fourth edition (from 1992) by Aḥmad Ṣaqr.

116 *Akhlāq*, 181.

117 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Taḥsīn al-qabīḥ*, 69.

118 Al-Farqad, "the oryx calf," is the star γ *Ursae minoris* by means of which travelers direct their course by sea and by land. With its associate star, *β Ursae minoris*, it forms al-Farqadān "the two calves," the "guardians" of the North Pole: F. Viré, "Mahāt," *EI2* and Lane, *f.r.q.d.*

119 On *nithār*, "scattering," see Chapter 1.

120 Y, III, 100–1. Al-Thaʿālibī produces this piece together with six others from al-Ṣāḥib's praise poetry under the title "Witty Selections from his Praise Poems" (*mulaḥ min madāʾiḥihi*). Unlike four of these pieces, the one translated above is not reported to have been extracted from an ode, and is hence assumed to be a monothematic poem (*qiṭʿa*); *Dīwān al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, 288.

121 Thematically speaking, I would also remark in passing that the motif of the palace equated to a lofty stellar waymark in al-Ṣāḥib's poem (l.1) or variants thereof appear in several Mansion Odes. Al-Rustamī expresses exactly the same idea in A21, and in B13 delineates the mansion as higher than Pleiades (Y, III, 47–8); so does Abū l-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī (Y, III, 48, l.3: the elevated mansion is lit like the sky when earth is dark; l.5: the mansion is a lighthouse for those reciting poetry); Abū l-Qāsim ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Muʿallā (Y, III, 52, l.6: the mansion is a brightly shining star in al-Ṣāḥib's horizon); al-Khwārazmī (Y, III, 54, l.3: the lofty mansion shines like lamps in the darkness of the evening); as for the motif of al-Ṣāḥib in l.5 and 6 (if there were two Gods, Fakhr al-Dawla would be the second), we find a more contextualized hyperbolic deification in al-Rustamī's B14 (Y, III, 48): "Verily, that which the like of you builds is eternal, while the rest of what mankind builds is [destined] to crumble."

122 Y, III, 108; T, I, 50; al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb man ghāba*, 169.

123 In a chapter on antidotes and remedies, ʿAlī b. Sahl al-Ṭabarī (d. after 850) provides

a recipe for a liquid antidote called Mithrūdīṭūs, which is also beneficial for scorpion bites: *Firdaws al-ḥikma fī l-ṭibb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣiddīqī (Berlin: Āftāb, 1928), 462–3; the origin of *tiryāq* was claimed by some to be from the Arabic *rīq*, and not arabicized, "because containing the spittle of serpents": Lane, *t.r.q*.

124 T, I, 50.

125 Y, III, 100; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 667–8 (a slightly different version).

126 In order for it to be acceptable (according to al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī, d. 739/1338, in *al-Īḍāḥ*), the third subcategory of *mubālagha maqbūla*, namely *ghuluww*, must meet one of the following conditions: 1. a word meaning "almost" should be added to it; 2. the line should contain a beautiful phantastic reinterpretation of reality (*takhyīl*); and 3. the line should be a joke: W.P. Heinrichs, "rhetorical figures" (under Figures of the meaning, see *mubālagha maqbūla*), *EAL*.

127 Y, III, 223–4.

128 *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* is a figure which requires the adoption of a second or more invariable consonant(s) preceding the invariable rhyme consonant (*rawī*). *Luzūm* was rare among the ancient poets: S.A. Bonebakker, "Luzūm Mā Lā Yalzam," *EI2*.

129 Y, IV, 238.

130 *Al-Kashf*, 48–9, 73–4.

131 Ibid., 48.

132 Al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 24–5; whereas, for instance, city-dwellers found around sixty words for "long" used by the Bedouins (among them those found abominable by al-Qāḍī like *ʿashannaṭ*, *ʿanaṭnaṭ*, *ʿashannaq*, *jasrab*, *shawqab, salhab*, *shawdhab*, *ṭāṭ*, *ṭūṭ*, *qāq*, and *qūq*), they left out all of them except for *ṭawīl* "because of its lightness on the tongue and lack of repugnance to the ears": ibid., 25; what makes this part of al-Qāḍī's presentation elucidatory of al-Ṣāḥib's extract is also the fact that both use the same terminology (or its morphological derivatives) in the relevant context: *jazāla*, *ṣalāba*, *salāsa*, *riqqa*, *rikka*.

133 Y, I, 7.

134 Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, I, 130.

135 Y, III, 129.

136 ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 265.

137 Y, III, 194; al-Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*, 235 (the verse only); al-Mīkālī, *Kitāb al-muntakhal*, I, 68 (the verse only). Instead of *al-mughliqīn*, I read *al-mufliqīn*, as in Y, A, III, 377.

138 "Breeze" (*nasīm*) is defined by Ibn Manẓūr as "a pleasant wind" (*al-rīḥ al-ṭayyiba*), and "the beginning of it [=the wind] when it advances gently (*bi-līn*) before intensifying": *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4414 (*n.s.m.*); the indeclinable proper name *barāḥi* or *birāḥi*, "the sun," is morphologically and semantically related to the abstract noun *barāḥ* glossed by Ibn Manẓūr as "conspicuousness and clearness" (*al-ẓuhūr wa-l-bayān*): ibid., I, 245 (*b.r.ḥ.*); note that by poetic license *bi-birāḥī* is shortened by Ibn Bābak to *birāḥī*.

139 Cf. the saying "many a discourse has the beauty of pretty faces and the magic of beautiful pupils" (*rubba kalāmin la-hu ḥusnu l-wujūhi l-ṣibāḥ wa-siḥru l-ḥadaqi l-milāḥ*): al-Thaʿālibī, *Siḥr al-balāgha*, 202.

140 Y, III, 238; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, IV, 1800; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, XV, 241; Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muqla (273–328/886–940) was a vizier of the ʿAbbāsid period, who in addition to his political activities was a famous calligrapher and a theorist of calligraphy. The invention of a special kind of writing named *khaṭṭ al-mansūb*, "the proportioned script," is attributed to him (or to his brother): D. Sourdel, "Ibn Muḳla", *EI2*; J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Khaṭṭ," *EI2*.

141 Y, I, 8; for Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī's ascription of his intellectual and literary skills and knowledge to his stay in al-Shām appears, see ibid.

142 Y, III, 254. Instead of *diqqata fikrihī*, I read *diqqata fikratin*, as in Y, A, IV, 21; the selection's rhyme is *lā*. *lām* is the last letter in al-Ṣāḥib's first name (*Ismāʿīl*), and

indeed we find in this entry another selection from an ode in praise of the vizier, in the same rhyme and meter, whose second line ends with *Ismāʿīlā*: Y, III, 248 (under the heading: A Little from His Poetry where Beauty of Transition [*ḥusn al-takhalluṣ*] Occurs). In the same entry there exists additional selection from an ode in praise of al-Ṣāḥib with the same meter and rhyme: Y, III, 250 (under the heading: Highlights from His Praise Poetry and What Relates to It). In the last two places the selections are explicitly said to be in praise of al-Ṣāḥib, and except for these we find no other poem (or selection) in al-Qāḍī's entry which has this meter and rhyme. No manuscript of al-Qāḍī's *Dīwān* has survived, but his poems were collected from various sources and published in *Dīwān al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī*, ed. Samīḥ Ṣāliḥ (Damascus: Dār al-Bashāʾir, 2003). There is no other poem in the published *Dīwān*, except the three selections mentioned, with the *lā* rhyme: Y, III, 112–13. It, therefore, seems most likely to me that al-Thaʿālibī "sliced" three selections from one ode addressed to al-Ṣāḥib and placed them according to the subject of the relevant sub-entry. While the first two selections (in *al-Yatīma*'s order of presentation) are explicitly presented with the vizier's name, he dropped it (like all other names of patrons in this section) in the last one probably because it did not seem pertinent to al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī's selections "on the decription of poetry."

143 The meaning of *faṣṣala* here is to "cut a piece of cloth for a garment": Lane, *f.ṣ.l.* Hence, in saying that the two poets "cut from it the hems of its texture," they are claimed to be those who tailored or fashioned the ode.

144 T, I, 11–12. This poetic evidence was also studied above (with some additional annotation) in the context of performance to shed light on the poetics of mood change characteristic of ʿAbbāsid praise poetry.

145 Note the dependence between external (environmental, political, etc.) and internal conditions (one's character or personality) in the analysis of al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī. Interestingly, this point would be the cornerstone in Norbert Elias's theory of the European civilizing process approximately a thousand years later.

146 Al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 23–9.

147 With regard to the expression *al-namaṭ al-awsaṭ*, Ibn Manẓūr cites the following *ḥadīth* told on the authority of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, which went against both negligence and exaggeration in religion: "The best of this nation are the people pursuing the middle way, with whom the one lagging behind catches up and to whom the one exceeding proper bounds goes back" (*khayr hādhihi l-umma al-namaṭ al-awsaṭ yalḥaqu bi-him al-tālī wa-yarjiʿu ilayhim al-ghālī*): *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4549 (*n.m.ṭ.*).

148 Al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 30–1, 34; Jarīr b. ʿAṭiyya b. al-Khaṭafa b. Badr (d. *c.*110/728–9 at roughly 80) was among the most important *hijāʾ* poets of the Umayyad period who famously exchanged lampoons with al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal. As for his style, "Djarīr's work does indeed show him to be a true descendent of the old Bedouin poets": A. Schaade and H. Gätje, "Djarīr," *EI2*.

149 The active element is discernible in the emphasis given to habituation in al-Qāḍī's definition of poetry: "I say—may God support you—that poetry is a discipline (*ʿilm*) of the Arabs, in which nature, transmission, and intelligence (*al-ṭabʿ wa-l-riwāya wa-l-dhakāʾ*) take part. Then, habituation (*durba*) becomes strength for it and power for each of its means": al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 23.

150 Y, III, 51.

151 Because these are the rich and powerful who have long *adhyāl*: Lane, *dh.y.l.* (*ṭūl al-dhayl*).

152 Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Maḥmūd M. Shākir, rev. ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1974), I, 378–80; on al-Jumaḥī, see Charles Pellat, "Ibn Sallām al-Djumaḥī," *EI2*; although not an adherent of the "natural" style, Abū Nuwās preferred Jarīr over al-Farazdaq, too: *al-Kashf*, 32.

153 Al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāṭa*, 31, 34–6.

154 Al-Thaʿālibī recounts that in 382/992 he met al-Maʾmūnī in Bukhara and heard from him some of his poetry while copying most of it from his handwriting: Y, IV, 94.

155 Y, IV, 84; *shiʿr badīʿ al-ṣanʿa* may also be translated “poetry of innovative artfulness/artificiality.”

156 Of which many examples are cited by al-Thaʿālibī in Y, IV, 94–112, none with connection to the vizier.

157 Y, IV, 84; paraphrased in al-Maʾmūnī’s biography by al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, II, 320.

158 *Suḥub*, “clouds,” should be read *suḥb* for the meter.

159 Allusion to Q 12:18. See Chapter 3.

160

> Al-Sharā is a place to which lions are attributed. It is said about brave men: “They are nothing but the lions of al-Sharā” (*mā hum illā usud al-Sharā*).… It is said that it is Sharā of the Euphrates (Sharā l-Furāt) and its region…:
>
> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, IV, 2254 (*sh.r.y.*);

elsewhere, Ibn Manẓūr cites a line by al-Farazdaq: “Indeed, he who proceeds to corrupt my wife is like the one proceeding to the lions of al-Sharā (*usdi l-Sharā*) to collect their urine in his hand”: ibid., I, 389 (*b.w.l.*)

161 Instead of *tabahā*, I read *tahabā*, as in Y, A, IV, 162.

162 *Dharib* means, literally, “sharp.” Applied to *lisān* (or here *miqwāl*), it may have positive, “eloquent,” or negative, “obscene,” meaning in tropical use (Lane, *dh.r.b.*). The context here dictates the former.

163 Y, IV, 84–5; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, II, 321 (showing some minor changes in the text); these selections produced by al-Thaʿālibī are absent from the entry on al-Maʾmūnī in Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, XV, 248–52; focusing on al-Maʾmūnī’s descriptive output found in *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Bürgel did not include these ode selections among his translations in *Die ekphrastischen Epigramme*.

164 This technique is well developed and present in al-Maʾmūnī’s ekphrastic *qiṭaʿ*, for example, the one about the lamp: Y, IV, 94.

165 We have already discussed above an artful/artificial *waṣf* part (about the inkwell, pens, and knife), a selection from an ode addressed to al-Ṣāḥib, composed by Abū l-Fayyāḍ al-Ṭabarī. Al-Thaʿālibī dubbed al-Ṭabarī *mubdiʿ*, similarly to al-Maʾmūnī.

166 Y, III, 52.

167 On the meanings and etymology of *naqd*, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4517–18 (*n.q.d.*); Lane, *n.q.d.*; W.P. Heinrichs, “Naḳd,” *EI2*.

5 Al-Tawḥīdī at al-Ṣāḥib's court

What went wrong?

> Human beings—each one of them—learn [the principles of social interaction] to the extent that they can, getting hold of [their knowledge] through experience in social intercourse among their kind. In the end, the dos and don'ts become evident to them, and the habitus (*malaka*) of social intercourse with their kind is attained through interaction.… Nevertheless, those possessing no knowledge or tradition in this respect, or those averse to listening carefully and observing, will have to go through a long disciplining process because of that, for they will rush through the unfamiliar and arrive at inconsistent [knowledge]. Thus, their manners and social intercourse will be found to be based on bad principles and manifestly flawed, and their livelihood opportunities among their kind will be spoiled.
>
> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, II, 369

I The unsuccessful interaction

The heavy attack launched by the great man of letters, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (b. between 310/922–320/932–d. 414/1023), on al-Ṣāḥib following their unsuccessful relationship is well known in Arabic literary history. In 367/977, al-Tawḥīdī, having despaired from his unprofitable and inauspicious profession of a copyist in Baghdad, traveled to al-Rayy aspiring to a lucrative and respectable post at the court of al-Ṣāḥib.[1] According to al-Tawḥīdī's account, however, out of envy, malice, and arrogance, the vizier accepted him only as a copyist and did his utmost to mistreat him until he returned to Baghdad in the end of 370/980, penniless and without provisions.[2] Following this frustrating experience, al-Tawḥīdī, embittered and angry, composed *Akhlāq al-wazirayn*, a work in which the personalities of the two viziers, al-Ṣāḥib and Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, were mercilessly analyzed, criticized, and caricatured.[3] Afraid of the reaction of al-Ṣāḥib, he kept it unpublished in a draft form. Only after his subsequent patron for a while, the vizier Ibn Saʿdān,[4] curious to hear al-Tawḥīdī's opinion on al-Ṣāḥib, learned of its existence and promised to keep it strictly confidential, was he willing to review the draft and hand it to him.[5]

It would be desirable first to see what al-Tawḥīdī said about al-Ṣāḥib in *Akhlāq* and *al-Imtāʿ*. The qualities he attributed to him recurrently include cruelty, imperiousness, vainglory, intolerance, envy, stinginess, heresy, licentiousness, pederasty, effeminacy, craziness, silliness, hypocrisy, neglect of official duties, literary incompetence, and bad taste. These negative characteristics are exemplified in many anecdotes, often entertaining and cartoonish in nature. The purpose of the humor, according to the author, was to counterbalance the seriousness of the subject matter (as required by good *adab* style). Allegedly, for space concerns and self-censorship, we have been spared of many reports on shameful and abominable deeds of the vizier.[6] Al-Tawḥīdī frequently resorts to quoting the views other people allegedly had of al-Ṣāḥib. The goal of this disclosed rhetorical strategy is to convince the readers of the soundness and fairness of the author's severe judgment of the vizier, and to prevent them from assuming that he only censured al-Ṣāḥib for personal grievances.[7] The anecdotes adduced from others concerning the bad treatment they received from the vizier, or regarding his faulty character, aspire to establish the objective meanness of the latter, beyond al-Tawḥīdī's much deplored bad luck. In other words, it is as if to say that al-Tawḥīdī's case is only one instance caused by the vizier's completely flawed personality.[8] Here are two representative anecdotes from *Akhlāq*:

> Another day, he [=al-Ṣāḥib] said to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān Abū l-Ḥasan the jurisprudent and theologian: "O Shaykh, are you on the truth (*anta ʿalā l-ḥaqq*)?" (Literally; meaning: "are you on the right track?") He replied: "Yes." [Al-Ṣāḥib] asked: "Is God the truth (*al-ḥaqq*)?" He replied: "yes." [Al-Ṣāḥib] said: "Then you are on God." Ibn al-Qaṭṭān[9] said: "Praise be to God for the rapidness of this conclusion (*inqiṭāʿ*), the brilliance of this proof, and the conclusiveness of this judgment." When Ibn al-Qaṭṭān went out, we [=al-Tawḥīdī and the others] said to him: "O Shaykh, why did you not go into detail [denying it], after he had made an allusion about you, and laughed while pointing to you?" He replied: "Why should I debate a man whom I would not be safe to address from nearby, even if he were chained in the insane asylum; hence, how much more when he is free and obeyed?! We seek the protection of God from an insane person (*majnūn*), powerful and obeyed, as we do from a sane person, weak and defied." Then he said: "This speech coming out of him constitutes bad manners (*sūʾ al-adab*), feeble-mindedness, insolence, abomination, and impiety. In fact, *al-ḥaqq* and *al-ḥaqq* are two nouns sharing [one] expression (*lafẓ*) for two different meanings (i.e., a homonym). "I am on the truth," but the truth whose opposite is the false, and I am not on the truth who has no opposite. *Al-ḥaqq* is designated for God meaning that He is *muḥaqqiq* (Actualizer). *Al-ḥaqq* is designated for what is other than Him, meaning that it is *muḥaqqaq* (indubitable). God is *al-ḥaqq al-muḥiqq* (Enforcer) *al-muḥaqqiq*, and whatever past Him is *al-ḥaqq al-muḥaqq* (enforced) *al-muḥaqqaq*. If it is said from another point of view "God is *muḥaqqaq*," the meaning is not this one (enforced); for it is intended that He is Proved, Existent and Believed, to Whom unity, omnipotence, wisdom, and will are attested.[10]

> The extent of his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] feeble-mindedness was such that when Abū Ṭālib al-ʿAlawī attended, whenever he heard from him [=al-Ṣāḥib] an utterance in rhymed prose, and a message embellished and related, he would widely open his eyes, spread his nostrils, and make himself appear as overtaken by a swoon until rose water was sprinkled on his face. When he regained consciousness, he was asked: "What afflicted you? What befell you? What hit you and made you faint?" He answered: "The words of our master kept delighting and pleasing me until my reason parted from me, my intellect abandoned me, my joints slackened, the bonds of my heart disintegrated, my mind became perplexed, and I was separated from my good senses." Then the face of Ibn ʿAbbād beamed with joy and he puffed up and laughed[11] out of vanity and folly. Thereupon, he ordered that Abū Ṭālib be given a gift, a present, a reward, and a grant, and gave him priority over his paternal cousins and the sons of his father (*banī abīhi*).
>
> He who is thus deceived is not among those who have a share in the secretary's craft (*kitāba*) or a part in coherent thinking. He resembles more foolish women and dim-witted boys than leaders and great men.[12]

In the first anecdote al-Tawḥīdī seeks to demonstrate al-Ṣāḥib's ignorance, silliness, obscenity, shameless impiety, and dangerous insanity. The latter's pseudological inference is shown to be contradictory to valid grammatical-theological analysis, as exercised by Ibn al-Qaṭṭān. Al-Ṣāḥib was well-versed in the disciplines of language as attested by many accounts, by his own scholarly works and literary production. It is hard to believe that he was unaware of *al-ḥaqq* as a homonym with two meanings established on different semantic derivations;[13] rather, it seems that both al-Tawḥīdī and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān simply miss the point here: al-Ṣāḥib, whose penchant for humor, often sacrilegious and bawdy in nature, is well attested, was just jesting. The fact that Ibn al-Qattān and al-Tawḥīdī (who adduces the anecdote as incriminating evidence) took it seriously and resorted to a learned refutation is indicative of a misunderstanding in this interaction. The second anecdote—aside from showing the manipulation of al-Ṣāḥib's *sajʿ* mania by the sly Abū Ṭālib—primarily aims at denying the legitimacy of the vizier's leadership by delineating his gullibility and lack of sound judgment. One should note that these characteristics are first gendered as feminine and then presented as puerile by al-Tawḥīdī.[14]

II Explanations for the failure

In both medieval and modern times, however, al-Tawḥīdī's portrayal was deemed highly biased, hence presenting a problem for biographers and critics. Yāqūt (574–626/1179–1229) provided the earliest extant critical comment:

> Abū Ḥayyān had headed to Ibn ʿAbbād in al-Rayy, was not maintained by him, and therefore withdrew blaming him. Abū Ḥayyān was naturally disposed to a passion for defaming the distinguished, and did his utmost to

> detract from [the reputation of] Ibn ʿAbbād. The merits of Ibn ʿAbbād only led him to extol his noble qualities and make them manifest, so that his dispraise of him turned into praise.[15]

After all, as revealed by sources other than al-Tawḥīdī, al-Ṣaḥib was well known for treating kindly the great men of letters that packed his court, was considered a competent administrator and military leader, let alone an adept literary person and scholar.[16] Al-Thaʿālibī, for one, opens his extensive entry on al-Ṣāḥib in *Yatīmat al-dahr* with a long laudatory introduction starting with "I find no satisfying words to give expression to his lofty rank in knowledge and *adab* and his illustrious standing in liberality and magnanimity." To be sure, al-Thaʿālibī does not leave out material that is unflattering to the vizier, namely, his plagiaries and verse lampooning him (preceded by the reminder: "Sovereigns continue to be satirized and praised").[17] Still, we find no trace of al-Tawḥīdī's devastating accusations or other supporting evidence in *Yatīmat al-dahr*. Therefore, one may justly wonder what stood behind al-Tawḥīdī's unparalleled harsh criticism of the vizier, and what went wrong between these two extremely talented men.

The answers given by medieval and modern authors to this question are characterized by three interpretative lines (some examples follow):

1 The "naturalistic" – Yāqūt: "Abū Ḥayyān was naturally disposed to a passion for defaming the distinguished" (cit. above); Stern: "he was employed by Ibn ʿAbbād as an amanuensis. In this case, too, he was anything but a success, owing, no doubt, mainly to his own difficult character and sense of superiority."[18]

2 The "environmental" – Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449): "He [=al-Ṣāḥib] loathed whoever was leaning toward philosophy, and thus dismissed Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī; that induced him [=al-Tawḥīdī] to compile a work on his shortcomings, most of which is fabricated";[19] Āl Yāsīn: al-Tawḥīdī's improper manners and rude conduct with al-Ṣāḥib made the latter show coldness to him, which consequently caused his disappointment in the vizier;[20] al-Ḥūfī: The neglect of al-Tawḥīdī by al-Ṣāḥib was not representative of the kind treatment encountered by other scholars and *udabāʾ* at his court. It happened because al-Tawḥīdī, the proud "scholar, *adīb*, and Ṣūfī," did not respect the deferential etiquette to which the vizier was accustomed. He responded rudely, talked where he had to be silent, showed off his knowledge and was not mindful of the fact that other courtiers—motivated by interest—reported the blunt comments he made to al-Ṣāḥib;[21] Bergé: Al-Tawḥīdī expected a relationship of "mutual respect and intellectual equality, since both men were *adībs*. In this he was mistaken … Ibn ʿAbbād coveted Tawḥīdī's services not as a scholar but as a scribe";[22] Pellat: Al-Tawḥīdī was disappointed in being assigned as a copyist, and took every opportunity to confront and belittle al-Ṣāḥib, "who no doubt looked upon him as a literary rival."[23]

3 The "naturalistic" *and* "environmental" – al-Shaykh: al-Tawḥīdī and al-Ṣāḥib were envious of each other; the former for al-Ṣāḥib's money, power,

and glory, and the latter for al-Tawḥīdī's intelligence, eloquence, and knowledge. In addition, al-Tawḥīdī was by nature an outspoken person, disdainful of flattery, while al-Ṣāḥib had a lordly character and expected everyone's servile conduct. Al-Shaykh moves on to psychologism later: "Maybe among the most important reasons for the misfortune of al-Tawḥīdī in general and the reasons for al-Ṣāḥib's antipathy toward him specifically was his inability to adjust himself to his reality and environment, and to situations befalling him. This is for reasons possibly going back to his early childhood and the way he was brought up, about which very little is known." He relies on Zakariyya Ibrāhīm who detects in al-Tawḥīdī "clear symptoms of wanting emotional maturity." His emotional imbalance was even worsened due to his life experience, "leading to his incapacity for self-control";[24] Kraemer: "Tawḥīdī was a difficult person. He had a scurrilous tongue and tended to find fault with everyone he met, especially the highly placed and well-off." Referring specifically to the relationship with al-Ṣāḥib, Kraemer writes that al-Tawḥīdī "clashed with his patron on personal and doctrinal grounds";[25] Ṭabāna maintains the reason was one of the following: al-Tawḥīdī retaliated for being disappointed with al-Ṣāḥib's rewards, because of his natural discontent and bitterness, or since al-Ṣāḥib sought to kill him.[26]

III Al-Tawḥīdī, his philosophical background, and the habitus concept

The proposed answers offer at best partial explanations, for none of them takes *as a whole* the wide array of positions and dispositions betrayed by al-Tawḥīdī in his severe criticism. Similarly, the question of the veracity of al-Tawḥīdī's accounts of al-Ṣāḥib, referred to by almost all medieval and modern critics,[27] albeit important, is missing the point; for the focal point should rather be al-Tawḥīdī's epistemological stance. Indeed, his whole narrative of the unsuccessful relationship reflects unwittingly in his own words, how unfit he was at court, and subverts his own explanation for the failure, in which he blamed al-Ṣāḥib solely. As we shall see, the very fact of his unawareness is the source of his failure, and his revealing naivety is the key to our understanding of this relationship. That is, al-Tawḥīdī's unwilling attitude toward adaptation to the courtly habitus kept him in the position of an outsider, from which he could not but fail time and again to understand where and how he went wrong. Approaching the inquiry from the veracity aspect of al-Tawḥīdī's narrative leads necessarily to moral judgments, which should be beyond the realm of scholarly discourse. The different characteristics of the involved figures, as learned from the evidence, should only be used in the present inquiry as part of the necessary data to study the functioning of the parties in their interaction at court; interaction governed by rules that were valid regardless of al-Tawḥīdī and, to a large extent, even beyond this specific site.

