

RISĀLAT AT-TAWĀBI^c WA Z-ZAWĀBI^c

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RISĀLAT AT-TAWĀBI WA Z-ZAWĀBI

*The Treatise of Familiar
Spirits and Demons by
Abū Ḥāfiẓ Amīr ibn Shuhād
al-Asħjaṭī, al-Andalusī*

Introduction, Translation
and Notes by
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(1923–1971)

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Have the poets left a single spot for a patch to be sewn?
Or did you recognise the abode after long meditation?

^cAntara (sixth century); translated by A. J. Arberry

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND: THE POETRY OF IBN DARRĀJ AL-QASTALLĪ

The life of the Andalusian poet Abū ‘Āmir ibn Shuhaid extends from 992 to 