These rules were mastered by the agents who have successfully acquired the courtly habitus. The philosophical concept of habitus was in fact well known in the milieu in which al-Tawḥīdī had been intellectually formed. In Chapter 2, I showed that for those associated or interacting with the fourth/tenth-century Baghdad philosophical school, habitus (in its Arabic expressions) was the term used to denote a well-established disposition or set of dispositions, which, having been acquired and habituated, enables one to act successfully in a certain way. We saw how crucial the acquisition of the proper courtly habitus was for the functioning of the courtiers amid the challenges and dangers lurking at the court. Now, we should turn to al-Tawḥīdī's familiarity with philosophy and philosophers in order to assess his acquaintance with the habitus concept. Al-Tawḥīdī had been interested in philosophy well ahead of his travel to al-Ṣāḥib in 367/977, as we learn from his earliest work, the *adab* anthology *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir*, composed and published part by part over twenty-five years from 350/961 to 375/985.[28] Throughout this work, he speaks highly of philosophy and equates its merits to those of Ṣūfīsm, cites numerous sayings of ancient and contemporary philosophers, and provides accounts of his meetings with the latter and their views.[29] We also know that al-Tawḥīdī studied with Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, and made a clear reference to his attending Ibn ʿAdī's philosophical circle in 361/971.[30] Al-Tawḥīdī saw the philosopher Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī in Baghdad in 360/970 and found his discussion of jurisprudence by means of philosophical terms exquisite. He saw him again in 364/974 with the vizier Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd conversing with the philosophers of Baghdad, and shared some of al-ʿĀmirī's teachings with his readers.[31] He was familiar with Aristotle's *Categories* and had a copy at his disposal during his days in al-Rayy—a noteworthy fact given the discussion of habitus in this work.[32] Based on this evidence, there is no doubt that when he left for al-Ṣāḥib's court he already had a serious philosophical background, and that to him philosophy was not an abstract theory, but rather primarily an edifying one to be put into practice in one's life. The applicability of philosophy and its power to refine one's character is captured nicely in his words about Pythagoras and Socrates: "Their words impress marvelously and refine laudably, so do not turn away from them."[33]

We already saw that notable philosophers associated (or interacting) with the Baghdad philosophical school of the fourth/tenth century made use of the habitus concept in their writings, following its introduction in the previous century by the translation movement. Of these key figures, al-Tawḥīdī was in direct contact with Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, Miskawayh, al-Sijistānī, and al-ʿĀmirī. Indeed, in *al-Muqābasāt*, a work documenting philosophical sessions and conversations in which al-Tawḥīdī participated in Baghdad (focusing mostly on al-Sijistānī and his circle), he cites most of these influential figures using the term and explicitly approves of their authoritative insights.[34] The discussions in *al-Muqābasāt* cover a thirty-year span (360–90/970–99), but at least when it comes to al-ʿĀmirī, the material al-Tawḥīdī cites based on hearing him in person (including the references to habitus) must come from 360/970 or 364/974. These are the dates he gives for seeing the philosopher, and hence—at least through hearing al-ʿĀmirī—he must have been familiar with the habitus concept prior to his time at al-Ṣāḥib's court.

Of great importance to us is the application of habitus by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī's student, Miskawayh, who was al-Tawḥīdī's colleague and first mentor.[35] This is especially the case with the *responsa* work titled *al-Hawāmil wa-l-shawāmil*, in which al-Tawḥīdī collected a diverse and rich body of queries he directed to Miskawayh with the answers of the latter. Throughout *al-Hawāmil*, al-Tawḥīdī asks and Miskawayh answers, in a way that reflects unequal scholarly authority and a typical student–teacher relationship. Admiring Miskawayh and his erudition, al-Tawḥīdī described him as "the treasure of rare knowledge and the cache of philosophy (*ḥikma*)," when referring to him a question he had been asked by someone else, looking up to Miskawayh's authoritative reply.[36] In Chapter 2 we saw that habitus was applied as an analytic tool in several discussions in *al-Hawāmil*. Taking into consideration the dual authorship of the work, this is another indication that al-Tawḥīdī should have been familiar with the concept by the time he was at al-Ṣāḥib's court.[37]

It is clear that the habitus concept was known and applied as an analytic tool by scholars in al-Tawḥīdī's milieu, and, most importantly, that he was aware of that. One wonders whether he actually used it in his own discourse. I was able to find one usage of *qunya* by al-Tawḥīdī when he urges his audience to acquire (*iktisāb*) the quality of forbearance (*ḥilm*)—among other things—for its being "a rational acquired disposition" (*qunya ʿaqliyya*).[38] Taken altogether, the presented evidence makes the use of habitus in studying the interaction between al-Ṣāḥib and al-Tawḥīdī crucial. For when I say that al-Tawḥīdī was unwilling to adapt himself to the courtly habitus, it is evident that he was himself cognizant of how one might voluntarily adapt through habituation, so that he would be capable of handling successfully *even* what runs against his nature. It is my argument, which will be elaborated more in the following, that al-Tawḥīdī's conscious commitment to values derived from the philosophical and Ṣūfī ways of life, in addition to his well-established aesthetic perceptions, precluded him from acquiring the courtly habitus. This was despite knowing that a person should acquire specific traits to handle well a given situation, but in his case these traits ran against his own values and preferences. He clearly lacked the component of *volition* which, as we saw, al-Fārābī found necessary for shifting to the opposite of a given disposition. An echo to the idea of trait acquisition and adjustment to a social role is found in al-Tawḥīdī's reproach of al-Ṣāḥib in *Akhlāq*, after yet another anecdote where the vizier's behavior is delineated as maniacally envious and vulgar:

> Whoever adorns himself with sovereignty and forces the people to submit to him obediently is in need of many innate traits. Apart from that, he needs to be fervently desirous of other traits and of their acquisition (*iktisāb*) from their possessors through social interaction (*mujālasa*), listening (*samāʿ*), reading (*qirāʾa*), and receptivity (*taqabbul*).[39]

Finally, what should also guide us to study this unsuccessful interaction through the question of habitus is the fact that, in consonance with the emphasized ethical outlook on habitus among contemporary philosophers, the criticism of al-Tawḥīdī has a clear moral emphasis; accordingly, his work attacking al-Ṣāḥib (and Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd) was titled "The Morality (or Character) of the Two Viziers" (*Akhlāq al-wazīrayn*).[40] This work as a whole is about dispositions, seen by its author as either noble or ignoble, and purports to describe the profiles of the vizier, those who follow him, and those who do not. And indeed, the aggregate of the accounts, when scrutinized and abstracted, disclose a set of positions and dispositions that was favored by the vizier and shared by those who made their way into the court, contrasted with another of those who did not. While the first abstraction amounts to the courtly habitus in effect, the second makes up the habitus of those who resisted it—first and foremost, al-Tawḥīdī's.

IV Incompetent and out of place at the court

Al-Tawḥīdī was not a poet and—citing copious verses in his works notwithstanding—did not lay claim to poetic skill, stating once: "I have nothing to do with poetry and poets."[41] He was an excellent prose writer, but based on the evidence at hand, he was never employed as a professional chancellery secretary (*kātib*).[42] Unlike some other prominent men of letters at the time, he showed no interest in active political or diplomatic service that not infrequently was a commitment undertaken by courtiers. What did he have in mind, then, when he set out on his journey to al-Ṣāḥib? If we are to judge by dispersed comments he made and the short-term position he would later hold with Ibn Saʿdān—one he would certainly cherish—he was expecting to become one of the courtiers surrounding al-Ṣāḥib and offering him at his pleasure counsel, learned companionship, and entertainment based on their scholarship, sagacity, and experience.[43] There is no doubt that al-Tawḥīdī had the learning that was a precondition for such position. Yet, his case demonstrates that success at the court, an environment governed by specific social rules and cultural codes, requires of literary people—professionally competent as they may be—to command them. This is illustrated, for example, in the biography of the secretary and littérateur al-Barūjirdī, about whom al-Thaʿālibī writes: "He had served al-Ṣāḥib in the prime of his youth, became well-mannered in his etiquette, was closely related to him, and trained his nature to adopt his way."[44] Some of those who addressed this relationship have already noted al-Tawḥīdī's improper conduct at court and breach of accustomed etiquette; none of them, however, indicated the wide range of oppositional positions taken by al-Tawḥīdī in his criticism of courtly practices *en vogue* characterized by obscenity and licentiousness, and of the hegemonic aesthetic preferences. Beyond simply misconduct, al-Tawḥīdī presented a coherent challenge to the courtly habitus that included behavioral, linguistic, moral, and aesthetic aspects. In the following, I will show how severe this habitus mismatch really was.

"Al-Musayyabī went out of Ibn ʿAbbād's residence and I [=al-Tawḥīdī] said to him: 'what did you think of the people [there]?' He answered: 'I saw the interior inferior and the exterior superior.'"[45] This opinion, cited by al-Tawḥīdī, summarizes well his contempt toward what he believed to be the reign of the ostentatious and the superficial over the plain and meaningful at the court, including behavior, language, and aesthetics. As for behavior, the first meeting of al-Tawḥīdī and al-Ṣāḥib serves as an illuminating example for the former's lack of understanding how one should treat the court's patron deferentially. Here is al-Tawḥīdī's description of their first interaction after his arrival to al-Rayy in the year 367/977:

> As for my story with him, when I arrived, he said to me: "What is your *kunya* (*abū man*)?" I answered: "Abū Ḥayyān." He said: "I heard you are a kind of a literary man." I answered: "The way people are these days." He said: "Then tell me, is Abū Ḥayyān triptotically inflected (*yanṣarifu*) or not?" I answered: "If our master accepts him, he won't go away (*yanṣarifu*)." When he heard it, he became angry, as if it did not please him. He turned to someone beside him and cursed in Persian, as it was interpreted to me. He then said to me: "Stay in our house, and copy for us this book." I replied: "To hear is to obey." Afterwards I said uninhibitedly to some people at the house: "I only headed from Iraq to this place, and jostled those seeking the favor of this residence, to be saved from the inauspicious profession; for [the business of] copying in Baghdad was not stagnant." This [remark], part of it, or a distorted version, made its way to his ear, and increased his hostility.[46]

Al-Tawḥīdī, in his own words, shows how misguided his words and actions were as the relationship with the vizier started. He might have been disappointed that al-Ṣāḥib did not seem to remember him, and was probably offended that the vizier described him as "a kind of a literary man."[47] Answering "the way people are these days" was a disrespectful retaliation, for after all al-Ṣāḥib was among the notable literary people of the time. When he was tested by the vizier regarding the inflection of Ḥayyān (the second term of his *kunya*), he rudely bypassed it returning a smart-alec answer, as if to indicate he was beyond auditioning. Al-Tawḥīdī, tactlessly or scornfully, disregarded hierarchy and the implications of his being inferior in rank vis-à-vis the vizier; that is, for sure, not the way a prospective protégé should respond to a patron's testing, a legitimate and common practice among learned and confident patrons, as we have already seen. Despite his aspirations for a rewarding position at court, al-Tawḥīdī appears unable or unwilling to pay the price, to wit, accepting hierarchical inferiority without challenging it inappropriately. Moreover, he shows his want of understanding of court politics, speaking "uninhibitedly" (*qultu … mustarsilan*) in defiance of al-Ṣāḥib behind his back. His criticism went from his lips directly to the ears of competing courtiers, who did not hesitate to make gains at the expense of al-Tawḥīdī's mindlessness.

Al-Tawḥīdī's faux pas is even more evident when compared to another man's successful interaction in a similar situation:

> A man unknown to al-Ṣāḥib entered, and the latter said to him: "What is your *kunya* (*abū man*)?" The man recited: "Given names and *kunya*s are

> often the same in wording, while the traits are different." Then he said to him: "Sit down, Abū l-Qāsim."[48]

The unknown man answered wittily, submissively, and to the point without sounding tastelessly challenging. He knew well that in a courtly environment apt quotation (*muḥāḍara*)—the ability to call from memory promptly an expression drawn from the literary heritage that fits in a certain social situation—was greatly valued. Moreover, he was refined and thoughtful enough not to break the taboo on mentioning one's name before a leader in case both share it.[49] Based on the man's well-chosen verse, al-Ṣāḥib grasped immediately that both of them shared the same *kunya*, Abū l-Qāsim. He was probably flattered by the emphasis given in the verse on the necessary difference in character; Abū l-Qāsim, the proud vizier, must have seen himself distinct from the other Abū l-Qāsim who approached him. The juxtaposition of (the other) Abū l-Qāsim's performance and al-Tawḥīdī's provides a profitable demonstration of a courtly habitus at work and the lack thereof.

A glance at some other episodes in which the two interacted discloses how far al-Tawḥīdī was from abiding by the accepted behavior norms at court: al-Ṣāḥib argued in a session that, according to the grammarians, the morphological combination of *faʿl* and *afʿāl* is rare and attested in three cases only (each combining a singular and plural noun: *zand* and *aznād*; *farkh* and *afrākh*; and *fard* and *afrād*). In response, al-Tawḥīdī said that he memorized thirty such words (*ḥarf)*,[50] which he enumerated with references. He went on to criticize grammarians (and, indirectly, al-Ṣāḥib, who was one, too) who made judgments without a thorough independent research. He started to give an example for another incorrect statement regarding *faʿīl* (he found more than twenty semantic groups [*wajh*] in contrast to the ten claimed), only to be interrupted by the irritated vizier, who said:

> Evading your claim concerning *faʿl* is indicative of your false allegation regarding *faʿīl*. But we shall not allow you to talk, and will not give ear to your words. Your insolent conduct in our session and your informality (*tabassuṭ*) at our court are inappropriate.[51]

Here, noticeably, al-Tawḥīdī fails to interact properly within the informal frame, showing "excess of liberty-taking," as al-Ṣāḥib once called this type of behavior on the part of courtiers.[52]

Al-Tawḥīdī was asked through Najāḥ, the supervisor of al-Ṣāḥib's library, to copy the vizier's thirty-volume epistle collection. Al-Tawḥīdī suggested preparing an anthology instead so that readers not be bored and the vizier not be put to blame. Without al-Tawḥīdī's knowledge, an offensive version of his response was reported to al-Ṣāḥib, who seethed with anger over the slight to his authority and ability. On another occasion, al-Ṣāḥib asked al-Tawḥīdī where he had acquired his embellished writing style. Al-Tawḥīdī must have noticed a derisive tenor (or irony) in his question, for he retaliated tauntingly: "How would it not be this way, since I harvest the fruits of his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] epistles and draw from the well of his knowledge…" With this retort, al-Tawḥīdī—although displaying surprise, probably more feigned than real—was successful again in irritating al-Ṣāḥib, who could not bear the comparison to what he considered al-Tawḥīdī's begging discourse. On yet another occasion, al-Tawḥīdī was asked by the vizier to recite to him the epistle, with which he solicited the favor of Abū l-Fatḥ b. al-ʿAmīd who visited Baghdad in 364/975.[53] Al-Tawḥīdī repeatedly declined, but was ordered to do so, and the laudatory epistle provoked the vizier's ire. He was later reproached by those who learned about it for harming himself in praising the vizier's bitter enemy. Al-Tawḥīdī defended his action saying he could not have let the honor of an eminent figure (Abū l-Fatḥ) be injured, and that the vizier himself prompted him to recite it.

> It was also said: You brought about harm on yourself, and neglected prudence in your affairs; for he abhorred and loathed you, and noticed that in your speech you exceeded your boundaries, ignored your rank, and forgot your weight. There is no one like you who trespassed to criticize someone in the standing of this man [=al-Ṣāḥib]. When you ventured to do that, you became fond of it, and hitched with him someone else (i.e., put Abū l-Fatḥ on the same level with him).

It happened again that the vizier asked al-Tawḥīdī to tell him about Abū l-Fatḥ, in this case about his soirées in Baghdad, to which he agreed without even trying to evade it. He noticed that al-Ṣāḥib became irritated while listening, "without intention on my behalf to provoke his ire; nor was I cognizant of an intent to insult him. All this was the reason for [my] deprivation."[54]

Al-Tawḥīdī felt justified, having been viciously harmed by the vizier, in spite of his immense sacrifices, which included "submission and flattery."[55] Although claimed, "submission and flattery" are hardly seen in al-Tawḥīdī's conduct, and reading his accounts we may justly wonder if he really realized what these meant; what one sees is a continuous inability to accept hierarchy and the prerogatives of the court's patron. From the very beginning he acted irreverently, in a way that made al-Ṣāḥib cold and angry with him. He did not hesitate to outdo him inappropriately in public (as in the session where grammatical issues were discussed), speaking completely informally and indeed insolently. He, therefore, resorted to sardonic and derisive remarks whenever he felt the vizier did not treat him honorably, and was proud of that. As we saw, he lacked any necessary political senses, speaking uninhibitedly behind al-Ṣāḥib's back without thinking of the consequences. An indication of his improper courtly conduct is given in the criticism of the anonymous courtiers who told him that he should have found a way to avoid reciting the laudatory epistle to al-Ṣāḥib's bitter foe. It stems from their reproach that a sensitive courtier must have known how to keep away from such a risky situation. Moreover, they clearly blamed him for ignoring his inferior standing vis-à-vis the vizier and for imprudently challenging him. Their remarks support the view that al-Tawḥīdī was completely out of place at court. When he says that his story made the vizier angry "without intention on my behalf to provoke his ire," he manifests again how completely unaware he was of normative rules in this environment. Such awareness is after all the insider's logic, while al-Tawḥīdī chose to stay outside, a fact that necessarily affected his vantage point.

No less important for al-Tawḥīdī's lack of success at court was his strong revulsion from the patron's keen interest in the underworld, its people, and argot. As it was not only an "academic" interest, al-Tawḥīdī was disgusted with the zeal of al-Ṣāḥib for what he considered to be immoral licentiousness and unbecoming gutter slang. There is no doubt that al-Ṣāḥib was indeed infatuated with low-life culture and obscene language, as this is attested even by admiring biographers such as al-Thaʿālibī.[56] Bosworth anchored this fascination in a broader perspective as a continuation (if not a culmination) of a cultural trend that had appeared in the Islamic world of the third/ninth century:

> [The interest in low life was] undoubtedly related to the progess [*sic*] of urbanization and sophistication of life in this period, as was pointed out by G.E. von Grunebaum. Previously, literature had tended to reflect the Islamic ideals of high moral seriousness and such attended virtues as liberality, hospitality, fortitude in battle, pride in one's kin and family, etc. The reverse of these qualities was now exemplified in *sukhf*, scurrilousness and shamelessness, and *mujūn*, levity and scoffing, which begin to intrude into the themes of Arabic literature.[57]

Bosworth dedicates pp. 60–79 in the first volume of *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld* to study the influence of this trend on al-Ṣāḥib and figures related to him. He notes that alongside al-Ṣāḥib's "laudable literary and scholarly pursuits," embracing such fields as theology, lexicography, epistolography, literary criticism, and medicine, he was interested in the Islamic underworld and its jargon, and fascinated with "the pornography of the period." Bosworth connects this fascination to the vizier's homosexual preference, alleged by reports of al-Tawḥīdī and al-Thaʿālibī but rejected by the vizier: "Although the Ṣāḥib is said to have angrily disavowed these sentiments, the close correlation noted by modern psychologists between homosexuality and an interest in pornography makes the charge not impossible."[58] This problematic speculation aside, Bosworth is right in concentrating on al-Ṣāḥib as a prominent representative of this cultural trend at the time (as a patron and keen participant alike). Yet, his explanation for this trend by "the progress of urbanization and sophistication of life in this period" is circumstantial and not well-argued; this appeal of the low and dirty for the high and noble is by no means a phenomenon unique to the Islamic civilization of the fourth/tenth century, and has already been attested and studied by literary scholars, historians, and anthropologists focusing on other times and places who offered valuable insights. Taking advantage of some of these studies, I hope to shed more light on this phenomenon from various angles and offer a more elaborated explication in what follows. We should first see, however, what the nature of this interest of al-Ṣāḥib was.

Al-Ṣāḥib's penchant for shameless bawdiness in everyday situations and for various purposes, already as a young man, is well attested in the sources. The historian Hilāl b. al-Muḥassin al-Ṣābī (359–448/969–1055) relates a characteristic story on the authority of his grandfather, Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī, the secretary of the Būyid *amīr* Muʿizz al-Dawla. When the twenty-one-year-old al-Ṣāḥib was visiting Baghdad with the future *amīr* Muʾayyid al-Dawla, he was prevented from seeing the vizier al-Muhallabī, who was busy. After waiting, seated for a long time without permission to enter, al-Ṣāḥib sent al-Ṣābī a note with this verse: "I am left prevented from entering the gate like balls, while others go in and out like cocks." Al-Ṣābī read it to al-Muhallabī, who gave order to let him enter.[59] It should be noted that such a ribald message opened the vizier's doors for the young al-Ṣāḥib. This short account speaks volumes of the legitimacy, centrality, and appeal of the obscene for elite members of the time.

Al-Tawḥīdī devoted a significant portion of *Akhlāq* to rebel against al-Ṣāḥib's over-indulgence in obscenities and licentiousness, often relying on others' narratives to give more weight to his severe judgment. In many accounts and analyses, the scatological interest of the vizier is linked to the sacrilegious, which even magnifies al-Tawḥīdī's revulsion.[60] We saw how al-Ṣāḥib's jest playing on the homonymous *ḥaqq*, which has a clear obscene meaning, was taken as shocking and impious. In addition, as mentioned by Bosworth, two of the contexts in which al-Tawḥīdī depicts al-Ṣāḥib's debauchery is his ardent Muʿtazilī views and his teacher al-Baṣrī's allegedly blasphemous views.[61]

> Isn't this the person [=al-Ṣāḥib] who says on account of his lewdness and religious levity: Among my practices, among my practices, is fucking mature men/I only fuck them, because I am a Muʿtazilī/A disciple of an eminent shaykh nicknamed al-Juʿal.[62]

In this case as in others, when al-Tawḥīdī cites or reports about the vizier's lewdness, a harsh criticism of his moral values follows. The recurrent argument is that such improper indulgence is not expected at all of pious and virtuous people (*kullu dhī muruwwa*), let alone men in leading positions; it is characteristic of the scum and riffraff.[63]

Al-Tawḥīdī, censuring al-Ṣāḥib, relied significantly on al-Khathʿamī, the secretary of ʿAlī b. Kāma,[64] who contributed many accounts of the vizier's licentious conduct and speech: al-Ṣāḥib used to narrate all kinds of obscene and scatological anecdotes and poetry (vivid examples are given), from which those in position of leadership should keep away; he admired and memorized Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's scatological verse in its entirety, noting that Imruʾ al-Qays and al-Nābigha fell short of him in this craft; "scatology, licentiousness and wantonness (*al-sukhf wa-l-khalāʿa wa-l-mujūn*) were his wont." He used to make up obscene stories and put it in the mouth of others with good reputation, only to wash his hands of them, "and he was filthier than a pig."[65]

Al-Tawḥīdī refers also to two low-life figures with whom al-Ṣāḥib associated (besides Abū Dulaf). One was Ibn Fashīshā, chief of the beggars' platform (*maṣṭaba*) in al-Rayy, to whom al-Ṣāḥib recited once a hedonistic poem (employing several argot expressions) calling for unrestrained indulgence in pleasure: to pass the night with a large-buttocked beardless youth, have sex with him, drink wine, and eat well. Al-Tawḥīdī concludes asking:

> Are these the words of a person who calls upon God, seeking to be answered, [wishing] that his religious way be followed, and [aspiring] to be an intermediary between God and man?! This [person]—may God protect you—is more deserving to be cursed; to wash one's hands of him and *his friends* is worthier. How little the shame of these [people] is and how great their lying and haughtiness are![66]

We clearly see how strong al-Tawḥīdī's disgust is with what he sees as a mix of profligacy with impiety and hypocrisy. Note that it was not only al-Ṣāḥib, but (as italicized above) also "his friends" who acted in the same immoral way that made al-Tawḥīdī rebel; it was a milieu beyond the patron himself.

The second person, about whom al-Tawḥīdī provided much more details, was al-Aqṭaʿ al-Munshid al-Kūfī, a multifaceted criminal and devoted sinner, whose hand was amputated for robbery (hence called al-Aqṭaʿ, "the amputee"). The long list of his self-professed crimes and sins discloses that he was *inter alia* a gambler, a pimp, a sodomite, a fornicator, a killer, a drunk, and a blasphemer. Al-Ṣāḥib was so fascinated by al-Aqṭaʿ that he imprisoned him in his house, for he has never found anyone who could teach him different jargons of beggars, gamblers, and other low-life figures. Al-Aqṭaʿ was at the same time witty, refined, and eloquent, a man whose prompt versifying skill (and predilection for scatology) is seen in an extemporized exchange with al-Ṣāḥib. In addition, al-Ṣāḥib used to compel him to memorize his poems on the Prophet's family and recite them to people in a lamenting style. For each line he received a dirham, if he mastered it, or one beating with a knotty stick, if he did not. Forbidden to leave al-Ṣāḥib's house to return to his place and wife, al-Aqṭaʿ complained about sexual deprivation, and resorted to masturbation. In a hilarious anecdote (translated below), al-Tawḥīdī recounts how al-Aqṭaʿ managed to satisfy his sexual needs once when his wife came to visit the vizier's house, while the excited al-Ṣāḥib was watching closely the intercourse, and finally bestowed upon him a robe of honor, and endowed the couple with presents. We are then asked by the repulsed al-Tawḥīdī: "Is this part of virtue (*muruwwa*), moral excellence, manners of leadership, and etiquette of viziership?!" He finds no parallel to al-Ṣāḥib's conduct among viziers of renown, and strongly condemns his followers:

> Indeed, whoever approves of this [person] and his likes, and clears from blame the leadership and loftiness of people of his ilk is of weak character, devoid of virtue. Whoever pays attention to this [person] and his kind is shameless and ignorant.[67]

Al-Tawḥīdī expresses here his strong sense of revulsion toward al-Ṣāḥib and his milieu for their shameless behavior that contradicts the codes men of dignity should adhere to. In fact, he rightly indicates a discrepancy between the dignified behavior *expected* from elite members and that of al-Ṣāḥib, who was obsessed with its negation.

V Transgression as a component of the courtly habitus

The apparently paradoxical phenomenon of attraction by an elite person to the low and dirty calls for a wider analytic perspective, especially since it is evident in different times and places. In *Purity and Danger* the anthropologist Mary Douglas famously defined dirt as matter out of place in both "primitive" and modern cultures, as in each culture notions of dirt and defilement contrast with its notions of positive structure which must not be negated. Faced with the fact that boundary transgression does nonetheless occur, she asks "how dirt, which is normally destructive, sometimes becomes creative." Her answer is that making intentional use of the impure in specific circumstances like rituals is symbolically empowering (in the sense of harnessing destructive cosmological powers for the good) and reviving, and in addition that pollution symbols are necessary for the affirmation of "dark themes" as integral part of nature.[68]

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin delineates the social and cultural phenomenon of the carnival, which found literary expression more than anywhere else in the work of François Rabelais. The carnival, an inherent feature in medieval and Renaissance European calendar and social life, has later lost its centrality and became impoverished. Broadly understood by Bakhtin to comprehend festivities and other cultural manifestations (like oral and written parodies, marketplace shows, oaths, curses, etc.), the carnival gave voice to a counter-hegemonic folk humor that functioned as an alternative to the seriousness and formality of the official culture and established order. During the time of the carnival, hierarchy and certain norms and prohibitions of everyday life were suspended ("all were equal during the carnival") to create "a special carnivalesque marketplace style." This style, in speech and gesture, is "frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times." The carnival is characterized by laughter, which is festive (in its collectivity), universal (directed at *all* and *everyone*), and ambivalent (gay and deriding, reviving and humiliating at the same time). Carnival imagery is an anti-classical counter-aesthetic characterized by the concept called by Bakhtin grotesque realism. Grotesque realism puts the body and the bodily in its focus in a deeply positive way, the body—"as something universal, representing all the people"—being always earthy, merry, open-ended, and unfinished. The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, a transfer of the high, ideal, abstract to the material level, "to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity." To degrade also means to center around the lower stratum (in contrast to the upper, the locus of rationality and spirituality) of the body: the belly, the buttocks, and the genital organs, and hence to concentrate on the acts of defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Bakhtin believed that the carnivalesque, especially when carnivals were organically part of social life and before it was essentially transferred into the literary realm, endowed culture with liberating, rejuvenating, and innovative forces.[69]

In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, relying on literary and historical sources, demonstrate how during the continuous definition of the early modern and modern European bourgeois identity, the act of excluding the low, the dirty, and the repulsive was inseparable from desiring and being fascinated with them. In what may apparently be viewed as absurd, power and hierarchy always entail to some degree inversion and transgression:

> A recurrent pattern emerges: the "top" attempts to reject and eliminate the "bottom" for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other (in the classic way that Hegel describes in the master–slave section of the *Phenomenology*), but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central (like long hair in the 1960s). The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organization and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture.[70]

The observable wantonness in the conduct of al-Ṣāḥib, in addition to his enthusiasm about the subculture of the underworld, and his direct contact with its dwellers, manifest the component of transgression in the courtly habitus of an elite personality. This is for the fact that these characteristics were in sheer disagreement with the dominant values and cultural codes (including the linguistic and aesthetic ones) held by members of the elite. To be sure, this apparently unexpected attraction on the part of elite members to the lowest social elements and their subculture is to the *symbolical* (e.g., language, literary repertoires, conduct), while on the political and social levels they were controlled and despised. We can learn that from the relationship between al-Ṣāḥib and al-Aqṭaʿ reported by al-Tawḥīdī (*Akhlāq*, 184–90), which serves as an apt test case. The vizier's treatment of al-Aqṭaʿ shows clearly relations based on hierarchy and control, reflecting conventional political and socio-cultural practices conducted against the marginal, and at the same time desire. Here, al-Aqṭaʿ narrates how he was subjected to harassment, imprisonment, deprivation of sex, coercion, and physical and psychological punishment by al-Ṣāḥib, while mentioning the vizier's desire for him:

> On the basis of that [=al-Aqṭaʿ's having committed every thinkable sin and crime], he [=al-Ṣāḥib] has ardent desire for me, he harasses me, troubles me, and prevents me from returning to my house and to my wife. He had

> imprisoned me in his house in this manner, so whenever I am overcome by lust, I masturbate out of necessity…
>
> [Al-Tawḥīdī recounts:] Ibn ʿAbbād would demand that al-Aqṭaʿ memorize his poems on the house of the Prophet and recite them to people in a lamenting style. He would give him for each line a dirham, and if he did not master [them], he would beat him once for each line with a knotty stick. Thus, poor al-Aqṭaʿ would be beaten daily. I said to him: "Who tasked you with tolerating this beating? Memorize [them] as you used to do, gain the dirhams, and rid yourself of the pain!" He then said: "By God, if he were to beat me with every stick in the world, it would be easier for me than memorizing his graceless (*ghathth*) poetry and reciting his lifeless (*bārid*) verse. By God, his poetry on the house of the Prophet is indeed shit!" This is what he said.[71]

Al-Aqṭaʿ embodies many traits of what Bakhtin called the carnivalesque: he has a grotesque body (being, as an amputee, unfinished), is over-sexed, a hedonist (loves perfumes and bent on marrying women), vulgar and scurrilous, subversive and degrading in his humor,[72] an avowed law-breaker, blasphemous, and playful in his quackery.[73] Al-Ṣāḥib, writes al-Tawḥīdī, can find no equal to al-Aqṭaʿ in his command of the variety of jargons and idioms used by the different types of underworld people, and hence clings to him.[74] One of the reasons for which al-Ṣāḥib was keen on learning this lore was to naturalize it in his own creation, as he did in the hedonistic poem recited to Ibn Fashīshā. Banū Sāsān jargon words detected by Bosworth in this poem (used also in Abū Dulaf's *qaṣīda sāsāniyya*) are *shawzar* for beardless youth, *ṣamy* for wine, and *matr* for copulation.[75] This type of naturalization goes hand in hand with Mary Douglas's observation about the reviving power of the dirty (here in the sense of literary creativeness) and Stallybrass and White's about the low's constitutive role in the production of high cultural repertoires. But al-Ṣāḥib went beyond literary creation to participate personally and passionately in the carnival:

> [al-Ṣāḥib] would not let al-Aqṭaʿ depart for his home, and he used to complain of vehement carnal desire. His wife would visit him frequently at the house's vestibule, change his clothes, take care of his affairs, talk to him, and take away what he had collected. One day al-Aqṭaʿ found the vestibule empty, because the midday heat prevented [people] from going out. He then seduced her, laid her in the abandoned place, got on top of her, and started his act. One of the servants glanced at him, and then ran to inform al-Ṣāḥib, reporting on the situation and scene. [Al-Ṣāḥib] was stirred from his cool napping place, his shady spot, and the mattress on which he had lain, bareheaded and barefoot. Having put the tip of his [robe's] sleeve on his head without [wearing] undergarment, he rushed out quickly until he stood over al-Aqṭaʿ, who was engaged in sex, thrusting and withdrawing, moving back and forth like crazy. He said to him: "O Aqṭaʿ, woe to you, son of a bitch, what are you doing in my house?!" Al-Aqṭaʿ answered: "O al-Ṣāḥib! Go

> away, this is not the site of watchers! This is my wife, [legally married] with witnesses and notaries, by contract and agreement, go, go!" He was raving and out of his mind until he ejaculated, while my lord [=al-Ṣāḥib] was over his head laughing, clapping hands, and dancing. Thereupon, having assisted [al-Aqṭaʿ] in pulling tight his undergarment drawstring, Ibn ʿAbbād took his hand and let him in his napping place, scolding him and inquiring about the act and climax; how did he like it? How did he get [so] aroused? He, then, bestowed upon him a robe of honor and presents, and presented his wife with garments and perfume.[76]

Unable to control his sexual drive, al-Aqṭaʿ pays no attention to norm and order and dares to engage in sex with his wife in a non-private area of the vizier's house. This is the first phase in the suspension of customary norms in what presents itself as a completely carnivalesque happening. Its "unnatural" character shows in the vizier's amused but surprised reproach to the busy al-Aqṭaʿ ("O Aqṭaʿ, woe to you, son of a bitch, what are you doing in my house?!") and in his scolding after the sexual activity was over. Al-Aqṭaʿ's irreverent treatment of al-Ṣāḥib during this happening is seen in his dismissive engrossment in the act despite being caught *in flagrante delicto*, his rude response to the vizier ("Go away, this is not the site of watchers…"), and subsequent "raving." Court patrons realized that cultural creativity is suffocated by permanent strict hierarchy, and the vizier—eager to satisfy his desire for the carnivalesque—did not care too much about his temporary degradation. Indeed, al-Ṣāḥib's desire cannot be missed, starting with his bursting in, inappropriately dressed from his cool napping place to the midday heat, through his spirited participation—different from passive voyeurism—by "laughing, clapping hands, and dancing" over the couple's heads, and ending with his interested inquiries about the act and climax once it was over.

It would be a mistake, however, to fail to notice the reassertion of authority once the act ends: al-Ṣāḥib takes al-Aqṭaʿ by the hand leading him to one of his rooms, questioning him, investing him with a robe of honor, and giving presents to him and his wife. However surrealistic this investiture may seem to us, al-Ṣāḥib assumes the role of a potentate who awards and invests a subject for a great achievement or service performed. This carnivalesque experience is, then, a remarkable example for the transgressive component in the habitus of elite members, which was so foreign to al-Tawḥīdī and offensive to his sensibilities.[77] This type of boundary transgression taken as a natural and healthy element (as observed by Mary Douglas), reflecting the cosmological balance of things good and bad, pure and impure, is well defined by Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, one of al-Ṣāḥib's favorite poets, justifying the need for his scatological poetry (*sukhf*) [*al-wāfir*]:

Wa-shiʿrī sukhfuhū lā budda minhū
Fa-qad ṭibnā wa-zāla l-iḥtishāmū

Wa-hal dārun takūnu bi-lā kanīfin
Fa-yumkinu ʿāqilan fīhā l-maqāmū

The *sukhf* in my poetry is inescapable
As we have relaxed and bashfulness has vanished

Is it possible for a house to be without a lavatory
And feasible for a sane person to stay in it?[78]

To be sure, al-Tawḥīdī was not a prude; an admirer of al-Jāḥiẓ, he, too, believed in the *adab* principle of balancing the serious with the humorous, which often overlapped with the obscene. Thus, he unashamedly scattered in his *adab* anthology, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir*, obscene and scatological anecdotes, whose advantage was not only to refresh one's strength and spirits (he urges the readers to delight in them as a means to recreation and a ladder to seriousness), but also to give one a better understanding of the world, "knowing its good and bad, its public and hidden [matters]."[79] Indeed, alongside obscene anecdotes meant solely to entertain the readers, there are others acquainting them with transgressors and deviants whose sexual behavior and scatological interests are disapproved of, but nevertheless found interesting enough from an ethnographic point of view.[80] Moreover, when asked by the vizier Ibn Saʿdān in their eighteenth nightly session to entertain him with bawdy (*mujūn*) materials in order to counterbalance the stress caused by attending to serious matters, al-Tawḥīdī complies.[81] This session, as recorded in *al-Imtāʿ*, attests as well to his familiarity with obscene prose and poetry, and lack of reluctance to impart this content to others as a counterbalancing measure. To al-Tawḥīdī, the problem was when engagement in the obscene became an obsession and a *way of life*, when instead of being a refreshing entertainment in the form of risqué anecdotes and poems or a legitimate intellectual pursuit it became a deviant behavior characterizing one's personality.[82] This approach explains why he was repulsed by al-Ṣāḥib, whose over-indulgence in the low and dirty manifested a *transgressive lifestyle*. Al-Tawḥīdī, in contrast to al-Ṣāḥib and other courtiers, did not link the obscene to his *own* life; apart from mentioning hearing obscene materials from others, we do not find self-references and reported active involvement in the obscene anecdotes and poems by which he entertained and educated his audience. These could have been indicators of a transgressive lifestyle, which he had indubitably not led.

VI Al-Tawḥīdī's criticism of the hegemonic literary taste in prose

Al-Tawḥīdī's lack of a fit courtly habitus is also visible in regard to the shibboleth of this court—enthusiasm about linguistic manipulation, playfulness, and experimentalism. In *Akhlāq* and *al-Imtāʿ* alike, al-Tawḥīdī criticized recurrently the affected prose created and appreciated by the vizier and his favorites. He often adduced what he considered silly word plays, tasteless repartees, meaningless jabber, and cacophonic gibberish in which al-Ṣāḥib indulged. We saw above how al-Ṣāḥib fell prey to a trick played on him by a courtier, who feigned a swoon in reaction to the vizier's rhymed prose, only to be greatly honored and awarded. Indeed, al-Tawḥīdī demonstrated clearly time and again his aesthetic distaste for the rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) so extensively used and adored by al-Ṣāḥib. This superficial virtuosity, in *sajʿ*, use of rare words, affectation, and excessive focus on prosody—it is reiterated in different ways by him—only disguises a lack of natural talent, skill, and knowledge. The concentration on formal aspects is at the expense of meaning.

Al-Khathʿamī, questioned by al-Tawḥīdī, asks rhetorically: "Does his madness about prosody (*ʿarūḍ*) indicate anything but a deficient natural disposition and paucity of spontaneity?" According to him, al-Ṣāḥib learned prosody from the poet al-Badīhī, whose poetry was also bad for this reason.[83] Proficiency in prosody was for al-Ṣāḥib a required aesthetic standard demanded of anyone:

> He went so far with his mania for it—to wit, prosody—that he used to impose it on everyone and demand it of every poet and secretary. It reached a point these days that he started teaching [prosody] to a Turkish male slave, another from Qūhistān, and yet another black one.

Nevertheless, al-Khathʿamī—as did al-Tawḥīdī himself elsewhere—granted that al-Ṣāḥib "demonstrated in this [=prosody] and the like dexterity, proficiency, and learning."[84] In fact, al-Ṣāḥib's passion for prosody and his didactic approach to this topic is attested in his compendium *Kitāb al-iqnāʿ fī l-ʿarūḍ wa-takhrīj al-qawāfī*, which he opens by comparing prosody to syntax as setting the standards for poetry and speech respectively.[85] His "madness about prosody," as put by al-Khathʿamī, should then be understood in the most general way as an enthusiastic concentration on the whole theory of meter and rhyme and not a predilection for rare meters, or rare metrical deviations (*ʿilal* and *ziḥāfāt*), in his poetry.

The secretary ʿAlī b. al-Qāsim said to al-Tawḥīdī: "*Sajʿ* for this man [=al-Ṣāḥib] is tantamount to a walking cane for a blind man. If the blind man loses his cane he is compelled to remain seated, and if this [man] leaves *sajʿ* he is silenced."[86] Among the numerous anecdotes and comments on al-Ṣāḥib's passion for *sajʿ*, the following is very telling:

> A proof for al-Ṣāḥib's madness about *sajʿ* and his going way too far with it, is his words one day: "*Ḥaddathanī Abū ʿAli Ibn Bāsh, wa-kāna min sādat al-nāsh* (Abū ʿAli b. Bāsh related to me, and he was among the notables)." He changed the *sīn* to *shīn* [in *nāsh*], went on with the account, and said: "This is an (ancient) dialect variant (*lugha*)." He lied [here]; he was [always] an inveterate liar.[87]

Al-Ṣāḥib's obsession with the formal aspects of speech and composition, as seen in the anecdotes brought forth in *Akhlāq*, is often taken by al-Tawḥīdī and his interlocutors as ravings indicative of various types of mental illnesses. In one case, al-Tawḥīdī heard al-Ṣāḥib commenting to a shaykh from Khorasan on ontological questions of being and necessity. His speech in *sajʿ* may be described as hardly intelligible with verbs and nouns derived from the roots *k.w.n.* and *w.j.b.* (providing the semantic fields of "being" and "necessity," respectively) heavily repeated in almost every sentence. What seemed to the vizier an important observation, made the Khorasani—speaking with al-Tawḥīdī later that night—wonder if they had no insane asylum in their area.[88]

When asked by al-Tawḥīdī, the poet Abū l-Salm substantiates his opinion on al-Ṣāḥib's speech by a striking example:

> Al-Ṣāḥib's speech is stinkier than abnormal armpit odor, heavier than baggage carried on one's head, more hated than gravel in food, and more monstrous than confused dreams. He opens his mouth as if he were an adolescent, thinking that the surface of the Earth has not carried anyone except him, and that the sky has covered none but him. Haven't you heard him these days abusing someone:
>
> "May God curse this rash, crooked, hemiplegic, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed person who stutters when standing, is bandy-legged when walking, falters when speaking, languishes when going barefoot, rolls down when walking, and is bowlegged when running."
>
> [*laʿana llāh hādha l-ahwaj al-aʿwaj al-aflaj al-afḥaj al-ḥafallaj alladhī idhā qāma lajlaj wa-idhā mashā tafaḥḥaj wa-in takallama talajlaj wa-in tanaʿʿama tamajmaj wa-in mashā tadaḥraj wa-in ʿadā tafajfaj*]
>
> [Abū l-Salm] said: Have you ever heard of speech more repugnant to the heart and more revolting than this?! We seek the protection of God from obscurity (*ʿujma*) mixed with eloquence (*taʿrīb*), and from Arabic (*al-ʿarabiyya*) mixed with incomprehensibility (*taʿjīm*). If this shortcoming indicated only expression (*lafẓ*), whose place of origin is the tongue, excusing [it] would be more likely; but it unveils the defectiveness of the mind.[89]

This heavily-rhymed abuse paragraph, jingling throughout with an *-aj* rhyme, appeared to al-Tawḥīdī and Abū l-Salm completely cacophonic and nonsensical. It is no less important to note in the end of the poet's criticism the contrastive play with the two pairs: *ʿujma* versus *taʿrīb* and *al-ʿarabiyya* versus *taʿjīm*. This is an overt allusion to al-Ṣāḥib's Persian descent as an obstacle to eloquence, commensurate with al-Tawḥīdī's own critique of non-Arabs' deficient linguistic sensitivities (more on that below).

One of the longer "specialist opinions" al-Tawḥīdī adduced in *Akhlāq* is by Abū ʿUbayd al-Kātib al-Naṣrānī. While in Baghdad, he asked this secretary, whose literary skills he appreciated, about al-Ṣāḥib's writing. He opens by saying:

> It is deformed; part of it is extremely polished, another part is extremely weak, and between these two there is a stagnant languor. [His writing] is

> more similar to the ways of the would-be intelligent, stupid teachers than to those of the old masters (*al-salaf al-awwalīn*) among the secretaries and bureaucrats (*aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn*).

A major criticism of Abū ʿUbayd was the vizier's exaggeration with *sajʿ*, which should be only used "like salt in food." Abū ʿUbayd elaborated on good and bad writing and went against affectation (*takalluf*) and the use of rare and hermetic expressions (*al-gharīb wa-l-ʿawīṣ*) and in favor of natural style—reasonable, easy to pronounce, and pleasant to hear.[90] The defects pointed out by Abū ʿUbayd are indeed those criticized harshly by al-Tawḥīdī and his interlocutors as characteristic of al-Ṣāḥib's prose style throughout *Akhlāq*.

VII Reasons precluding adaptation to the courtly habitus

Thus far, al-Tawḥīdī's own description allowed us to see his complete inadaptability to the courtly habitus, and his strong opposition to the behavioral, linguistic, moral, and aesthetic dispositions that made it. To him, such adaptation necessarily requires compromising one's morality, suspending rational judgment, abandoning dignity, and accepting humiliation, which is in almost all cases not even worth it. Besides al-Tawḥīdī, this sentiment was perhaps best expressed by one of his cited interlocutors, the poet al-Jīlūhī, whose view as an experienced and discerning person he sought.[91] It should now be asked what could have been the reasons for al-Tawḥīdī's total failure to adapt himself to a fit courtly habitus, a key to a successful and rewarding interaction with his patron, as experienced by other literary people. The three significant reasons, I believe, are his Ṣūfī proclivities, his philosophical background, and his aesthetic perceptions.

There is enough evidence about al-Tawḥīdī's Ṣūfī proclivities before, at the time, and after his three-year stay at al-Ṣāḥib's court.[92] As already discussed, to succeed at any court, one had to frame properly the formal and informal time zones, to interact properly within each frame, and navigate properly between them. It is true that any human environment requires that agents be well attuned to various frames that govern events; still, the court environment had a very nuanced framing requiring great refinement in one's behavior choices, and there was much at stake when it came to making or breaking. Al-Tawḥīdī, not least due to his inclination to Ṣūfīsm, and his search for the essential and scorn for the superficial,[93] had little patience for refined codes of behavior and speech, just as he had only contempt for al-Ṣāḥib's fascination with modish activities and attractions; especially since those—the kick the vizier got out of the underworld and its characters comes immediately to mind—often ran against moral codes he adhered to. "Cool" rough humor for al-Ṣāḥib and other courtiers seemed to him idiotic, tasteless, aimless, and immoral. It is not difficult to imagine how a hedonistic and obscene poem like the one recited to Ibn Fashīshā by the vizier, calling for carefree pursuing of all pleasures and desires, was accepted by someone with Ṣūfī inclinations like al-Tawḥīdī. The vizier's lack of morality, religious devotion, and true belief extremely annoyed al-Tawḥīdī. Under the false guise of a keen Muʿtazilī, he says, al-Ṣāḥib had only a little care for prayer, a weak memory of the Qurʾān—and most important in our context—"he had no natural disposition for devotion (*ʿibāda*), nor the mark of the ascetics (*mutaʾallihūn*)."[94] Al-Tawḥīdī's reservations about al-Ṣāḥib's debate with the Ṣūfī shaykh Abū l-Faraj al-Baghdādī show how far from the tenets of Ṣūfīsm he considered the vizier to be. Al-Tawḥīdī, who witnessed the debate, cites some paragraphs from it, and mentions that following the event he wondered in front of the shaykh why he took part in that. He indicated the futility of discussing issues related to Ṣūfīs with the vizier, especially for a Ṣūfī shaykh with a good reputation like him. The shaykh admitted that al-Ṣāḥib was a silly and shameless person (*raqīʿ*), but argued that due to his pressing need to make a living he had to collaborate with his stupidity for a while.[95]

Al-Tawḥīdī's distaste for the profligacy, scatology, frivolity, and irrationality (often expressed together in the term *sukhf*) he encountered at the court, the strong reactions to which we saw above, was no doubt in part due to his philosophical background. From the Aristotelian and contemporary Islamic philosophical point of view there could hardly be anything worse for one's soul than unrestrained indulgence in pleasures and levity, which amounts to one's submitting his rational faculty to the reign of the appetitive faculty. The latter (in addition to the irascible faculty) is common to humans and animals. Hence, there is little wonder that those whose appetitive faculty governs the rational are considered by Ibn ʿAdī "more resembling animals than humans."[96] One should rather subjugate the appetitive and irascible faculties to the rational and empower it. Among the ways that Ibn ʿAdī prescribes for this purpose is frequenting the company of ascetics, religious leaders, and scholars, while avoiding the assemblies of dissolute, foolish, and shameless people, "and those who jest and joke a lot." Each of the two opposite environments has a strong impact—good or bad—on the person involved and directs his behavior accordingly.[97] Indeed, having been exposed to the carnivalesque atmosphere at the court of al-Ṣāḥib, the shocked and disgusted al-Tawḥīdī reflects well the moral positions of his teachers in his reactions. When enumerating the noble dispositions, Ibn ʿAdī refers *inter alia* to preserving oneself from disgrace (*taṣawwun*), which includes:

> foul jesting, mingling with those engaged in it, attending their assemblies, holding back the tongue from obscenity, and from indecent, humorous, and irrational (*sukhf*) speak.... And there is no splendor for he who exaggerates in joking and does so obscenely. Preserving oneself also requires withdrawing from base and low people, from befriending and socializing with them, being on one's guard against contemptible livelihoods ... deeming oneself above seeking one's needs from vile and lowly people and humbling oneself before unworthy people.[98]

Important as well—given al-Tawḥīdī's repetitive criticism of al-Ṣāḥib's irrationality, bursts of rage, and obscene cursing[99]—is Ibn ʿAdī's description of foolishness (*safah*) among the bad moral qualities:

> It is the antonym of forbearance (*ḥilm*). It is quickness of anger, losing control for insignificant things, hastening to assault, attacking the annoying person, going too far with punishing, displaying impatience at the slightest offense, and obscene cursing. This disposition is considered disgraceful for anyone, but even more so for kings and leaders.[100]

Al-Tawḥīdī's philosophical guide in the 360s/970s, Miskawayh, repeats pretty much the same moral prescriptions in his own *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*. Remarkable in the context of his criticism of indulgence in pleasures is his denunciation of obscene poetry (*al-shiʿr al-fāḥish*) with "references to vile deeds and the pursuit of pleasures—as is found, for instance, in the poetry of Imruʾ al-Qays, al-Nābigha and their like." This type of poetry is harmful for the unfortunate person raised on it for its creation of false positive view of vile deeds (*qabāʾiḥ*) and pursuit of pleasures. It leads him to the service of leaders who encourage him to recite this type of poetry and compose verse in the same vein, for which he is generously rewarded, and to association with companions who assist him in obtaining bodily pleasures. A lifelong engagement in hedonistic practices is misery rather than bliss and is a way of life which is found extremely hard to eradicate.[101] Importantly, Miskawayh later attacks the connection made between this type of poetry and elegance, saying with regard to the proper education of boys:

> He [=the boy] should also be put on his guard against the study of frivolous poetry (*al-ashʿār al-sakhīfa*) and what it contains about love and lovers, and against the impression which its authors give that it is a form of elegance (*ẓarf*) and of refinement (*riqqat al-ṭabʿ*). For this kind of poetry has, indeed, a strong corrupting influence on youth.[102]

When Miskawayh goes against those who believe themselves to be open-handed patrons giving money away to undeserving folks like evil people, entertainers and buffoons, we cannot help thinking of al-Ṣāḥib's patronage of al-Aqṭaʿ and his ilk. A rational (*ʿāqil*) person should never be in a position of helping rulers with their immoralities (*fawāḥish*), commending their vile deeds (*qabāʾiḥ*) to satisfy their desires, for the sake of gain.[103] To keep a virtuous person's soul healthy, he must associate with those who are like him and not with:

> the wicked and the defective among the frivolous or among those who display enjoyment of disgraceful pleasures and commitment of vile deeds and boast of them and indulge in them. Let him not listen to these people's tales with interest, nor recite their poetry with approval, nor sit in their company with delight; for sitting once in their company, or listening to one of their tales, or reciting one verse of their poetry would attach to the soul such dirt and filth as would not be washed away except with the passage of a long time and with difficult treatments. It could be the cause of the corruption of [even] the virtuous and experienced man and the seduction of the discerning knower.[104]

The pertinent points to be highlighted in Miskawayh's discourse are: (i) criticism of the elite for its enthusiasm about the obscene and immoral, which leads to patronage of those who create and represent obscenity and immorality; (ii) rejection of the association of the obscene with the refined; and (iii) dissociation from leaders and others who engage in the obscene and immoral to avoid harmful corruption of one's soul, and association with the virtuous. That said, Miskawayh emphasizes that pleasant humor, agreeable conversation, jokes and pleasures permitted by the Law and determined by reason—without excess, as the mean between dissoluteness and sternness—are not only desirable but necessary to attain friendship among the virtuous.[105]

As for al-Tawḥīdī's aesthetic perceptions, his reacting with distaste to the prevalent prose style at the court has been demonstrated enough above. It would still be important to say something about his views on sound literary style, which provoked his severe aesthetic criticism at the time. After citing some views on eloquence (*balāgha*) in *al-Baṣāʾir*, al-Tawḥīdī expresses his own opinion on this topic at some length. Eloquence requires natural disposition supported by a desire to attain it and by the study of *adab*; that is, both genetic and acquired capacities. He, then, refers to foreigners (*dukhalāʾ*) who lack the required natural sensitivities to appreciate the effects of their language usage and hence fail to achieve eloquence.

> Expansion of regular usage (*ittisāʿ*) delights them and they ignore its [right] measure; figurative speech (*majāz*) pleases them and they exceed its boundaries; or an explicit expression (*taṣrīḥ*) is appropriate in their judgment, while a euphemism (*kināya*) may be more perfect in that case, and an allusion (*ishāra*) more common.

He goes on to speak in favor of natural speech (*ṭabʿ*), clear and reasonable. Just as salt in food, *sajʿ* must not be used more than is necessary (*al-sajʿ fī-l-kalām ka-l-milḥ fī-l-ṭaʿām*). Otherwise, the speech resembles that of the ancient Arab *nasaʾa* (charged with the intercalation of the calendar during pre-Islamic times) and *kahana* (the pre-Islamic soothsayers), or the non-Arabs (*ʿajam*) who assimilate themselves to the Arabs (*mustaʿribūn*). "Natural speech (*ṭabʿ*) is more spontaneous (*aʿfā*), and affectation (*takalluf*) is odious (*makrūh*)." When one heeds meanings (*maʿānī*), expressions come upon him spontaneously, but those given to expressions (*alfāẓ*) are always resisted by meanings. Thus, when both meaning and expression are in harmony, soundness of speech in prose and poetry is attained.[106]

These views go hand in hand with remarks he and his trusted interlocutors made in *Akhlāq*. They also agree with specialists' opinions on al-Ṣāḥib's eloquence and style, as compared to those of other great secretaries, cited for Ibn Saʿdān by al-Tawḥīdī.[107] Hence, from the aesthetic point of view, al-Tawḥīdī's perceptions stood in stark contrast to those of al-Ṣāḥib, as evident in his artful/artificial ornate prose. If we add this incongruity to the others springing from al-Tawḥīdī's Ṣūfī proclivities and philosophical background, we can better understand his failure to adapt himself to the courtly habitus at al-Ṣāḥib's court.

VIII Al-Tawḥīdī's subsequent failure with the vizier Ibn Saʿdān

Despite his attempts, al-Tawḥīdī has never been able to maintain a *stable* position at any known court. This recurrent lack of success—beyond a certain patron or court—supports, too, the argument that his unwillingness to adapt himself to a courtly habitus was the reason for his failure with al-Ṣāḥib. It surely makes his attempt to attribute blame to al-Ṣāḥib (or any other patron) more unconvincing. It would be beneficial at this point to focus on his relationship with the vizier Ibn Saʿdān to see the recurrence of some major lines of behavior that had failed him previously with al-Ṣāḥib.

One would think that al-Tawḥīdī, once connected with this vizier as a respected courtier, would be finally able to form a stable and rewarding relationship at court. Ibn Saʿdān highly appreciated al-Tawḥīdī's panoramic knowledge, being always eager to learn from him, as he showed throughout their nightly conversations. As for al-Tawḥīdī, he was especially impressed by the vizier's piety and ascetic spirit, never mentioning any characteristics or behavior that irritated and disgusted him.[108] Despite all that, an epistle he sent to Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī reveals that, at the time of writing, his relationship with the vizier had deteriorated. He pleaded for Abū l-Wafāʾ's intercession with Ibn Saʿdān so that his meager monthly pay of forty dirhams be increased to a thousand. Of all people, he bitterly complained, that benefited from the vizier's generous favors, he was the only one to be left out, and notwithstanding his devoted service he was suffering poverty and humiliation. He also referred to false rumors and enmity he was suffering from.[109]

Several references in *al-Imtāʿ* indicate that al-Tawḥīdī performed really poorly at this welcoming court, too. The scientist and courtier Abū l-Wafāʾ, who connected al-Tawḥīdī with the vizier, rebuked al-Tawḥīdī severely for his ingratitude to him and his unbecoming conduct at court. He blamed him for exceeding proper limits, for being incompetent to interact with the highly ranked, for his crude manners, and rude speech. Abū l-Wafāʾ attributed al-Tawḥīdī's "ignoble conduct" to his association with wandering mystics—whom the scientist evidently disdained—and acquisition of their ways of behavior ("your ignoble conduct acquired by befriending Ṣūfīs, strangers, and base mendicants").[110] We can learn about al-Tawḥīdī's boldness from the very fact that he suggested addressing the vizier Ibn Saʿdān in the second person already in the first nightly session. Although his wish was kindly granted by the vizier, etiquette required that the party higher in standing initiate such a move, if at all. To al-Tawḥīdī, as he said, informality was important for the smoothness and vitality of conversation.[111] Moreover, al-Tawḥīdī's political performance at court was unsurprisingly a failure. He evaded involvement that could have strengthened his position, for instance, by refusing to set out on a mission as ordered by Ibn Saʿdān. Due to his poor political senses, he talked harshly about key figures among the vizier's close circle. As suggested by al-Shaykh, speaking ill frequently of these figures could not have remained unknown to them, and they might have used their influence to make Ibn Saʿdān ignore al-Tawḥīdī after a while.[112]

Thus, the record of al-Tawḥīdī with Ibn Saʿdān shows noticeable similarities to his performance at al-Ṣāḥib's court: his "ignoble conduct," revealing crudeness and little attention to refined courtly codes; his difficulty to accept hierarchical differences and predilection for excessive informality; his poor understanding of court politics, failing to solidify his position by greater involvement, and, in fact, destabilizing it by short-sighted backbiting. Indeed, this repeated performance highlights patterns of behavior at odds with accepted courtly norms.

IX Al-Tawḥīdī's performance in the scholarly circle

Each of the two significant courtly episodes in the life of al-Tawḥīdī, with which we are sufficiently familiar, ended as a striking failure, but we are yet to see how he performed in non-courtly circles. In this section, I will show that he had successful interactions in scholarly circles operating as voluntary associations of masters (who held no state offices), their colleagues, and students. Underscoring the characteristics that set the circle environment apart from the court's will clarify why he was "at home" in it. We will see that al-Tawḥīdī was able to form meaningful social ties, and took no issue with hierarchy per se. In contrast, in the court environment he was challenged by principles of organization, conventions, and contents that were strange and unappealing to him. He was out of place.

There were four quintessential differences between a fourth/tenth-century circle led by a master scholar and a court established by a prominent political figure: (i) the focused purpose of scholarly pursuit of knowledge in the former (through discussions and teaching of the master) unlike the entertainment-oriented character, or entertainment with a scholarly component, characterizing the latter; (ii) the fact that no competition over money, awards, and positions existed among the circle members rendered courtly behavior, manners, and strategies irrelevant, and hence the courtly habitus;[113] (iii) the absence of political and economic power in the hands of the circle masters and in addition the narrow focus on the pursuit of knowledge and the ethics it required (and not on "fun" and pastime activities)[114] made the "vanities," vagaries, and whimsy behavior of court patrons unlikely to occur among them; and (iv) the hierarchy in the scholarly circle was based on the master's superiority in a definite field (or fields) of knowledge over other circle members and not on the "superficial" basis of political and economic power, as it may well be at the court.

Fortunately, we do have sufficient information about a scholarly circle in which al-Tawḥīdī took a significant part, namely, that led by the philosopher Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī between 370/980 and his death in around 375/985. It concentrated on philosophy and the discussion of broad cultural issues in the residence of al-Sijistānī. Al-Tawḥīḍī was one of its members and thanks to his various pieces of writing we know a great deal about the discussions and the spirit of the circle. Joel Kraemer, who has written extensively on this circle, describes succinctly its principles of organization:

> Although no specific doctrine or system was espoused by Sijistānī's circle, its members did share certain aspirations and sentiments: an ideology of friendship, a conviction that philosophy is the pathway to salvation, a veneration of the master as a spiritual guide. Insofar as it embraced a soteriological goal, religiously tinged ideas, and an ideology of friendship, the philosophical circle was akin to the type of fraternal society represented by the Sincere Brethren.[115]

This passage shows well how the circle was conceived as a *collective* intellectual and spiritual enterprise. For this reason, it was very different from the essentially *individualist* enterprise of the court, designed and established by an individual patron with his own goals and interests in mind. When in one of the sessions, al-Bukhārī—a student of al-Sijistānī—thanks his master for the useful lessons the circle members gain from him, he replies that he was only able to do so through the members' inspiration, and that "when the heart of one friend is completely ready for another, the truth shines between them, and each of them becomes a helper to his companion and an aide in his endeavor."[116] It is not that hierarchy did not play a role in the circle; it did, as we can learn from the dynamics of the sessions in al-Sijistānī's circle. The manifestations of the hierarchical differences are discernible in the excess of liberty the master has in navigating the sessions, interrupting others and challenging them, and on the other hand in their addressing questions to him as an authority, their humble admission of not knowing the answers to his challenging questions, their beseeching him to award them with his explication, and their grateful thanks (in which God is praised for conveying His lessons through al-Sijistānī). Nonetheless, it was voluntarily maintained by the members' recognition of the master's advantage of knowledge over them, his authority, and their consequent admiration.[117] This is not a hierarchy established mainly on political and economic power and sustained by the agents' need for subsistence.

Unlike his scathing criticism of al-Ṣāḥib and his court, al-Tawḥīdī admired al-Sijistānī's intellectual gifts. He expressed his high opinion when asked by Ibn Saʿdān about al-Sijistānī's standing compared to other philosopher colleagues.[118] Earlier that night—the second night of conversation between Ibn Saʿdān and al-Tawḥīdī—the vizier was curious about al-Sijistānī's approval, after he had awarded him a 100 dinar stipend. Ibn Saʿdān explained to al-Tawḥīdī why *he* should be the addressee of this inquiry: "It has reached me that you are his protégé and companion, his adherent and follower, going after his steps and tracks, and retaining the information on him to the utmost degree."[119] We clearly see, then, how close al-Tawḥīdī's relationship with al-Sijistānī was, and how different this interaction was from the one he had with al-Ṣāḥib at his court. In addition to al-Tawḥīdī's membership in al-Sijistānī's circle, he had been prior to that a member in the school and circle of the philosopher Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 363/974).[120] Al-Tawḥīdī's opinion of Ibn ʿAdī was not as high as his opinion of al-Sijistānī, and he did not record his sessions in the same meticulous way he did with those of al-Sijistānī's, but he did have respect for him.[121]

We saw above that al-Tawḥīdī, bereft of a courtly habitus, had difficulties in acting on the basis of hierarchic inferiority to al-Ṣāḥib. This is at odds with his unquestioning willingness to accept the hierarchic superiority in the circle based on his recognition of the master's advantage over him. It is, therefore, clear that al-Tawḥīdī did not take issue with hierarchic inferiority per se, but with the fact that it was a cardinal feature of a courtly environment, in which the patron did not support his hierarchic superiority by intellectual eminence acknowledged by al-Tawḥīdī, relying instead on his political and economic power. Moreover, discussion and learning imbued with the ethics of friendship were completely out of place there.

Finally, it should be noted that some scholars, unlike al-Tawḥīdī, could adapt themselves to the courtly habitus and thus moved successfully between these two different social environments, manifesting flexibility and being able to make the requisite compromises. The career of Miskawayh—in contrast to that of al-Tawḥīdī—may serve as an example for that. This was realized by the latter, who acknowledged: "Miskawayh is skillful in the service [of leaders] and accomplished in the etiquette of the courtier" (*rusūm al-nidāma*).[122] Miskawayh demonstrated the adjustability in question shifting successfully for a long period between the court and the scholarly environment, while compromising to some extent his well-being according to the precepts of philosophy; that was also admitted by him regretfully later in his life.[123] This flexibility was at least in part what stood behind al-Tawḥīdī's criticism of Miskawayh in front of Ibn Saʿdān, censuring him for wasting time on the satisfaction of "his necessary and appetitive needs," while in Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd's service, failing to take advantage of excellent opportunities to seek knowledge.[124]

X Al-Tawḥīdī's ineptitude expressed by Abū l-Wafāʾ

The sociologist Norbert Elias described the meaning of value (a term reminiscent of "standing," *manzila*, in our sources) for the courtier, and its possible appreciation or depreciation, based on one's performance in the demanding arena of the court:

> The court is a kind of stock exchange; as in every "good society," an estimate of the "value" of each individual is continuously being formed. But here his value has its real foundation not in the wealth or even the achievements or ability of the individual, but in the favour he enjoys with the king, the influence he has with other mighty ones, his importance in the play of courtly cliques. All this, favour, influence, importance, this whole complex and dangerous game in which physical force and direct affective outbursts are prohibited and a threat to existence, demands of each participant a constant foresight and an exact knowledge of every other, of his position and value in the network of courtly opinion; it exacts precise attunement of his own behaviour to this value. Every mistake … depresses the value of its perpetrator in courtly opinion; it may threaten his whole position at court.

> A man who knows the court is master of his gestures, of his … expression; he is … impenetrable. He dissimulates the bad turns he does, smiles at his enemies, suppresses his ill-temper, disguises his passions, disavows his heart, acts against his feelings.[125]

Elias's description of "value" at the European court (above all the great absolutist court), its dangerous fragility, and the demands it makes on the courtier is very pertinent. We are reminded of al-Tawḥīdī's many missteps, which led to the deterioration of his standing at court; first, with al-Ṣāḥib, until he had no other choice but to leave, and later, with Ibn Saʿdān who neglected him as a courtier. Obviously, self-control, dissimulation, calculation, and foresight were quintessential courtly qualities foreign to the rash and short-sighted al-Tawḥīdī.

As I have already emphasized, al-Tawḥīdī was a bad courtier because he did not *want* to be a good one; that is to say, he resisted adaptation to the courtly habitus which contradicted cardinal beliefs and perceptions he held, and by not "giving in," he was unable to adequately perceive and generate the practices associated normatively with the courtier role. Al-Tawḥīdī's performance, especially at al-Ṣāḥib's court, displays role distance. This term was coined by Erving Goffman to describe expressed pointed separateness or some disdainful detachment of a performer from the role he is performing.[126] In al-Tawḥīdī's case, his back talk, disrespect for authority, and challenge to hierarchy, suggested disaffection from and resistance against the courtier role. While at the court, he was a resister from within who gave expression to his opposition by conventional verbal communication, and also gave it off through his actions and "attitude" in various situations. His conduct and criticism suggested that he wanted to be a courtier, but on his own terms, expecting the role to be similar to that of the member of the scholarly circle.

In light of al-Tawḥīdī's unwillingness to adapt, and hence incompatibility with the *normative* courtier role, it is evident that his attempt to secure a court position was a bad career choice. As shown by Shawkat Toorawa, already in third/ninth-century Baghdad, there existed viable avenues outside the court patronage system for men of letters with knowledge and skills comparable to al-Tawḥīdī's:

> The availability of paper, the rise of a middle class seeking education, and the growth of a lay readership, meant that one could support oneself as a teacher, tutor, copyist, author, storyteller, bookseller, editor, publisher, or any combination of these. These were professions in which one could engage without recourse to the court or to the indulgence of the caliph or patron.[127]

The fact that al-Tawḥīdī made a bad choice and the reason for his failure were clear to a perceptive man who did not spare him his criticism. As he takes him to task for his ineptitude at court, he applies insightfully the habitus concept, giving us immense support in examining al-Tawḥīdī's failure through its lens:

> Furthermore, you are inexperienced, possessing no habitus (*hayʾa*) for meeting the great and conversing with viziers. This is a situation (*ḥāl*) for which you need a custom (*ʿāda*) other than yours, a practice (*mirān*) unlike yours, and an interaction [manner] (*libsa*) that does not resemble yours.[128]

This statement is taken from a reprimand directed to al-Tawḥīdī by his friend the mathematician and astronomer Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī.[129] Abū l-Wafāʾ, an associate of the vizier Ibn Saʿdān, was the person who had previously put al-Tawḥīdī in touch with the vizier after returning from al-Rayy in 370/980, and who later scolded him for his ingratitude. The context of the cited passage from this scolding is al-Tawḥīdī's forgetting his place with the vizier and exceeding proper limits. It is remarkable that Abū l-Wafāʾ first stated that al-Tawḥīdī was bereft of the necessary courtly habitus, and then specified the qualifications (custom, practice, and interaction manner) he did not have on account of that. Based on this passage, Abū l-Wafāʾ seems to take habitus as an apparatus generating for—and in—a certain situation ("meeting the great and conversing with viziers") the appropriate perceptions and actions he calls custom, practice, and interaction manner. This piece of evidence encapsulates well the main argument presented in this chapter: the failure of al-Tawḥīdī to succeed at the court of al-Ṣāḥib, as well as later at Ibn Saʿdān's, reflects the fact that he was bereft of a courtly habitus, the indispensable key for successful functioning in this social arena. Given that, al-Tawḥīdī could have been greatly comforted by the words of La Bruyère, a sharp critic of Louis XIV's court: "In a sense, the most honorable criticism that could be directed at a man is that he does not know the ways of the court. There is no kind of virtue, which is not conveyed by this single expression."[130]

Notes

1 Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn: akhlāq al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād wa-Ibn al-ʿAmīd*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kīlānī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1961), 203; al-Tawḥīdī must have considered seeking al-Ṣāḥib's patronage before, as he suggested to the *adīb* and philosopher Abū Bakr al-Qūmisī, who had been unlucky with patrons, that he might profit from the patronage of Ibn al-ʿAmīd and al-Ṣāḥib. Al-Qūmisī declined, saying that it was better to suffer misery than fools. Al-Tawḥīdī believed that only he was as afflicted as al-Qūmisī, but unlike him, he later headed to al-Ṣāḥib with great expectations, having become much distressed with his meager living as a copyist: Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1926–8; on al-Qūmisī, see Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 59–64; note that the meeting in 367/977 was not the first one between al-Tawḥīdī and al-Ṣāḥib. Al-Tawḥīdī mentioned that in 358/968 he was in al-Rayy while al-Ṣāḥib had visited the city for some important matters with Muʾayyid al-Dawla (at that time al-Ṣāḥib served as a secretary to the future Būyid *amīr*). Al-Tawḥīdī stayed at al-Ṣāḥib's house in Bāb Sīn with three other men and a group of "strangers" (*ghurabāʾ*), when a disputation session (*majlis jadal*) took place: *Akhlāq*, 127; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 679.

2 *Akhlāq*, 305–11, 492; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 3–4.

3 In terms of space, the work mainly deals with al-Ṣāḥib. To a much lesser extent, it focuses on Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, the vizier whose patronage al-Tawḥīdī sought beforehand to no avail. Al-Tawḥīdī's censure of al-Ṣāḥib is much harsher and more

comprehensive than that of Abū l-Faḍl. Al-Tawḥīdī averred that to the extent that these two men—to whom no third secretary of the time could be added—were the greatest figures of their time and laid claim to the highest standards and perfection, they deserved an unusually detailed criticism: *Akhlāq*, 531.

4 Abū ʿAbdallah al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Ibn Saʿdān was appointed in 372/983 as a vizier to the supreme Būyid *amīr* Ṣamṣām al-Dawla in Baghdad. He held his position for two years, during which he extended patronage to scholars and literati, until his deposal and execution in 374/984–85: C.E. Bosworth, "Ibn Saʿdān," *EI2*.

5 Al-Tawḥīdī recorded his forty nightly sessions with Ibn Saʿdān in *al-Imtāʿ*. His description of al-Ṣāḥib at the request of Ibn Saʿdān was given in the fourth and fifth nights: ibid., I, 53–70; for al-Tawḥīdī's references to the draft and the vizier's persistent desire to view its fair copy, see ibid., 53–4, 61, 67, 70.

6 *Akhlāq*, 49–51, 105–7, 111–13, 116, 120–2, 133–168, 492 and *passim*; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 53–70; al-Tawḥīdī commented on the entertaining and humorous style he employed, addressing his benefactor: *Akhlāq*, 51.

7 *Akhlāq*, 151; when Ibn Saʿdān questioned him about al-Ṣāḥib's eloquence and literary style in comparison to other secretaries, al-Tawḥīdī typically preferred to cite the views of those he had asked about that, saying: "Each of them supplied me with an answer, which, if narrated on his authority, what is said about him [=al-Ṣāḥib] will stick better, and I will be farther from passing judgment against him [=al-Ṣāḥib] or in favor of him": al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 61.

8

> This (referring to an instance of al-Ṣāḥib's arrogance and belittlement of al-Tawḥīdī)—may God support you—although a proof for my bad luck, also proves his looseness, fabrication [of lies], hastiness, and wickedness. See how he acted crookedly with me on account of his way, which is his throbbing vein, invariable nature, and common practice (*daydan maʾlūf)*. Hasn't he treated me in the same manner as the Egyptian merchant, al-Shādhyāshī, so-and-so, and such a one?
>
> *Akhlāq*, 495

Al-Tawḥīdī, however, contradicts himself when he complains with self pity about his unjust and undeserved treatment by al-Ṣāḥib, arguing that unlike others he was maltreated by al-Ṣāḥib: "As if I was singled out by his baseness alone, or it was necessary that I be ill-treated by him, but not others": *Akhlāq*, 492; likewise, in his epistle to Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī, he complains that he has been treated by Ibn Saʿdān unfairly unlike others: al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, III, 226.

9 The text shows "al-Qaṣṣār" instead of Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, but the context plainly requires the latter.

10 *Akhlāq*, 178–9.

11 Al-Ṭanjī's text shows *yaḍmaḥillu*, "to melt down or fade out," but I preferred the reading of al-Kīlānī (al-Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib al-wazirayn*, 133), which is *yaḍḥaku*, "to laugh," as appearing in Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 689 (who quoted this anecdote); while *yaḍmaḥillu* is the *lectio difficilior*, it is difficult to make real sense of it.

12 *Akhlāq*, 195–6; I was not able to identify Abū Ṭālib al-ʿAlawī.

13 Especially in light of his lexicographical and grammatical works: *GAS*, XIII, 206–8 and IX, 192.

14 Characterization of al-Ṣāḥib's nature, body language, and speech as feminine occurs also elsewhere in this work: *Akhlāq*, 113, 125, 140, 395; as for the vizier's alleged puerility, cf. *ibid.*, 394.

15 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 669; Āl Yāsīn, *al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, 41–7; Badawī Ṭabāna, *al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, 147–8, 223–8, 243–6, 330–67; Charles Pellat, "*Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād*," in Julia Ashtiani *et al.* (eds), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 101; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 262–3.

16 See, for instance, Y, III, 31–3; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 656; Āl Yāsīn, *al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād*, 91–132.

17 Y, III, 31–3, 108–10.

18 S.M. Stern, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," *EI2*.

19 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, II, 138. According to *Akhlāq*, 115–16, al-Ṣāḥib disparaged philosophy openly but was interested in it secretly.

20 Āl Yāsīn, *al-Ṣāḥib*, 45–7.

21 Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr, [1964]), 96–107.

22 M. Bergé, "Abū Ḥayyan al-Tawḥīdī," *Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, 120.

23 Pellat, "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 101.

24 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī l-Shaykh, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (n.p.: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Kitāb, 1983), II, 680–2, 694–5.

25 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 213, 215; discussing the courtier's traits (ibid., 20), he notes: "Tawḥīdī was an unsuccessful courtier – he lacked the requisite sophistication and tact."

26 Ṭabāna, *al-Ṣāḥib*, 354–5.

27 We saw above how Yāqūt and even more so Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī discredited al-Tawḥīdī's narrative; as for the moderns, Ṭabāna works hard to refute "Abū Ḥayyān the malicious, envious, and liar" and his "sick imagination," claiming that had his accounts been true, the historians would have denigrated al-Ṣāḥib (while they did the opposite) and his court would not have been an object of desire for many great men. Additionally, he indicates internal contradictions in al-Tawḥīdī's accounts of the vizier (e.g., described both as a ruthless tyrant and a naive child): *al-Ṣāḥib*, 147–8; Āl Yāsīn, having established al-Tawḥīdī's rancorous position toward al-Ṣāḥib, decided not to rely on his accounts of the vizier unless supporting evidence is furnished by other sources: *al-Ṣāḥib*, 46–7; al-Shaykh believes that al-Tawḥīdī did not invent anything in his account of al-Ṣāḥib, "but rather exaggerated in [his] description and went to extremes with [his] defamation, according to his custom": *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī*, II, 705; Kraemer writes:

> Unfortunately, having suffered at his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] hands, Abū Ḥayyān was biased.… It is unlikely, however, that he manufactured the charges out of whole cloth. The portrayal may well touch upon darker sides of the Ṣāḥib's character omitted in refined biographies
>
> *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 262–3

Pellat notes: "Tawḥīdī may well have been biased against his subject, but his works are almost the only source to provide details on the conduct, character and capabilities of the Buwayhid vizier": "Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād," 101.

28 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988); on *al-Baṣāʾir*'s period of composition, see al-Qāḍī's study of the work ibid., IX, 233–4.

29 Already in his introduction to Part I, al-Tawḥīdī, having mentioned Greek philosophy among the types of beneficial wisdom he included in his work, legitimized it adducing the saying: "Wisdom (*ḥikma*) is the believer's object of persevering quest, wherever he finds it, he takes it": *al-Baṣāʾir*, I, 6 (see also ibid., II, 163, for his remark on the universal nature of knowledge); likewise he states after citing Pythagoras and Socrates:

> Their words impress marvelously and refine laudably, so do not turn away from them, as they are an excellent class of people; may God, the Powerful and Exalted, benefit us with their maxims and protect us from the evil of what is said about them!
>
> Ibid., II, 173

Al-Tawḥīdī views philosophy and Ṣūfīsm favorably as two similar disciplines, "this [Ṣūfī] method (*ṭarīqa*) … is the full sister of the method of the great philosophers": ibid., II, 163. He later repeats this parallelism, expressing his desire to include in the work a part consisting of Ṣūfī aphorisms and anecdotes and another including rare philosophical maxims, "for Ṣūfīsm and philosophy are neighbors and visit one another": ibid., VI, 194.

30 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, 104, 157 (*muqābasa* nos 14 and 34).

31 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, III, 93–4; idem, *al-Muqābasāt*, 340–54 (*muqābasa* no. 90 is dedicated to dicta and teachings of al-ʿĀmirī, most of which were recorded directly by al-Tawḥīdī. The latter commends the philosopher and regrets the hostility shown to him by the Baghdad philosophers he met in 364/974).

32 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 35.

33 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, II, 173; on the belief in al-Tawḥīdī's milieu in philosophy's role in one's self-formation, see Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, xi, xii.

34 Al-Tawḥīdī records an anonymous pledge (*al-Muqābasāt*, 384–7 [*muqābasa* no. 94]), identified as Miskawayh's by Yāqūt (*Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 498–9), in which he commits himself to fighting his base drives and becoming a better man with a refined character. One of the articles reads: "To preserve the condition (*ḥāl*) obtained in respect to every single thing for it to become a habitus (*malaka*) and not be corrupted by slacking." This article of his pledge to God is based on the difference between the Aristotelian terms condition (unconsolidated disposition) and habitus (firmly-established disposition). Having cited the pledge in full, al-Tawḥīdī endorses it enthusiastically; al-Sijistānī's application of *hayʾa* and *qunya* (discussed in Chapter 2) appears in *al-Muqābasāt*, 299–300 (*muqābasa* no. 72); in a response of al-ʿĀmirī's, cited by al-Tawḥīdī (*al-Muqābasāt*, 117 [*muqābasa* no. 20]), the philosopher says:

> A person who has achieved progress in his learning finds for his soul an acquired disposition (*qunya*) that is different from the rest and a habitus (*hayʾa*) unlike others. That is philosophy (*al-ḥikma*), which is the knowledge of the truth and the practice in accordance with the truth.

In the beginning and at the end of the quoted response, al-Tawḥīdī highlights al-ʿĀmirī's authority and reliability. See also al-ʿĀmirī's use of *qunya*, ibid., 341 (*muqābasa* no. 90); al-Tawḥīdī asked Abū Bakr al-Qūmisī (*al-Muqābasāt*, 91–2 [*muqābasa* no. 6]), whose authority in philosophy he acknowledged (see ibid., 90–1 and Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1926–7), to explain a philosopher's statement that expressions (*alfāẓ*) impress on one's hearing and the more diverse they are, the better. At the same time, argues that philosopher, meanings (*maʿānī*) impress on the soul, and the more in agreement they are, the better. Al-Qūmisī answers that since hearing is a sense, it seeks diversity, and hence the expressions obtained by it are not preserved. In contrast, the soul seeks unity with the meanings it receives, and hence the form (*ṣūra*) remains in the soul as an acquired disposition and habitus (*qunya wa-malaka*).

35 On Miskawayh, his career and thought, see *The Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, 151–6; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 493–9; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 222–33; Mohammed Arkoun, *L'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh, philosophe et historien*, 2nd ed. rev. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982).

36 Al-Tawḥīdī and Miskawayh, *al-Hawāmil*, 315.

37 The authors of *al-Hawāmil* do not disclose the date of its composition. Editor Aḥmad Amīn considers *al-Hawāmil* in his introduction (p. *yā*) as al-Tawḥīdī's first work; S.M. Stern believed that al-Tawḥīdī addressed Miskawayh with his questions from al-Rayy during the time he spent at the court of al-Ṣāḥib (367–70/977–80):

"Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," *EI2*; Arkoun concludes in *Essais sur la pensée islamique*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), 90–2, that al-Tawḥīdī sent the questions while at al-Ṣāḥib's court in al-Rayy, and Miskawayh responded to them between 370–72/980–82; in *L'humanisme arabe*, 116, Arkoun suggests that *al-Hawāmil* was most likely composed earlier than Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, since no reference to this important treatise is found in his answers to al-Tawḥīdī. He indicates (*L'humanisme arabe*, 111) Miskawayh's reference in *al-Hawāmil*'s introduction to the distressful situation in which both al-Tawḥīdī and he were found. Given this condition, they shared the commitment to propagate wisdom and denounce the fecklessness of the many who spread "a purely formal culture." Arkoun subsequently modifies *al-Hawāmil*'s composition date to 375/985 (the date 375 is also suggested on p. 116; when he sums up on p. 111, however, he repeats the date as 365 by mistake); Marc Bergé follows Arkoun in assuming that the relations between Miskawayh and al-Tawḥīdī existed between 367–72/977–82, and in dating *al-Hawāmil* to this period *or* after 375/985: *Pour un humanisme vécu: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1979), 186–7, 421; for the following reasons, however, Arkoun's later composition date (375/985) is improbable: right upon al-Tawḥīdī's return to Baghdad in 370/980, he became a close adherent and admirer of the philosopher Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (*c.*300–75/912–85) (al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 29). At the same time, having just started his term as a courtier of Ibn Saʿdān (around 372/983), al-Tawḥīdī's view of Miskawayh was quite unfavorable. He argues that compared to the others in Baghdad's philosophical milieu, Miskawayh is "poor among the rich, ineloquent among the articulate, since he's only acquired a bit of knowledge." Al-Tawḥīdī disapproves of Miskawayh's infatuation with alchemy and wasting time on the satisfaction of "his necessary and appetitive needs" while serving as Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd's librarian. Instead, he says, Miskawayh should have been studying with people like the philosopher al-ʿĀmirī who spent five years in al-Rayy. He also criticizes him for stinginess and hypocrisy, but nonetheless concedes that he is intelligent, has good poetry, and eloquence: al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 35–6 (cited in Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 493–4). Al-Tawḥīdī's criticism of Miskawayh in *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 136, is along the same lines. Likewise, in *al-Akhlāq*, 23–4, al-Tawḥīdī relates how he scolded Miskawayh for not living up to his philosophical and ethical precepts. It should be reiterated that al-Tawḥīdī already had the draft of *al-Akhlāq* ready, when his relation with Ibn Saʿdān started (*al-Imtāʿ*, I, 54). Therefore, the fact that al-Tawḥīdī regarded al-Sijistānī as the greatest philosopher in the Baghdad milieu (*al-Imtāʿ*, I, 33), became his closest adherent, addressed to him many questions, and recorded his sessions (in *al-Muqābasāt*), while simultaneously holding a very critical view of Miskawayh (professionally and personally), makes it very unlikely that at this time the latter could have been the esteemed addressee of his *al-Hawāmil* queries. This must have taken place beforehand. Since Miskawayh served as a very close courtier of the vizier al-Muhallabī in Baghdad starting in 341/952 until the latter's death in 352/963 (*The Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, 151), it is not impossible that al-Tawḥīdī who was living, studying, and intermingling with scholars in the same city at that time, met him there in the 340s/950s. In addition, al-Tawḥīdī visited al-Rayy in 358/968 and presented a panegyric epistle to Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd, but failed to secure his patronage (Kramer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 214–15). Given that Miskawayh was then Abū l-Faḍl's librarian and courtier (according to his own words, during these seven years of service he was constantly with Abū l-Faḍl, day and night: *The Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, 136), it is hard to believe that al-Tawḥīdī did not see him during this visit. Especially because al-Tawḥīdī narrates how al-Ṣāḥib, who visited then al-Rayy, humiliated Miskawayh wittily, albeit obscenely, in Abū l-Faḍl's session (*Akhlāq*, 464; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 685). After the death of Abū l-Faḍl (360/970), Miskawayh served his son, Abū l-Fatḥ, until his execution (366/976). Then, he became ʿAḍud al-Dawla's treasurer and courtier until the latter's demise in 372/982: *The Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, 151–2, M. Khan, "Miskawayh and the Buwayhids," *Oriens* 21 (1968–69), 235–47. Therefore, the available evidence suggests that *al-Hawāmil* is the cooperative fruit of the two figures in the late 350s or 360s, but no later than that.

38 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, 430–1 (*muqābasa* no. 101).

39 *Akhlāq*, 376; elsewhere (*al-Muqābasāt*, 300 [*muqābasa* no. 72]), too, al-Tawḥīdī endorses al-Sijistānī's response and states passionately that acquisition (*kasb* and *iqtināʾ*) of virtues is necessary for all. This was a recurrent theme in his master's teachings, as seen ibid., 120 (*muqābasa* no. 21).

40 The editor al-Ṭanjī writes in his introduction that the title of the book as appearing in the unique manuscript is *Akhlāq al-Ṣāḥib wa-Ibn al-ʿAmīd*. His decision to name the edited work *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn* is further supported by the fact that al-Tawḥīdī himself said to Ibn Saʿdān (al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 54) "I produced an epistle about his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] morals and those of Ibn al-ʿAmīd" (*ʿamiltu risāla fī akhlāqihi wa-akhlāq Ibn al-ʿAmīd*). In addition, al-Tawḥīdī tells (*Akhlāq*, 318) Abū Saʿīd al-Abharī that he decided to produce a book about his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] morals (*kitāban fī akhlāqihi*). The alternative title, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*, says al-Ṭanjī, was used roughly 200 years after al-Tawḥīdī's death by others: *Akhlāq*, p. *jīm*; al-Tawḥīdī's first biographer, Yāqūt, mentions several times (*Kitāb*) *akhlāq al-wazīrayn* of Abū Ḥayyān: *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 663, 669, 688; V, 1933, 1943. Yāqūt, however, also lists *Kitāb dhamm al-wazīrayn* among al-Tawḥīdī's works, states that al-Tawḥīdī produced a book about the shortcomings of al-Ṣāḥib and Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (*ʿamila fī mathālibihimā kitāban*), refers to *kitābihi fī thalb al-wazīrayn*, and once makes reference simply to *Kitāb al-wazīrayn*: ibid., V, 1925, 1937, 1924, 1945. Notwithstanding other titles for this work given by later biographers, al-Ṭanjī's decision is justified by the way al-Tawḥīdī referred to his own work and by the manuscript's title.

41 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 134.

42 Hence, Kraemer's choice of al-Tawḥīdī, instead of someone like Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī, to represent "The Secretary" of the Būyid age is regrettable: *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 212–22.

43 Al-Tawḥīdī was most satisfied when he believed he secured a paid position at the service of Ibn Saʿdān (al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, III, 224). Al-Tawḥīdī's position, as seen throughout *al-Imtāʿ*, could be best described as educating, entertaining, giving counsel, and informing the vizier, a "job description" overlapping with the functions of the courtier (*nadīm*).

44 *Qad khadama l-Ṣāḥib fī ʿunfuwān shabābihi wa-taʾaddaba bi-ādābihi wa-khtaṣṣa bi-hi wa-rāḍa ṭabʿahu ʿalā akhdh namaṭihi*: Y, IV, 278–9; al-Barūjirdī did well as a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib, and later became the prominent secretary of the *amīr* Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī l-Mīkālī in Khorasan.

45 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, VIII, 164; al-Musayyabī was a courtier of al-Ṣāḥib, from whom al-Tawḥīdī sought information about the vizier: *Akhlāq*, 107, 124, 172, 278; this anecdote is narrated also in ibid., 392, where instead of "superior" (*shākhiṣ*) we find "resentful" (*sākhiṭ*), and the person asked is Abū l-Salm. The latter, mentioned in ibid., 480–1, as Abū l-Salm Taḥiyya b. ʿAlī l-Shāʿir al-Qaḥṭānī, was one of the poets of al-Ṣāḥib, whose vast poetic memory and pleasant reciting voice were commended by al-Tawḥīdī. In *Akhlāq*, 281, as well as in Yaqūṭ, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 686, his first name appears as Najba.

46 *Akhlāq*, 305–6; I preferred al-Kīlānī's reading *ḥirfat al-shuʾm* "the inauspicious profession" over al-Ṭanjī's *kharazat al-shuʾm*.

47 *Balaghanī annaka tataʾaddabu*. The use of Form V here conveys the idea of affecting, pretending, or dabbling in some activity. On that, see Joyce Åkesson, *Arabic Morphology and Phonology: Based on the Marāḥ al-arwāḥ by Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Masʿūd* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 118.

48 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 669. The editor, Iḥsān ʿAbbās, identified the line as al-Farazdaq's: *Diwān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), II, 40. In al-Farazdaq's poem the two men with the identical name are called Abū Qaṭan; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī (*Majmaʿ al-balāgha*, I, 227) adduces this line (unidentified and with minor changes) when speaking about the case of two people sharing the same name; al-Qāḍī l-Jurjānī (*al-Wasāṭa*, 336) adduces al-Farazdaq's line as an example for al-Mutanabbī's *sariqāt*.

49 On *muḥāḍara*, see Stephanie Bowie Thomas, "The Concept of *Muḥāḍara* in the Adab Anthology with Special Reference to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ*" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000); on this taboo, see Michael Cook, "The Namesake Taboo," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 11–16.

50 A more exact definition of the grammatical term *ḥarf* (pl. *ḥurūf)*, as used here by al-Tawḥīdī, would be: "Any discrete unit of an Arabic text that has a linguistic function (word, morpheme)": Samvel Karabekyan, "*Ḥarf*," in Kees Versteegh *et al.* (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2006–09).

51 *Akhlāq*, 222–3; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1933–4.

52 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, III, 26.

53 As already mentioned in the Introduction, Abū l-Fatḥ was inimical to al-Ṣāḥib, and in 366/976 schemed to kill him. Later that year, Abū l-Fatḥ was put to death, and al-Ṣāḥib assumed again the office of Muʾayyid al-Dawla's vizier.

54 *Akhlāq*, 492–4, 494–5, 495–505, 510–14.

55 *Akhlāq*, 85.

56 Al-Ṣāḥib's fascination with Banū Sāsān (beggars, vagabonds, rogues, tricksters, and other figures of low life) and his command of their cultural practices and argot is pointed out by al-Thaʿālibī in the *Yatīmat al-dahr* entry on Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī. The latter was a favorite protégé of his and composed for him the famous *qaṣīda sāsāniyya*, in which their tricks and underworld lore are unveiled and celebrated. Al-Thaʿālibī describes al-Ṣāḥib's reaction, when he received this *qaṣīda*, thus: "He was moved by joy and got enthusiastic about it, boasted of it, memorized it entirely and awarded him openhandedly": Y, III, 175; it is also visible in the selection made by al-Thaʿālibī of al-Ṣāḥib's lampoons and lewd (*mujūn*) verse: Y, III, 101–5; the poet Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥajjāj (330–91/941–1001), whose focus on *sukhf* (scatology) made him the greatest exponent of the genre in the fourth/tenth century, also praised al-Ṣāḥib (in correspondence). The vizier was acquainted enough with his poetry to call a poem of his from memory in a session, when it befitted the situation (foul smell noticed): Y, II, 219, 266; Y, III, 32–3; al-Aḥnaf al-ʿUkbarī, "the poet of the beggars and their wit," whose *dāliyya* served as a model for Abū Dulaf's *qaṣīda sāsāniyya*, was admired by al-Ṣāḥib. Al-Thaʿālibī quotes a short passage by al-Ṣāḥib including eight lines from the *dāliyya*, recited to him by the poet, on whom he lavishes praise: Y, II, 285–6; Y, III, 174–5.

57 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 30. This observation is elaborated ibid., 65–6.

58 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 63; in one of the reports (mentioned in ibid.), Fakhr al-Dawla teases al-Ṣāḥib, saying "it has reached me that you say that the Muʿtazila is the only [valid] doctrine and fucking is only [pleasurable] with men" (*al-madhhab madhhab al-iʿtizāl wa-l-nayk nayk al-rijāl*): Y, III, 41; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, I, 430–1; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 707; an article by Frédéric Lagrange focuses on al-Tawḥīdī's *Akhlāq al-wazīrayn* from the angle of al-Ṣāḥib's sexual behavior as described by the medieval author. Lagrange does not attempt at probing the relationship between the two men and the reasons for its failure. He is mostly interested in al-Tawḥīdī's strategy of attacking al-Ṣāḥib as corrupted sexually in a way that runs against the moral standing expected of a vizier and discredits his legitimacy as a figure of authority. He argues that al-Tawḥīdī accused the vizier of passive sodomy (*ubna*) while creating a link between active and passive sexual roles (the latter much more damaging *socially*) in a male–male

relationship. Hence, without al-Tawḥīdī's explicit mention of that, the vizier fits in the category of a homosexual understood as "preferring gender over role": "The Obscenity of the Vizier," in Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi (eds), *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 161–203.

59 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 715–16 (cited from an unspecified work by Hilāl).

60 Cf. Erez Naaman, "Eating Figs and Pomegranates: Taboos and Language in the *Thousand and One Nights*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44: 3 (2013), 351–6.

61 Abū ʿAbdallāh Al-Baṣrī (d. 369/980), nicknamed al-Juʿal (the Dung Beetle), was a Zaydī Shīʿī and leader of the Bā Hāshimiyya Muʿtazilīs at his time. Al-Baṣrī and members of this school are depicted by al-Tawḥīdī as morally and intellectually depraved. He considers him a skeptic believing in the "equivalence of proofs" (*takāfuʾ al-adilla*), the view that arguments convince for practical considerations or rhetorical technique. Al-Ṣāḥib, who has met him during his visit to Baghdad, regarded himself as his student. Al-Ṣāḥib's power as a vizier contributed significantly to the influence of al-Baṣrī's views, and he even appointed the latter's most promising disciple, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, chief judge of al-Rayy at his recommendation: Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 178–91; J. van Ess, "Abū ʿAbd Allāh al- Baṣrī," *EI2*.

62 *Akhlāq*, 214.

63 For example, see *Akhlāq*, 151, 166, 173, 188–90.

64 Ibn Kāma was Muʾayyid al-Dawla's vizier. He was poisoned by Fakhr al-Dawla and al-Ṣāḥib in 373/983, right after the new *amīr* assumed power: Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, VII, 119–20.

65 *Akhlāq*, 145–51; al-Ṣāḥib's habit of ascribing obscenities to others is also mentioned ibid., 175–6; Imruʾ al-Qays and al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī were two notable pre-Islamic poets of the sixth century: R. Jacobi, "Imruʾ l-Qays" and "al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī," *EAL*. Both poets set benchmarks in obscene poetry. Imruʾ al-Qays, for describing his sexual adventures in his *muʿallaqa*: Alan Jones (ed. and tr.), *Early Arabic Poetry* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996), II, 52–86 (NB l. 16–17). Al-Nābigha, for his detailed description of king al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir's beautiful wife al-Mutajarrida, including her private parts: *Le dīwān de Nābiga Dhobyānī*, ed. and French tr. M. Hartwig Derenbourg (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869), 87–8 (the poem); Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, XI, 8–14 (anecdotes related to the poem); S uzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002). 4–17 (English tr. and discussion of the poem). These early benchmarks were later superseded by the much more explicit standards adopted by ʿAbbāsid poets, none of whom reached the graphicness of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's *sukhf* poetry; al-Tawḥīdī's opinion of Ibn Ḥajjāj (*sic*) was quite unfavorable. When Ibn Saʿdān asked him to describe "our poet friends" and their poetry, al-Tawḥīdī—reluctant at first—complied. He lauded the Bedouin (i.e., "natural," classical) style of Ibn Nubāta al-Saʿdī (327–405/938–1014; praised Sayf al-Dawla and Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, III, 190–3; Y, II, 143–57), "*the* poet of [our] time," as totally different from the irrational and scatological style of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Al-Tawḥīdī, however, acknowledges Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's talent in the realm of jesting (*hazl*): al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 134, 137.

66 *Akhlāq*, 215; for an annotated translation of the poem al-Ṣāḥib recited to Ibn Fashīshā, see Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 73.

67 *Akhlāq*, 184–90 (NB *addenda* p. 673); on al-Aqṭaʿ, see Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 74–5.

68 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2002 [first publ. 1966]), 50, 196, 199, 202, 218–20.

69 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984 [first publ. in English tr. 1968]), 1–34 (citations are from pp. 10, 19–20).

70 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 5–6; the contribution of Bakhtin and Douglas to the main argument of Stallybrass and White is evident, and the authors acknowledge them as sources of inspiration alongside Elias and Bourdieu: ibid., ix.

71 *Akhlāq*, 185, 187.

72 Al-Tawḥīdī (*Akhlāq*, 186) adduces a perfect example for al-Aqṭaʿ’s subversive wit:

> When we said to him: You love perfume, you are bent on marrying women, and go too far [with that], he replied: By God, in this respect, I only follow the model of our Prophet, God bless him, for he said: “Three were endeared to me from your world—perfume and women.” We said to him: but in the prophetic tradition [you quoted, the third thing is] “and I have been delighted by prayer,” while you do not pray at all! He then replied: O fools! If I prayed I would be a prophet, and [the Prophet], God bless him, had said, “There will be no prophet after me.”

Al-Aqṭaʿ, as if piously, uses the authority of sanctified Prophetic tradition to justify his religious impiety; al-Tawḥīdī (ibid., 186–7) offers another example demonstrating his degrading humor:

> I saw this al-Aqṭaʿ standing in front of Ibn ʿAbbād at the house’s courtyard, and that one [=al-Ṣāḥib] was also standing. Then, Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Warrāq appeared, and Ibn ʿAbbād said (in verse) while looking at him and at his combed beard: “A beard as though it were fine white clothes.” Al-Aqṭaʿ responded immediately (completing the line): “I made it an endowment for my farting.” This Abū Ṣāliḥ used to say: “I am among the descendants of the vizier Muḥammad b. Yazdād.”

The last sentence in which al-Tawḥīdī mentions Abū Ṣāliḥ’s pride of his noble descent (Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Yazdād b. Suwayd was the vizier of the caliph al-Maʾmūn, an eloquent secretary and poet: Ibn Isḥāq al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 545, 730) is not superfluous. It clarifies that al-Aqṭaʿ’s scatological remark was degrading not only of the well-groomed fine white beard but of its owner’s (true or false) bragging about being high-born, and of the elite in general. The degrading of the well-kept beard (of the higher bodily stratum) and noble birth to the lower bodily stratum of the anus is typically carnivalesque.

73 Al-Tawḥīdī (*Akhlāq*, 185) indicates one method of quackery, namely, “spitting into the air” (*wa-yabzuqu fī l-jaww*) among the numerous sins and crimes of al-Aqṭaʿ. In his translation of the passage in question, Bosworth (*The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 75) refers to l. 77 in the *qaṣīda sāsāniyya* (ibid., II, ١٩, 202, 251; Y, III, 184), where Abū Dulaf mentions, among other charlatans, the *bazzāq* “the one who claims to achieve cures by spitting.” In his commentary on the line, al-Thaʿālibī glossed *al-bazzāq* as “the person who uses magical spells to cure madmen and those with physical defects, and who [as part of these rituals] spits on them” (the translations in this note are Bosworth’s).

74 *Akhlāq*, 185.

75 Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, I, 73.

76 *Akhlāq*, 187–8 (NB *addenda* p. 673); al-Tawḥīdī uses the verb *hāja* twice in this passage. First, in the sense of “to be stirred or awakened” (“[al-Ṣāḥib] was stirred from his cool napping place”), and then “to become sexually aroused” (“How did he get [so] aroused?”). The latter sense of the verb is associated with the overpowering sexual arousal of camels (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, VI, 4733 [*h.y.j.*]), hence well-chosen to depict al-Aqṭaʿ’s “going wild” by frenzied sexual excitement. The clever (from al-Tawḥīdī’s satirical vantage point) former employment of the verb for

al-Ṣāḥib's awakening from a nap suggests *as well* that the vizier got sexually aroused, having listened to his servant's report on al-Aqṭaʿ's intercourse.

77 Robert Irwin claimed (*Night and Horses and the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature* [New York: Anchor Books, 2001], 170) that "[al-Tawḥīdī] made a habit of consorting with criminals and other low-life types in an age when it was fashionable to study the techniques and argot of such folk" (see also ibid., 178). No reference is provided for this statement about al-Tawḥīdī, and I know of no evidence that supports it. On the contrary, the evidence at hand, discussed in this chapter, demonstrates that he was repelled by "criminals and other low-life types," their practices, and morals. Perhaps this statement stems from Yāqūt's comment that al-Tawḥīdī was "a mainstay of Banū Sāsān" (*Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1924) and from Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī's reproaching him for "ignoble conduct acquired by befriending Ṣūfīs, strangers, and base mendicants" (al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 7). Yāqūt's comment should be read carefully in light of Abū l-Wafāʾ's reproach. The "Ṣūfīs, strangers, and base mendicants"—clearly despised by the elitist Abū l-Wafāʾ—refer to humble wandering mystics with whom al-Tawḥīdī associated, traveled, and had a lot in common (see, e.g., ibid., 51). The fact that they were marginal figures—poor, moving from place to place, and at least sometimes begging for subsistence—made it easy to confuse or bundle them with the underworld types of Banū Sāsān.

78 Y, II, 214.

79 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, I, 55. Obscene and scatological materials are found, for example, ibid., I, 54, 96–8; III, 59–62, 76, 84–5, 87–90.

80 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, I, 96–97 (NB his comments in nos 271 and 275); III, 87 (NB his comment in no. 280).

81 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, II, 50–60.

82 Samer Ali has already observed—discussing the "more comic-bacchic mode of *mujālasāt* conduct"—that "one should be careful to differentiate comic-bacchic expression from a debauched way of life." He also produces al-Tawḥīdī's justification for his "bacchic performance" in the eighteenth nightly session as meant to counterbalance serious matters: Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 51; we also learn that al-Tawḥīdī took no issue with refreshing entertainment from his description (al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 42) of a session held by "messengers from Sijistān," which he attended with Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī. It is obvious that the session also had an entertaining part given the participation of "Bundār the singer, Ghazāl the dancer, and ʿAlam [the singing-girl] behind the curtain"; at one point (*Akhlāq*, 228), al-Tawḥīdī criticizes al-Ṣāḥib's crossing the appropriate boundaries of "agreeable bawdiness" (*al-mujūn al-mustaṭāb*). One infers from this that he accepted "agreeable bawdiness" as a legitimate category.

83 On the poet Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Badīhī of Shahrazūr, see Y, III, 163–5; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 136–9; al-Badīhī is said to be al-Ṣāḥib's teacher of prosody (meter and rhyme), "with whose teaching and guidance he composed poetry." The poet Abū l-Salm, whom al-Tawḥīdī considered "eloquent," reproached al-Badīhī (not the other way around as in Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 139) for his affected speech. He advised him to drop affectation (*takalluf)* in favor of natural speech and to pursue meaning (*maʿnā*) so that expression (*lafẓ*) follow: *Akhlāq*, 118, 393; elsewhere, al-Tawḥīdī points to al-Badīhī's weakness as a poet and his compensatory concentration on prosody and lexicography. He criticizes his obscene and shameless speech and finds fault with his proclivity for unsupported lexicographical guesswork: *al-Baṣāʾir*, I, 145–6; VII, 272–3.

84 *Akhlāq*, 165; also when describing al-Ṣāḥib to Ibn Saʿdān, al-Tawḥīdī acknowledged that the vizier had a good command of meter and rhyme: *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 55.

85 Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, *Kitāb al-iqnāʿ fī l-ʿarūḍ wa-takhrīj al-qawāfī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Adkāwī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Taḍāmun, 1987), 57.

86 *Akhlāq*, 124–5.

87 *Akhlāq*, 139; al-Ṣāḥib's fondness of changing letters for rhyme in a playful way is also evident in a couplet of his produced by al-Thaʿālibī (Y, III, 95; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 709). Al-Ṣāḥib emulated the mispronunciation of an attractive lisping youth named ʿAbbās, who turned *s* into *th*: "There is a fawn whom I asked, what is your name?, and he answered coquettishly, ʿAbbāth/Due to his lisp, I started lisping, [too], and said, where is the *kāth* ("goblet", for *kās*) and the *ṭāth* ("cup", for *ṭās*)?" This couplet may serve as a relevant example, even though the lisp (*luthgha*) of beardless youths who substituted *thāʾ* for *sīn* and *ghayn* for *rāʾ* was considered attractive (cf. the poems by Abū Nuwās, anonymous, and al-Khubzaruzzī: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, VI, 9–10), and al-Ṣāḥib was supposedly lisping under the influence of this specific youth. Whether the reported interaction with the youth happened or not, versifying it and choosing *ṭāth* as a rhyming word for ʿAbbāth shows that the vizier actively enjoyed this linguistic distortion and wished it to be known.

88 *Akhlāq*, 176–8; see also ibid., 124–5.

89 *Akhlāq*, 394; presumably, it was al-Tawḥīdī who originally heard the vizier's rhymed abuse and told it to Abū l-Salm, who repeats it here: ibid., 122–3 (in a slightly shorter version followed by al-Tawḥīdī's criticism); Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 677; for similar examples of *sajʿ* and critical comments, see *Akhlāq*, 121–2, 123–4, 140, 395; for an example of *sukhf* in *sajʿ*, see ibid., 173. Al-Ṣāḥib's penchant for speech in bawdy *sajʿ* was observed: al-Tawḥīdī wondered in front of al-Khalīlī whether Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (when he was the young al-Ṣāḥib's patron) had not heard al-Ṣāḥib's speech. Al-Khalīlī replied that he had, citing Ibn al-ʿAmīd as saying that "his *sajʿ* attests to his licentiousness and shameless frivolity" (*al-khalāʿa wa-l-majāna*): ibid., 126.

90 *Akhlāq*, 133–8; al-Tawḥīdī mentioned this query in *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 61, where this secretary is called Ibn ʿUbayd.

91 Al-Jīlūhī offers a typology of the people who benefit from al-Ṣāḥib's patronage: (1) those whom al-Ṣāḥib fears for the satire they may direct against him, like [Abū Bakr] al-Khwārazmī; (2) those who possess a unique competence, like [Badīʿ al-Zamān] al-Hamadhānī; and (3) those—the majority group—with whom he fools around and brings close to him for various dubious and scandalous purposes. People who do not belong to these three groups usually receive an ungenerous reward from him, and only after much trouble, degradation, and moral compromise: *Akhlāq*, 190, 192–3.

92 Al-Tawḥīdī mentions asking the ascetic Ibn al-Jallāʾ about the description of the stranger (*gharīb*) during the pilgrimage in Mecca in 353/964 and his journey back with a group of Ṣūfīs a year afterwards: *al-Imtāʿ*, II, 79, 155. The Ṣūfī stranger is the one who wanders ceaselessly and restlessly from one place to another, never at peace and secure. He is not at home in this world, his true home being in the world of the spirit: *al-Imtāʿ*, II, 79; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 25, 220; he relates that in 357/968 he was annoyed by a speech of Abū Saʿīd al-Bisṭāmī in Esfahan, "being then a young solitary stranger" (*waḥīd gharīb ḥadīth al-sinn*): *al-Baṣāʾir*, I, 206 (see also ibid., III, 152–3 for a discussion he had with an assembly of wandering Ṣūfīs and strangers); al-Tawḥīdī narrates how he was told by the Ṣūfī shaykh Jaʿfar b. Ḥanẓala not to befriend him and his like. When al-Tawḥīdī met him again in Baghdad in 358/969 he wondered why he had hurt him thus, and was told: "In driving you away from me, I wanted to allure you to me, and this is among the tricks played by masters (*mashāyikh*) on [Ṣūfī] novices (*murīdūn*)": *Risālat al-ṣadāqa wa-l-ṣadīq*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kīlānī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1964), 292–3; in the fourth night al-Tawḥīdī accompanied the vizier Ibn Saʿdān, the latter accused

him of having emboldened Naṣr, the slave of Khwāshādha, to run away from his court, "as someone had told me that you are a friend of his." Al-Tawḥīdī denied any intimate relationship with him or involvement in his flight. He mentioned that he only felt sympathy for him because of his patched Ṣūfī garment (*muraqqaʿa*), worn out shoes, and humbleness, seeing him in 369/979 with his master in al-Rayy: *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 51; while serving Ibn Saʿdān, al-Tawḥīdī was criticized by Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī for the ignoble conduct he had acquired by befriending Ṣūfīs, strangers, and mendicants: ibid., 7; his first biographer, Yāqūt, described him as a Ṣūfī: *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 1923–4; see also Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 25, 192, 219–21; Bergé, *Pour un humanisme vécu*, 15–19, 245–53.

93 The importance al-Tawḥīdī (*al-Baṣāʾir*, VI, 194) ascribes to *content* with a genuine advantage for one's existence is seen in his praise of Ṣūfīsm: "Ṣufīsm has sound allusions, correct expressions, and far-reaching aspirations; it has a great deal of *substantial gain* and ample advantages" (*li-l-ṣūfiyya ishārāt salīma wa-alfāẓ ṣaḥīḥa wa-marāmāt baʿīda wa-fīhā* ḥashw *kathīr wa-fawāʾid jamma*). It is clear that the sense of *ḥashw* al-Tawḥīdī refers to in this place is not the negative one of "padding" as something superfluous, useless, or inferior (see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, II, 891 [*ḥ.sh.w.*] with regard to speech and people). The word *ḥashw* as "padding" may also appear in positive contexts, as in important Ṣūfī sources where the love of God is said to be the padding of the mystic's heart. Abū l-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Junayd (d. 298/910), the celebrated Baghdadi Ṣūfī, nephew and disciple of the Ṣūfī master Sarī l-Ṣaḳaṭī (155–253/772–867), related that a man asked Sarī how he was (*kayfa anta*). He replied in verse: "He who does not pass the night while love is the padding (*ḥashw*) of his heart/Does not know how livers are disintegrated" (Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* [Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1938], X, 119). When in Medina, al-Muzayyin al-Kabīr narrated that he saw a young man lying in the throes of death, who recited the following verse: "If I die, love is the padding (*ḥashw*) of my heart/And the noble die of love sickness" (ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf* ([Cairo]: Maktabat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīḥ, [1966]), 239). Even in poetry, *ḥashw*, "padding" (as redundant semantic information), is not necessarily considered faulty, as evident by its threefold division to "bad and blameworthy," "unobjectionable," and "praiseworthy" (al-Thaʿālibī, *Fiqh al-lugha wa-sirr al-ʿarabiyya*, ed. Khālid Fahmī and Ramaḍān ʿAbd al-Tawwāb [Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1998], II, 674–8). Al-Tawḥīdī used *ḥashw* in the sense of "substantial gain" elsewhere as well (*al-Imtāʿ*, III, 123) alongside other words denoting utility, just as he did in his cited statement about Ṣūfīsm (*al-Baṣāʾir*, VI, 194). Therefore, *ḥashw* as "substantial gain" conveys the idea of a genuine advantage found in a given content. To al-Tawḥīdī, it is the content found in Ṣūfīsm.

94 *Akhlāq*, 116; al-Tawḥīdī's remark on the vizier's lack of inclination to asceticism is supported by al-Ṣāḥib's disapproval of Ṣūfīs and Ṣūfī thought (twice) when finding fault with vague expressions in al-Mutanabbī's poetry. He compares them unfavorably to Ṣūfī obscurism *à la* Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/945), and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 264/877–8)—three great Ṣūfī masters well known for their vague language: *al-Kashf*, 45, 52.

95 *Akhlāq*, 279–81, 283–4.

96 Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (ed. Ḥātim), 49.

97 Ibid., 69.

98 Ibid., 55; similar things are said ibid., 60.

99 For example, in *Akhlāq*, 374–6.

100 Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (ed. Ḥātim), 60.

101 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 49–50/*The Refinement*, 45 (the translation above is Zurayk's).

102 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 57/*The Refinement*, 52 (the translation above is Zurayk's); these precepts and others (e.g., going against attending drinking parties with unvirtuous

people and being exposed to vile and irrational speech [*al-kalām al-qabīḥ wa-l-sakhāfāt*]: ibid., 59/53) in the same section are also applicable to adults, as noted by Miskawayh: ibid., 62/55.

103 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 110–11/*The Refinement*, 99–100.

104 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 177/*The Refinement*, 158–9 (the translation above is Zurayk's. I replaced "approbation" by "approval"); see also *al-Hawāmil*, 176–8 (discussed above), where Miskawayh elaborates on the susceptibility of the soul to bad influence of others, which requires one to keep away from association with evil people.

105 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, 177–8/*The Refinement*, 159. The same point is made ibid., 198/175–6.

106 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir*, II, 66–9.

107 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 61–6; Ibn Saʿdān seems to be interested in this comparison more than in al-Ṣāḥib's character flaws, as he says to al-Tawḥīdī (ibid., 61): "We left out of his [=al-Ṣāḥib's] account what is more deserving than what we have already had. How is his eloquence compared to that of Ibn al-ʿAmīd? And his way compared to Ibn Yūsuf's and al-Ṣābī's?"

108 For example, Ibn Saʿdān admits to have never been appreciative of the profundity and soundness of Ṣūfī thought before al-Tawḥīdī's accounts: al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, III, 97; considering Ibn Saʿdān's devoutness: having heard the description of the stranger (*gharīb*) and his immunity from the wrath of God when the Hour of Resurrection comes, the vizier shed tears out of piety. Al-Tawḥīdī then depicted his God-fearing personality and ascetic practices, unprecedented for a vizier: ibid., II, 78–80.

109 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, III, 225–30.

110 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 5–7 (…*wa-dhahābika fī fusūlatika llatī ktasabtahā bi-mukhālaṭat al-ṣūfiyya wa-l-ghurabāʾ wa-l-mujtadīn al-adniyāʾ al-ardiyāʾ*); in the opening of their fourth nightly conversation, al-Tawḥīdī, responding to Ibn Saʿdān's question about his satisfaction with Abū l-Wafāʾ, expressed his deep gratitude to the scientist. He described Abū l-Wafāʾ's efforts that led to his much coveted status as a courtier of Ibn Saʿdān as "the greatest benefit" (*al-niʿma al-kubrā*): ibid., I, 50. Indeed, Abū l-Wafāʾ acted as an intermediary and intercessor on behalf of al-Tawḥīdī with Ibn Saʿdān, which explains his rage against al-Tawḥīdī for unthankfully forgetting and ignoring him after obtaining the desired position: ibid., I, 3–7 (on page 6, Abū l-Wafāʾ bitterly describes himself as "he who does favors but is not thanked," *man yuḥsinu fa-lā yushkaru*). This shows that at the court not only the patron, but the intermediary who assisted in establishing the relation between the patron and protégé, expected the gratitude of the latter.

111 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 20–1; III, 210–11.

112 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 52–3, 42–8; al-Shaykh, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī*, II, 717–26.

113 This, of course, is not to suggest that the members of the scholarly circle did not use to compete with one another. Al-Tawḥīdī noticed the boastfulness (*mubāhāt*) and competition (*munāfasa*) among the discussants in a scholarly session with al-Sijistānī and commented: "This is known among people with different natures, and is familiar among competitors" (*aṣḥāb al-tanāfus*): *al-Muqābasāt*, 58 (*muqābasa* no. 2). We may assume that asserting oneself as a learned person and winning the master's and other members' appreciation for one's knowledge was the motive for competition in the scholarly circle.

114 The circle members did enjoy conviviality, recreation, and amusement at times. This, however, was often made a point of departure for philosophical discussion, as we see for instance in al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, 112–15 (*muqābasa* no. 19; translated in Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 162–4), 332–9 (*muqābasa* no. 89).

115 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 104; Kraemer undertook a thorough presentation of this circle from the biographic, ideological, and philosophical aspects in his monograph *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān*

al-Sijistānī and His Circle; on circles and other voluntary associations, see *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 103–206 (Chapter II: "Schools, Circles, and Societies"), and especially 103–4, 139–65, where he deals in detail with al-Sijistānī's.

116 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Muqābasāt*, 114 (*muqābasa* no. 19).

117 These dynamics are observable, for instance, in the session on which al-Tawḥīdī reports in *al-Muqābasāt*, 112–15 (*muqābasa* no. 19).

118 Al-Tawḥīdī commended al-Sijistānī and found him superior to all of them, while noting some (negligible) deficiencies of his: *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 33; his esteem for al-Sijistānī is frequently displayed in *al-Muqābasāt*, e.g., on p. 300 (*muqābasa* no. 72).

119 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 29.

120 On "Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī and his school," see Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 104–39; al-Tawḥīdī's membership in this school is mentioned ibid., 115, 215; Kraemer makes the point that the classifications of school or circle are fluid in the case of Ibn ʿAdī and al-Sijistānī. For the latter who had a circle also taught formal lessons, and the former who had a school also assembled a scholarly circle. "It is the preponderance of one or the other that determines the designation": ibid., 104.

121 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 31–3, 37; al-Tawḥīdī mentioned his presence in Ibn ʿAdī's circle and reported on the discussions in *al-Muqābasāt*, 104 (*muqābasa* no. 14; the year 361/971 is specified), 157 (*muqābasa* no. 34). Elsewhere (ibid., 334), al-Sijistānī addressed al-Tawḥīdī mentioning Ibn ʿAdī as "our master"; Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 107, 213.

122 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 136.

123 Warning against the addictive and ruining power of pleasures and luxuries encountered in the service of leaders, Miskawayh spoke remorsefully of his own experience, saying that he managed to wean himself off these only in an advanced age with the consolidation of practice (*istiḥkām al-ʿāda*) and a great struggle: *Tahdhīb*, 50/*The Refinement*, 45–6.

124 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 35–6; see also al-Tawḥīdī's censure of Miskawayh's moral duplicity in *Akhlāq*, 23–4; al-Tawḥīdī cites Ibn Saʿdān's criticism of some of his courtiers, blaming Miskawayh among other things for affected morality: *Risālat al-ṣadāqa wa-l-ṣadīq*, 67–8.

125 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 398–9. In the above passage (second paragraph), Elias cited the French moralist Jean de La Bruyère (1645–96), a keen observer of the court. For the original French, see La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, 198. In the same vein, La Bruyère compared the courtier—very hard and very polished at the same time—to marble: ibid., 199 (cited by Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 547).

126 Erving Goffman, *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 105–10. Goffman clarifies (ibid., 108) that "the individual is actually denying not the role but the virtual self that is implied in the role for all accepting performers."

127 Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr*, 112, 117, 121–2, 123–9 (the citation above is from p. 123).

128 Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ*, I, 5–6.

129 Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī (328–88/940–98) was one of the greatest medieval Islamic mathematicians and a prominent astronomer. Active in Baghdad since 348/959 until his death: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, V, 167–8; *GAS*, V, 321–5; H. Suter, "Abū ʾl-Wafāʾ al-Būzadjānī," *EI2*.

130 La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, 198.

Conclusion

Numerous literary people were patronized at the great court of al-Ṣāḥib, and literature was produced, performed, and criticized. As in any similar enterprise, the literary activity at this court was not randomly or irregularly organized. There was a certain logic in its functioning, which I attempted to uncover in the present work.

The literary field was the first and foremost part of al-Ṣāḥib's court enterprise. It is impossible not to see how deeply enamored he was with the written and spoken word, a fact noted even by his detractors. Still, at the same time, without any contradiction, he took great advantage of the legitimizing power of literature as a quasi-autonomic ruler. Al-Ṣāḥib was part of an elite society that valued literary competence and especially poetry as a sublime mode of artistic expression. It is, therefore, no wonder that as someone who could boast of having been celebrated in 100,000 praise poems in two languages (Arabic and Persian) and in addition demonstrated remarkable literary skill himself, he won widespread reputation. During his life, the massive literary activity at his court served him well in glorifying and spreading his outstanding political and military achievements as a vizier. Yet, after his death, these became of secondary importance in the sources, where he was often remembered primarily as a great patron of literature and a highly-qualified literary man. This should be explained by the immense dimensions of literary production connected with his name, and by the high appreciation for literature in the pre-modern Islamic world.

The "gratitude for benefit" patronage relation effective in the literary field was a rather ambiguous tie omitting to define the exact details of exchange and its duration. This ambiguity indubitably contributed to the significant flexibility in the market of literature, where patrons could stop their support to a protégé at some point for different reasons, and protégés could leave for other patrons. Nevertheless, the drawback of its undefined nature was the high chances for the creation of different expectations of the relation, which would at times lead to its breaking, yielding varying interpretations for the failure. Illocutionary acts delivered orally in praise poems, and not signatures on detailed contracts, confirmed benefit-based relations in the literary field. The greater tendency of *spoken* words (compared to those written down) to be of transitory validity reflects well the limited binding nature of this relation, and the rather low credibility given to the illocutionary acts performed by poets. Despite all that, the advantages for both parties in this method and the potential hazards of breaking it, kept it successfully working to the exclusion of occasional failures. And indeed, as in the case of family relations of al-Ṣāḥib who were also agents in the field, this acquired relation was strong enough to overrule the inherited relation as the one connecting them with the patron.

The commodification of poetry (or, rather, literature and knowledge in general) and the understanding of the processes of poetic creation in economic language is not an anachronistic Marxist interpretation. Rather, as demonstrated, this candid view of art and scholarly activity is present in the sources; it is characteristic of pre-modern Islamic cultures, setting it against the modern tendency to veil the economic aspects of art to supposedly prevent its immaterial qualities from being compromised. To the credit of medieval Islamic cultures, both material and immaterial aspects of the literary work were understood, and seriously and openly treated.

Despite promoting Shīʿī Islam, Muʿtazilī theology, and those adhering to both, al-Ṣāḥib's co-optation patterns did normally not exclude others. Notwithstanding his staunch religious and theological positions, literary merit was considered the major standard for admission to the field. This approach agrees with the tolerance shown by the Būyid rulers. It was very different from the approach of the Ghaznawid sultan Maḥmūd b. Sebüktigin who burned al-Ṣāḥib's library in al-Rayy in 420/1029, campaigning against Muʿtazilīs, philosophers, and Shīʿīs.[1]

The mainstay of the patron, courtiers were indispensable for the well-being of al-Ṣāḥib, and any other leader in general. Yet, enjoyable, stimulating, and fruitful interaction with them during the informal part of the schedule entailed relaxation of the hierarchical relation between the superior in rank and the inferiors, as emphasized by the old Sāsānid mirrors for princes tradition, still highly-influential in its later Islamic guise. Following that tradition, at the court of al-Ṣāḥib two time zones were framed: the one, formal, limited to activities related to administration and governing; the other, informal, for entertainment and intellectual activity, including cultural production. Some of the courtiers were office holders (e.g., secretaries) who shifted smoothly between one zone to another on a regular basis. This efficiency should not be taken for granted given the vastly different codes of behavior governing each zone and setting it apart from the other. More challenging was to know the limits of liberty *within* the informal zone. We should not forget that during events framed within it, the awe-inspiring vizier of formal events—before whom the great and powerful kissed the ground several times[2]—turned into someone a courtier could poke fun at or criticize. Hierarchy in the informal zone was only dimmed, or relaxed, and on account of the sovereign's need to be congenial while not giving up the position of superiority ambiguities abounded. How to "read" the vizier, then? How to know the limits? The courtly habitus acquired by the successful courtiers helped them navigate the dangerous seas of the court. It also helped them understand the expression given off by the vizier, whose reactions to performance they carefully observed. Evidence shows that conventional performance practices at the court provided opportunities for the clever and competent courtier to strategize a transgression in order to achieve individual goals. As performers of verbal art, poets at the court had significant transformational powers, uplifting the patron to a euphoric state by using—among other things—pragmatic cues to intensify the audience's favorable reception. Inasmuch as the literary field of the court was a refined environment, it was an arena characterized by fierce competition among the courtiers for better standing. I distinguished between positive competition, the major stimulating force behind literary production at the court, and negative competition that weakened social cohesion and interaction by resorting to slanderous and deceitful strategies targeting peers. The latter variety was seen as a normal—albeit deplorable—part of courtly life and the literary field.

Bourdieu's concept of the field, while inspiring and beneficial, had to be modified in order to fit the present literary field. The direct involvement of the vizier and his funding for the enterprise made it far from "an independent social universe." In addition, there were no solid positions in al-Ṣāḥib's court in terms of literary schools or genres to which literary agents belonged exclusively and under the flag of which they competed with their peers. Their struggles were not organized strictly, as Bourdieu's notion of position suggests, but in a loose and more individualistic competitive way. The adaptation of the field concept to this medieval Islamic arena required dispensing with "positions" in favor of concentration on the available genres. It was in certain generic forms where these literary people would cast their products making use of their cultural capital, and consequently compete with their peers for standing and benefits.

As a whole, the effect of al-Ṣāḥib as a patron on the literary field was very strong. His aesthetic preferences in both poetry and prose had great influence on the hegemonic taste in the field. It means that by and large the poets conformed to their patron's stylistic preferences in poetry, that is, a "natural" style perfected by artifice. The taste of al-Ṣāḥib represents well that of the social group among which he was cultivated, namely, the secretaries. This means that among the two chief contemporary stylistic possibilities in poetry, discussed by critics of the day, the one distinguishing the paragon al-Buḥturī (and not the other paragon, Abū Tammām) was chosen. Interestingly, considering this "natural" style as an ideal one in poetry is in stark contrast to the attraction to the artful/artificial *inshāʾ* prose style. The latter prose style, which al-Ṣāḥib and other secretaries of the era found preferable, was indeed the hegemonic prose style in the literary field of the court. The conditions of production in this case—al-Ṣāḥib's intensive involvement in the literary field and endorsement of certain aesthetic preferences while funding the whole enterprise—did leave their mark on the output of his poets and prose writers. Those literary people conformed to the vizier's taste, and thus in both poetry and prose his taste was the hegemonic one in the field.

We should be grateful to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. In addition to the entertaining and informative value of the ample anecdotes in *Akhlāq*, his detailed character study granted us a relatively rare opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the experience of a literary person in a literary field of a medieval Islamic court. This experience was a great failure and a source of anger and frustration for al-Tawḥīdī, but for us it was a happy historical accident. Al-Tawḥīdī was pushed by his strong feelings to document this experience from his own point of view, making a painstaking case against the vizier relying on his and others' grievances. These, he claimed, only reflected the vizier's severely flawed and corrupted personality. His narrative made it easier for us to conceive of the courtly habitus in question, and to understand why a person like him could not have succeeded at the court. Al-Tawḥīdī's conscious commitment to consolidated views and values derived from the philosophical and Ṣūfī ways of life, in addition to his well-established aesthetic perceptions, precluded him from acquiring the courtly habitus. Only those who *wanted* to adapt and did acquire it through imitation of models and practice were able to function successfully. Devoid of the necessary perceptual and behavioral mechanisms ingrained in the courtly habitus, he was unequipped to understand his environment and to conduct himself accordingly. Thus, he failed miserably without realizing why.

It is, therefore, not a question of "a difficult personality"—a vague, judgmental, and pointless expression—that failed him, as it has been suggested; in fact, al-Tawḥīdī did function successfully in the scholarly circle, without being defeated by his supposedly difficult personality. Aside from habitus acquisition, it is a question of social roles: a man like al-Tawḥīdī, socially and culturally constructed as he was, without any volition to change, could not be expected to succeed at performing the courtier role. This line of analysis is even more justified by the findings demonstrating that al-Tawḥīdī and the fourth/tenth-century philosophically informed milieu to which he belonged were familiar with the Aristotelian notion of habitus. Certainly, the members of this milieu were no strangers to the type of analysis laid out here. To them, habitus was a term denoting a well-established disposition or set of dispositions, which, following acquisition and habituation, enabled one to act successfully in a certain way. As we saw, this idea was discussed and applied by members of this milieu as an analytic tool in questions of trait acquisition and social adjustment. Remarkably, this very tool was used by Abū l-Wafāʾ al-Būzajānī in his own criticism of the ineptitude of his friend, al-Tawḥīdī, at the court of Ibn Saʿdān. The failure of al-Tawḥīdī to gain a stable position at court, therefore, is much more than an abortive interaction; being a habitus mismatch, it tells us a lot about the social role of the courtier and his cultural toolbox in general. It also tells us about the dominant part played by al-Ṣāḥib in determining the rules of the game in the literary field and at his court in general. In other words, as the source of power, al-Ṣāḥib took advantage of his privileges to make *his* literary taste the hegemonic in the field, and more generally *his* vision of the court and the courtier the one in effect. Those unwilling to adapt to the courtly habitus that to a high degree took its shape from the aggregate of the vizier's cultural preferences, had no place at court.

I would now like to touch briefly on several aspects of al-Ṣāḥib's court that should be considered when comparisons are made to other courts within and without the pre-modern Islamic world. His household had only limited connection with court life. It is certainly not surprising that we hear nothing of al-Ṣāḥib's wife, who must have been secluded from the court enterprise of her husband. We hear of his daughter, his only child, solely in the context of her giving birth to al-Ṣāḥib's grandson ʿAbbād, the fruit of a marriage to a respectable ʿAlīd. In 384/994, ʿAbbād was married off to the daughter of a relative of Fakhr al-Dawla. The demise of al-Ṣāḥib's mother earlier that year in Esfahan was followed by days of mourning characterized by extreme formality, during which Fakhr al-Dawla, the military elite, and other notables came to pay their respects. Family events such as the birth of ʿAbbād and his marriage were celebrated sumptuously with courtiers reciting festive odes. Nevertheless, of his immediate family, only the son-in-law, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ḥasanī, took part in the regular literary life of the court stressing the acquired relation of patronage that bound him to the vizier.[3] Other than him, the connection of the household with court life was limited to family events in which the real cause of the event was the eminence of the vizier. This limited connection (and involvement) is at least in part due to his small household and the fact that he had no sons. Indeed, his court was almost entirely a male society, much more than earlier ʿAbbāsid models. Cases of free women involved directly in unsegregated court life (let alone as court patrons like the famous Cordovan Wallāda) in pre-modern Islamic societies were unusual. Still, slave-girls, unrestricted by strict rules of segregation, played an important role in the ʿAbbāsid court and others,[4] while their involvement in al-Ṣāḥib's court was most superficial.

Evidently, the court institution in the pre-modern Islamic world, as seen in the present work, has gone a long way since the beginning of Islam in Arabia. The simplicity and casualness that distinguished access to the Prophet in Medina, as portrayed by Michael Cook based on early sources,[5] have given way to environments characterized by complexity and sophistication. This development should be attributed first and foremost to the growth of large political structures, strong influences of other models (notably the Sāsānid tradition of kingship), cultural efflorescence, and rulers' need of legitimacy. As a result, certain practices repeated regularly and governed by rules became characteristic of this elite social configuration we call court. By the time of al-Ṣāḥib, it had already become an established institution, shaped by earlier ʿAbbāsid caliphs. This, of course, does not mean that all courts were the same; the interests, background, and personality of the patron, as the source of power in these pre-modern institutions, played a major role in fashioning the court. Al-Ṣāḥib's was the court of the literary and scholarly patron par excellence. It shares important features with similar courts like that of another remarkable literary man, king al-Muʿtamid b. ʿAbbād of Seville, which I have studied elsewhere.[6] This similarity allows us to speak of a certain model of court, typical of literary and learned patrons, who would tend, for instance, to assert superiority over courtiers during the informal part of their schedule by literary and intellectual means. However, more research on courts of the pre-modern Islamic world should be undertaken to achieve a better understanding of the available models.

The evidence used for the present inquiry leaves no doubt that the informal time zone was the environment that made al-Ṣāḥib's court what it was. The formal zone's contribution to the cultural wealth of the court was insignificant.

There is nothing quite creative or innovative in ceremonial practices typical of the formal zone, such as kissing the ground before the vizier, whose sole purpose was to highlight the hierarchical differences between the vizier and his inferiors in the crudest way. In contrast, cultural repertoires develop in a meaningful way once a sovereign relaxed strict hierarchy to stimulate refined activities sublimating the impulses of power (as in the literary games described in Chapter 2). Environments dominated by formality tend to preserve cultural patterns, to encourage scripted reaction, and thus to hinder the development of cultural repertoires. Given all this, courts with a limited informal time zone or those that had none are of a lesser importance in terms of their contribution to the broader cultural map, synchronically and diachronically.

Lastly, taking into consideration all that we know about al-Ṣāḥib's court, the association (and, sometimes, identification) of medieval Islamic courtly culture, and the court itself, with love is found lacking. Although love is represented in the repertoire of literary themes, it does not have the force of a key cultural code it may have elsewhere. In the present literary field, we see love poetry as a literary platform for al-Ṣāḥib to show his skill.[7] We do not see it, however, as a key code aimed at inculcating courtly values in would-be courtiers. The key code at this court (and, I assume, at many others as well), and obviously in its literary field, is the command of language. What epitomizes beautifully the unassailable dominance of linguistic mastery and refinement over love as the key code at this court is the enthusiastic and eloquent reaction of al-Ṣāḥib to the following story. Yaḥyā b. Aktham, the legal scholar and courtier of al-Maʾmūn, once replied to the caliph, who asked him about a certain matter: "No, and may God support the Prince of Believers" (*lā wa-ayyada llāh amīra l-muʾminīn*). The purpose of the "and" (*wāw*) used by Yaḥyā in his reply was to separate the "no" (*lā* of negation) from the good wish (*duʿāʾ*) for the asker that followed it. This "and" has no grammatical role; it only serves as a punctuation mark in the reply to prevent the addressee from misunderstanding it as the optative statement, "May God not support the Prince of Believers!" (*lā ayyada llāh amīra l-muʾminīn*). When al-Ṣāḥib heard this story, he said: "By God, this *wāw* is indeed more beautiful than the *wāw*-shaped lovelocks on the cheeks of handsome beardless youths!"[8]

Notes

1 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 697; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tawārīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, eds Muḥammad ʿAṭā *et al.* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), XV, 196.
2 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 692.
3 Y, III, 74–7, 223–4; T, II, 99–100; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 690–1; *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 906.
4 See, for example, Algazi and Drory, "L'amour à la cour des Abbasides."
5 Michael Cook, "Did the Prophet Muḥammad Keep Court?," in Fuess and Hartung (eds), *Court Cultures*, 23–9.
6 Erez Naaman, "The Court of al-Muʿtamid Ibn ʿAbbād King of Seville 461–484/1069–1091" (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2001) [In Hebrew with an English abstract].

7 For selections of *ghazal* and other monothematic poems (whose themes are “the cheek, the down on a youth’s cheek and first growth of beard on the cheeks”) by al-Ṣāḥib, see Y, III, 88–95.

8 Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī l-Ḥarīrī, *Durrat al-ghawwāṣ fī awhām al-khawāṣṣ*, ed. Bashshār Bakkūr (Damascus: Dār al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Turāth, 2002), 145–6; al-Thaʿālibī, *Fiqh al-lugha*, II, 678 (discussing this use of *wāw* among the examples for “beautiful and refined padding,” *al-ḥashw al-ḥasan al-laṭīf)*; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Ghayth al-musajjam*, I, 69; al-Malik al-Afḍal, *Nuzhat al-ẓurafāʾ wa-tuḥfat al-khulafāʾ*, ed. Nabīla Dāwud (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1985), 23; al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī (*Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 141) presents al-Ṣāḥib as guiding someone to the necessary use of this “and” (*wāw*): “One of the people of our time spoke at the presence of al-Ṣāḥib. The latter asked him something and he responded: *lā aṭāla llāh baqāʾaka* (“No; may God prolong your life!” which could be misunderstood as “May God not prolong your life!”). Al-Ṣāḥib said: say: *lā wa-aṭāla llāh baqāʾaka* (no, and may God prolong your life!) Then, one person said: we have not seen a *wāw* more in place than yours!”

Appendix

Al-Rustamī’s Mansion Ode[1]

ومن قصيدة أبي سعيد الرستمي:

[A]

١. نَصَبْنَ لِحَبَّاتِ ٱلْقُلُوبِ حَبَائِلَا   عَشِيَّةَ حَلَّ ٱلْحَاجِبَاتُ حَبَائِلَا
٢. نَشَدْنَ عُقُولاً يَوْمَ بُرْقَةِ مُنْشِدٍ   ضَلَلْنَ فَطَالَبْنَا بِهِنَّ ٱلْعَقَائِلَا
٣. عَقَائِلُ مِنْ أَحْيَاءِ بَكْرٍ وَوَائِلٍ   يُحَبِّبْنَ لِلْعُشَّاقِ بَكْراً وَوَائِلَا
٤. عُيُونٌ ثَكِلْنَ ٱلْحُسْنَ مُنْذُ فَقَدْنَهَا   وَمَنْ ذَا رَأَى قَبْلِي عُيُونًا ثَوَاكِلَا
٥. جَعَلْتُ ضَنَى جِسْمِي لَدَيْهَا ذَرَائِعاً   وَسَائِلَ دَمْعِي عِنْدَهُنَّ وَسَائِلَا
٦. وَرَكْبٍ سَرَوْا حَتَّى حَسِبْتُ بِأَنَّهُمْ   لِسُرْعَتِهِمْ عَدَّوْا إِلَيْكَ ٱلْمَرَاحِلَا
٧. إِذَا نَزَلُوا أَرْضاً رَأَوْنِيَ نَازِلاً   وَإِنْ رَحَلُوا عَنْهَا رَأَوْنِيَ رَاحِلَا
٨. وَإِنْ أَخَذُوا فِي جَانِبٍ مِلْتُ آخِذاً   وَإِنْ عَدَلُوا عَنْ جَانِبٍ مِلْتُ عَادِلَا
٩. وَإِنْ وَرَدُوا مَاءً وَرَدْتُ وَإِنْ طَوَوْا   طَوَيْتُ وَإِنْ قَالُوا تَحَوَّلْتُ قَائِلَا
١٠. وَإِنْ نَصَبُوا لِلْحَرِّ حُرَّ وُجُوهِهِمْ   تَمَثَّلْتُ حِرْبَاءً عَلَى ٱلْجِذْلِ مَائِلَا
١١. وَإِنْ عَرَفُوا أَعْلَامَ أَرْضٍ عَرَفْتُهَا   وَإِنْ أَنْكَرُوا أَنْكَرْتُ مِنْهَا ٱلْمَجَاهِلَا
١٢. وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا سَيْراً شَدَدْتُ رِحَالَهُمْ   وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا حَلاًّ حَلَلْتُ ٱلرَّحَائِلَا
١٣. وَإِنْ وَرَدُوا مَاءً حَمَلْتُ سِقَاءَهُمْ   أَوِ ٱنْتَجَعُوا غَيْثاً حَدَوْتُ ٱلزَّوَامِلَا
١٤. أَوِ ٱسْتَنْفَدَتْ خُوصُ ٱلرَّكَائِبِ مَنْهَلاً   أَعَدْتُ لَهُمْ مِنْ فَيْضِ دَمْعِي مَنَاهِلَا
١٥. يَظُنُّونَ أَنِّي سَائِلٌ فَضْلَ زَادِهِمْ   وَلَوْلَا ٱلْهَوَى مَا ظَنَّنِي ٱلرَّكْبُ سَائِلَا

١٦. وَأَقْسَمْتُ بِٱلْبَيْتِ ٱلْجَدِيدِ بِنَاؤُهُ   يُحَيَّى وَمَنْ يُحْفِي إِلَيْهِ ٱلْمَرَاقِلَا
١٧. هِيَ ٱلدَّارُ أَبْنَاءُ ٱلنَّدَى مِنْ حَجِيجِهَا   نَوَازِلَ فِي سَاحَاتِهَا وَقَوَافِلَا
١٨. يَزُرْنَكَ بِٱلْآمَالِ مَثْنًى وَمَوْحَداً   وَيَصْدُرْنَ بِٱلْأَمْوَالِ دَثْراً وَجَامِلَا
١٩. قَوَاعِدُ إِسْمَاعِيلُ يَرْفَعُ سَمْكَهَا   لَنَا كَيْفَ لَا نَعْتَدُّهُنَّ مَعَاقِلَا
٢٠. فَكَمْ أَنْفُسٍ تَأْوِي إِلَيْهَا مُغِذَّةً   وَأَفْئِدَةٍ تُهْوِي إِلَيْهَا حَوَافِلَا
٢١. وَسَامِيَةُ ٱلْأَعْلَامِ تَلْحَظُ دُونَهَا   سَنَا ٱلنَّجْمِ فِي آفَاقِهَا مُتَضَائِلَا
٢٢. نَسَخْتَ بِهَا إِيوَانَ كِسْرَى بْنِ هُرْمُزٍ   فَأَصْبَحَ فِي أَرْضِ ٱلْمَدَائِنِ عَاطِلَا
٢٣. فَلَوْ أَبْصَرَتْ ذَاتُ ٱلْعِمَادِ عِمَادَهَا   لَأَمْسَتْ أَعَالِيهَا حَيَاءً أَسَافِلَا
٢٤. وَلَوْ لَحَظَتْ جَنَّاتُ تَدْمُرَ حُسْنَهَا   دَرَتْ كَيْفَ تَبْنِي بَعْدَهُنَّ ٱلْمَجَادِلَا
٢٥. يُنَاطِحُ قَرْنُ ٱلشَّمْسِ مِنْ شُرُفَاتِهَا   صُفُوفَ ظِبَاءٍ فَوْقَهُنَّ مَوَاثِلَا
٢٦. وُعُولٌ بِأَطْرَافِ ٱلْجِبَالِ تَقَابَلَتْ   وَمَدَّتْ قُرُوناً لِلنِّطَاحِ مَوَائِلَا
٢٧. كَأَشْكَالِ طَيْرِ ٱلْمَاءِ مَدَّتْ جَنَاحَهَا   وَأَشْخَصْنَ أَعْنَاقاً لَهَا وَحَوَاصِلَا
٢٨. وَرَدَّتْ شُعَاعَ ٱلشَّمْسِ فَٱرْتَدَّ رَاجِعاً   وَسَدَّتْ هُبُوبَ ٱلرِّيحِ فَٱرْتَدَّ نَاكِلَا
٢٩. إِذَا مَا ٱبْنُ عَبَّادٍ مَشَى فَوْقَ أَرْضِهَا   مَشَى ٱلزَّهْوُ فِي أَكْنَافِهَا مُتَمَايِلَا
٣٠. كَنَائِسُ نَاطَتْ بِٱلنُّجُومِ كَوَاهِلاً   وَعَادَتْ فَأَلْقَتْ بِٱلنُّجُومِ كَلَاكِلَا
٣١. وَفَيْحَاءَ لَوْ مَرَّتْ صَبَا ٱلرِّيحِ بَيْنَهَا   لَضَلَّتْ فَظَلَّتْ تَسْتَنِيرُ ٱلدَّلَائِلَا
٣٢. مَتَى تَرَهَا خِلْتَ ٱلسَّمَاءَ سُرَادِقاً   عَلَيْهَا وَأَعْلَامَ ٱلنُّجُومِ تَمَاثِلَا

ومنها في وصف الماء الجاري وهو أحسن ما سمعت فيه على كثرته:

[B]

١. هَوَاءٌ كَأَيَّامِ ٱلْهَوَى فَرْطَ رِقَّةٍ   وَقَدْ فَقَدَ ٱلْعُشَّاقُ فِيهَا ٱلْعَوَاذِلَا
٢. وَمَاءٍ عَلَى ٱلرَّضْرَاضِ يَجْرِي كَأَنَّهُ   صَفَائِحُ تِبْرٍ قَدْ سُبِكْنَ جَدَاوِلَا
٣. كَأَنَّ بِهَا مِنْ شِدَّةِ ٱلْجَرْيِ جِنَّةً   فَقَدْ أَلْبَسَتْهُنَّ ٱلرِّيَاحُ سَلَاسِلَا
٤. وَلَوْ أَصْبَحَتْ دَاراً لَكَ ٱلْأَرْضُ كُلُّهَا   لَضَاقَتْ بِمَنْ يَنْتَابُ دَارَكَ آمِلَا

٥. وَلَوْ كُنْتَ تَبْنِيهَا عَلَى قَدْرِ هِمَّةٍ   سَمَتْ بِكَ وَٱسْتَسْرَتْ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْمَرَاسِلَا
٦. عَقَدْتَ عَلَى ٱلدُّنْيَا جِدَاراً فَحُزْتَهَا   جَمِيعاً وَلَمْ تَتْرُكْ لِغَيْرِكَ طَائِلَا
٧. وَأَغْنَى ٱلْوَرَى عَنْ مَنْزِلٍ مَنْ بَنَتْ لَهُ   مَعَالِيهِ فَوْقَ ٱلشِّعْرَيَيْنِ مَنَازِلَا
٨. وَلَا غَرْوَ أَنْ يَسْتَحْدِثَ ٱللَّيْثُ بِٱلسُّرَى   عَرِيناً وَأَنْ يَسْتَطْرِفَ ٱلْبَحْرُ سَاحِلَا
٩. وَلَمْ يَعْتَمِدْ دَاراً سِوَى حَوْمَةِ ٱلْوَغَى   وَلَا خُدَّماً إِلَّا ٱلْقَنَا وَٱلْقَنَابِلَا
١٠. وَلَا حَاجِباً إِلَّا حُسَاماً مُهَنَّداً   وَلَا عَامِلاً إِلَّا سِنَاناً وَعَامِلَا
١١. وَوَٱللّٰهِ مَا أَرْضَى لَكَ ٱلدَّهْرَ خَادِماً   وَلَا ٱلْبَدْرَ مُنْتَاباً وَلَا ٱلْبَحْرَ نَائِلَا
١٢. وَلَا ٱلْفَلَكَ ٱلدَّوَّارَ دَاراً وَلَا ٱلْوَرَى   عَبِيداً وَلَا زَهْرَ ٱلنُّجُومِ قَبَائِلَا
١٣. أَخَذْتَ بِضَبْعِ ٱلْأَرْضِ حَتَّى رَفَعْتَهَا   إِلَى غَايَةٍ أَمْسَى بِهَا ٱلنَّجْمُ جَاهِلَا
١٤. فَإِنَّ ٱلّٰذِي يَبْنِيهِ مِثْلُكَ خَالِدٌ   وَسَائِرُ مَا يَبْنِي ٱلْأَنَامُ إِلَى بِلَى

Translation

What follows is from the ode of Abū Saʿīd al-Rustamī:

[A]
1 The women set snares for the cores of the hearts
On the evening when the female gatekeepers loosened snares
2 On the Battle Day of Burqat Munshid, the women looked for blood-price camels
That went astray, and we demanded them back from the noble women[2]
3 Noble women from the Bakr and Wāʾil tribes
Endear Bakr and Wāʾil to the lovers[3]
4 Eyes that were bereaved of beauty since they lost her
And who has seen before me bereaved eyes?
5 I used my emaciated body as a means to gain access to her
And the stream of my tears as a medium to come close to them
6 I remember riders traveling at night so fast until I thought
That they ran through the stations to [reach] you
7 If they alight on the ground, they see me alighting
And if they move away from it, they see me moving
8 If they set out in a certain direction, I turn in their direction
And if they turn away, I turn away
9 If they arrive to water, I do; if they suffer hunger,
I do; and if they take a midday nap, I turn to the same thing

10 If they expose their cheek to the heat,
I become like a chameleon leaning over the stump[4]
11 If they know the way-marks, I know them too
If they do not, I deny knowledge of the unknown areas
12 If they resolve on going, I bind their [camels'] saddles
And if they resolve on unbinding, I unbind the saddles
13 If they arrive to water, I carry their water skin
Or if they seek herbage, I urge the camels of burden by singing[5]
14 Or [if] sunken-eyed camels exhaust a watering place
I bring back to them watering places out of the flood of my tears
15 They think that I beg for the leftovers of their provisions,
And if it were not for love the camel riders would not deem me a beggar[6]
16 And I swear by the newly built house:
It is saluted along with the one making the hooves of the swift she-camels [traveling] to him [from afar] chafed[7]
17 It is the mansion among whose pilgrims are those dependent on generosity
[Arriving] at its courtyards as single travelers and in groups
18 They visit you with hopes, two by two and one by one,
And leave with property in abundance and a herd of camels[8]
19 Foundations whose ceiling Ismāʿīl raises up
For us; how shall we not consider them a place of refuge?![9]
20 Thus, how many souls seek shelter at it, hastening,
And [how many] hearts strive for it, swarming?![10]
21 And you see below the loftiest of waymarks
The glistening of the Pleiades waning in its horizons[11]
22 You replaced by it the Īwān of Kisrā Son of Hurmuz
For [the Īwān] has become destitute in al-Madāʾin[12]
23 If [Iram] Dhāt al-ʿImād were to see its pillars
It would turn upside down out of shame[13]
24 If Tadmor of paradisiac splendor were to view [the mansion's] beauty
It would know how you build palaces after it [was ruined][14]
25 The horn of the sun butts—with respect to its battlements—
Rows of antelopes; standing erect above them[15]
26 Are ibexes on the peaks of the mountains facing each other
And extending horns lowered to butting
27 [The ibexes are] like shapes of aquatic birds that extended their wings
And raised their necks and the craws
28 They warded off the sun rays, so they reflected back
They blocked the blowing of the wind, so it withdrew dispirited
29 Whenever Ibn ʿAbbād walks on its ground
Splendor walks swaying in its flanks from side to side[16]
30 Beautiful women who leaned their upper backs on the stars
Returned and rested their breasts on the stars[17]
31 [It is such] a spacious building that if the East Wind were to pass amidst it
It would go astray and keep seeking illumination for signs

32 When you see it, you'd think the sky a canopy
Over it, and the well known constellations statues

[Al-Thaʿālibī:] [This ode] includes the best description of flowing water I have heard, despite the existence of many others:

[B]
1 Breeze like the days of love, exceedingly delicate,
In which the lovers had been without censurers
2 And there is water streaming on small pebbles as if it were
Plates of silver nuggets molded as streamlets
3 As though there was in them, with respect to the strong flowing, insanity
For the winds had dressed them with chains
4 If the whole earth were to become a mansion for you,
It would be too narrow for those who frequent your mansion hoping
5 Had you built it with the measure of ambition
That elevated you and made the fleet she-camels travel to you by night
6 You would have raised a wall on the world, gaining control of it
As a whole, and leaving it of no use to others
7 The most able among mankind to dispense with a mansion is he to whom
Glorious deeds built mansions above the two Sirius stars[18]
8 There is no wonder that the lion creates in his night-journeying
A den, and that the sea makes a shore
9 He did not rely on a mansion other than the vehemence of battle
And not on servants other than spears and cavalry
10 Not on a chamberlain other than a sword made of Indian steel
And not on a governor other than a spearhead and spear shaft
11 By God, I will not be content for you with Time as a servant,
Not with the full moon as a frequenter, or the sea as a gift
12 Not the revolving celestial sphere as a mansion, not with mankind
As slaves, or the shining of the stars as tribes
13 You seized the upper arm of Earth to the point that you lifted [Earth]
To an extremity of which the Pleiades became ignorant in the evening
14 Verily, that which the like of you builds is eternal
While the rest of what mankind builds is [destined] to crumble

Notes

1 The Arabic text is based on al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr* (Damascus: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥanafiyya, 1886–7), III, 46–8. I added full vocalization to the poetry. The meter is *al-ṭawīl*.

2 Burqat Munshid was an oasis (*māʾ*) of Banū Tamīm and Banū Asad (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, I, 398, with poetic evidence by Kuthayyir). It is not mentioned in Ulrich Thilo, *Die Ortsnamen in der altarabischen Poesie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958); I did not find information on a Battle Day (*yawm*) called after Burqat Munshid in ʿĀdil al-Bayātī's reconstruction of Abū ʿUbayda's *Kitāb ayyām al-ʿarab* (Beirut:

ʿĀlam al-kutub, 1987); Jarīr b. ʿAṭiyya and Farazdaq, *Kitāb al-naqāʾiḍ: naqāʾiḍ jarīr wa-l-farazdaq*, ed. Anthony Bevan (Leiden: Brill, 1905–12); Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*; Egbert Meyer, *Der historische Gehalt der Aiyām al-ʿArab* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970); or ʿUmar Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam qabāʾil al-ʿarab al-qadīma wa-l-ḥadītha* (Damascus: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Hāshimiyya, 1949). Still, verse by an anonymous pre-Islamic or early Islamic Bedouin mentions the Battle Day of Burqat Munshid as an occasion of fierce fighting (al-Khālidiyyān, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir min ashʿār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-jāhiliyya wa-l-mukhaḍramīn*, ed. al-Sayyid Yūsuf [Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf, 1965], II, 99). Al-Rustamī's line 3 clarifies that the women in question are from the Bakr b. Wāʾil tribe. In pre-Islamic times, when Bakr's territory was stricken by draught, the tribe used to seek pasture on Tamīm's lands and exhaust it completely. That led once to Yawm al-Zawrayn in which Tamīm was defeated (Abū ʿUbayda, *Kitāb ayyām al-ʿarab*, 438–41). Hence, given the long history of hostilities between Bakr and Tamīm (see Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam qabāʾil al-ʿarab*, I, 94) and that Burqat Munshid is (at least in part) on Tamīmī territory, it appears that the poetic persona is from the Tamīm tribe, which clashes with the beloved's Bakr tribe. According to the vague picture portrayed by the *nasīb* (l. 1–5), free, noble women (*ʿaqāʾil*) from Bakr, who were normally secluded, were sent on this Battle Day to look for lost camels. These camels were blood-price (*ʿuqūl*) that Tamīm had paid Bakr. The women had retrieved the camels but were captured by men from Tamīm (including the poetic persona), who claimed the camels back from the women before releasing them. These were the circumstances in which the poetic persona met the beloved from the other, hostile, tribe—an experience that left him deeply in love and heartbroken. As shown by Ilse Lichtenstädter, women in pre-Islamic times played active role in everyday life and during battle days. They were often targeted by the tribe that clashed with their own, captured, and sometimes exchanged for ransom (such as camels): *Women in the Aiyām al-ʿArab: A Study of Female Life during Warfare in Pre-Islamic Arabia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1935), 21, 24–34, 51–2, 62.

3 "Bakr and Wāʾil" refers to the two ancestors of the Bakr b. Wāʾil tribe, hence to the tribe itself. Indeed, the reading "Bakr b. Wāʾil" exists in another work citing this ode from *al-Yatīma* (Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Kashkūl*, ed. Ṭāhir al-Zāwī [Cairo: ʿĪsā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1961], I, 332); despite the enmity between Bakr and Tamīm, the attraction of the Tamīmī poetic persona to the noble woman of Bakr makes her tribe dear to him.

4 The chameleon (*ḥirbāʾ*), well known to the ancient Arabs and described in poetry, lives by warmth, and can be seen from morning to night following the path of the sun. At midday, when the ground is too hot, it climbs to the top of a tree: Charles Pellat, "Ḥirbāʾ," *EI2*; cf. the line of Kaʿb b. Zuhayr from his celebrated ode, Bānat Suʿād, recited to the Prophet: "On a day when the chameleon became so burned by the heat of the sun as if its exposed side was like bread baked in hot ashes": *Bânat Soʿâd: poëme arabe de Kaʿb Ben Zohaïr*, ed. and French tr. A. Raux (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), ١٣.

5 Instead of *al-zawāʾilā*, I read *al-zawāmilā* ("camels of burden"), as in Y, A, III, 209.

6 The adverse effects of the poetic persona's love on his body (especially the emaciation mentioned in the *nasīb*) make him appear like a beggar.

7 Instead of *yukhfī*, I read *yuḥfī* ("making the hooves chafed"), as in Y, A, III, 210; "the one" is al-Ṣāḥib, the patron who attracts to his court prospective protégés traveling great distances, despite the hardships they experience along with their she-camels.

8 Instead of *wa-ḥāmilā*, I read *wa-jāmilā* ("a herd of camels"), as in Y, A, III, 210.

9 The reference to Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād clearly alludes to Q 2:127, where Ishmael (Ismāʿīl) together with Abraham are mentioned as the builders of the *kaʿba*: "when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the house…" (*wa-idh yarfaʿu ibrāhīmu al-qawāʿida mina l-bayti wa-ismāʿīlu*…)

10 Instead of *mufidhdha*, I read *mughidhdha* ("hastening"), as in Y, A, III, 210.

11 *Aʿlām* denotes waymarks in the desert to guide those going astray, which yielded the expression *aʿlām al-kawākib*, “the stars, or asterisms, that are signs of the way for travellers” (Lane, *ʿ.l.m.*), with which the poet plays; *al-najm* is an alternative name for the Pleiades (see Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, tr. R. Ramsay Wright [London: Luzac, 1934], 82; P. Kunitzsch, “Al-Nudjūm”, *EI2*), although the term is applicable to every star. Here, “the Pleiades” reflects the poet’s hyperbole better.

12 Cf. Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Asadī’s line from his Mansion Ode (Y, III, 52): “The tears of Īwān Kisrā in al-Madāʾin flow uninterruptedly since you have built [your mansion]”; al-Madāʾin, “the cities,” is the Arabic name of the Sāsānid metropolis on the Tigris (20 miles south-east of Baghdad), one of whose adjacent cities was Ctesiphon. Īwān Kisrā is the great audience hall built in Ctesiphon probably by Khusraw I Anūshirwān (531–79), who is likely to be the mentioned Kisrā b. Hurmuz (despite the fact that Khusraw I’s father was not named Hurmuz but Kubādh): M. Morony, “Al-Madāʾin” (co-authored with M. Streck), “Kisrā,” “Sāsānids,” *EI2*; the past glories of Īwān Kisrā were sang and lamented by al-Buḥturī in a famous ode. For the text, translation, and discussion, see Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons*, 153–70, 206–8.

13 The text reads *dār al-ʿimād* (repeated in Y, A, III, 210), which is a corrupted form of *dhāt al-ʿimād*. The correct form appearing above exists in two other sources citing from this ode: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkira al-Ḥamduniyya*, eds Iḥsān ʿAbbās and Bakr ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1996), V, 387; al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Kashkūl*, I, 332; Iram dhāt al-ʿimād (Iram with the pillars) was mentioned in Q 89:6–7: “Did you not see what your Lord did to ʿĀd of Iram with the pillars” (*iram dhāt al-ʿimād*). According to most exegetes, it was a city of unparalleled opulence near Aden in Yemen, built to rival paradise. Before it was inhabited, however, the city, the ʿĀd people, and their king were destroyed by God for their pride: Paul M Cobb, “Iram,” in *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001–06); the pillars of this city, emblematic of its magnificence and splendor, are compared hyperbolically by the eulogist to those of al-Ṣāḥib, only to be found inferior. Iram’s proverbial status was employed by al-Zaʿfarānī, too, in his Mansion Ode (Y, III, 49): “[Al-Ṣāḥib’s mansion is] Iram of the Muslims in which there is no mention of Shaddād b. ʿĀd and not the name of Shadīd.” Unlike al-Rustamī, al-Zaʿfarānī matches al-Ṣāḥib’s splendid mansion with Iram of the ʿĀd kings (whom he mentions), while dissociating it from the infidelity of the original Iram.

14 Tadmor is the ancient city of Palmyra in the Syrian desert. Yāqūt notes that it had marvelous buildings built upon marble pillars. These buildings, for their wondrous nature, were claimed to be built by the Jinn for Solomon (Yāqūt skeptically adds that whenever people see a wondrous building, whose builder is unknown to them, they attribute it to Solomon and the Jinn): *Muʿjam al-buldān*, II, 17–19; this line evokes a famous panegyric ode to the king of Ḥīra, al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir, by the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī. In l. 21–3 (*Le dīwān de Nābiga*, 74), the poet finds only Solomon comparable to the king among mankind. He says that when Solomon was entrusted by God with the task of preventing creation from error, God told him “And subjugate the Jinn! I gave them permission to build Tadmor with flag-stone and pillars.” Evoking al-Nābigha’s references to Solomon controlling the Jinn (thus calling to mind also Q 34:12–13), and to Tadmor as magnificently built by the Jinn, al-Rustamī associates al-Ṣāḥib, as the builder of a beautiful mansion, with the proverbially powerful king; cf. l. 8 of al-Zaʿfarānī’s Mansion Ode (Y, III, 49).

15 *Qarn al-shams*, translated above “the horn of the sun,” is also the first visible part of the rising sun.

16 Instead of *mutamāʾilā*, I read *mutamāyilā* (“swaying from side to side,” i.e., walking with a proud gait) as in Y, A, III, 210.

17 “Beautiful women” stands for al-Ṣāḥib’s mansion (see the analysis of the line in Chapter 4 above).

18 Instead of *al-shiʿratayn*, I read *al-shiʿrayayn* (“two Sirius stars”), as in Y, A, III, 211; in this hyperbolic line the poet plays with the lexical sense of *manzil*, “house”—in our context, “mansion”—and the technical astronomical sense “lunar mansion.” Having mentioned *manzil* for the first time with the former meaning, al-Rustamī follows up with ideas that have to do with loftiness (*maʿālīhi*, *fawqa*), stellar bodies and positions (*shiʿrayān*, *manāzil*), all of which are concomitant through *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* with the latter meaning. *Manzil* or *manzila* (pl. *manāzil*; more fully, *manāzil al-qamar*) refer to the lunar mansions or stations of the moon, a system of twenty-eight stars or groups of stars, near which the moon is found in each of the twenty-eight nights of its monthly revolution: P. Kunitzsch, “al-Manāzil,” *EI2*; see also al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction*, 81; “In the dual, *al-shiʿrayān* designated the two stars Sirius, α Canis Maioris, and Procyon, α Canis Minoris, together. Both of them were also given specifying adjectives, Sirius as *al-shiʿrā al-ʿabūr* (‘*al-sh*. which has crossed [the Milky Way]’) and *al-shiʿrā al-yamāniya* (‘the southern *shiʿrā*’) and Procyon as *al-shiʿrā al-ghumayṣāʾ* (‘*al-sh.* with eyes filthy from weeping’) and *al-shiʿrā al-shaʾāmiya* (‘the northern *shiʿrā*’), and each of them could be named by one of the adjectives alone.” *Al-shiʿrā al-ʿabūr* (α Canis Maioris) is the brightest of the fixed stars: P. Kunitzsch, “Al-Shiʿrā,” *EI2*; idem, *Untersuchungen zur Sternnomenklatur der Araber*, 111–12; Paul Kunitzsch and Tim Smart, *Short Guide to Modern Star Names and Their Derivation* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 22, 24; see also al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction*, 80–1; al-Ṣūfī, *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib*, 288–9, 293; the reference to the sky and the stellar bodies is not accidental. While al-Ṣāḥib totally denied belief in the influence of celestial bodies and strongly rejected astrology (see his poem cited in al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 298, and in *Kitāb rawḥ al-rūḥ*, II, 775), there are signs that this position was not entirely representative of his actions and beliefs—at least in certain periods. According to al-Tawḥīdī (*Akhlāq*, 114–15, 126–7), despite attacking astrology, al-Ṣāḥib would not part with his ephemeris (*taqwīm*), consult it several times a day and would not travel when he found bad omens. Al-Tawḥīdī later presents his horoscope (studied by Oliver Kahl and Zeina Matar, “The Horoscope of aṣ-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād,” *ZDMG* 140, 1 [1990]: 28–31); as for Sirius, al-Tawḥīdī cites (*Akhlāq*, 172) al-Ṣāḥib’s words in a session: “I was born while Sirius (*al-shiʿrā*) was in my ascendant (*ṭāliʿ*). Had it not been for a minute, I would have attained prophecy.” Indeed, one of the two Sirius stars, *al-shiʿrā al-yamāniya* (“the southern *shiʿrā*”; α Canis Maioris) is said in *Kitāb al-mawālīd* ascribed to Zarādusht (tr. to Arabic between 129–36/747–54) to have an extremely lucky temperament: “[It] is the most excellent fixed star in the sphere. It is southern. It is the object of adoration of the Arabs. Quadroped animals rejoice when seeing it. It is purely lucky”: Paul Kunitzsch, “The Chapter on the Fixed Stars in Zarādusht’s *Kitāb al-mawālīd*,” in idem, *Stars and Numbers: Astronomy and Mathematics in the Medieval Arab and Western Worlds* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), XI: 246 (article first pub. 1993; translated from Arabic by Kunitzsch); note in the citation from *Kitāb al-mawālīd* the reference to the adoration of Sirius in pre-Islamic times, also hinted in Q 53:49, where it is emphasized that God is the Lord of Sirius; based on all that is said above, it is clear that the association of al-Ṣāḥib with Sirius as done in this line was highly laudatory, and given al-Tawḥīdī’s report (about Sirius in his ascendant), it must have resonated well with him.

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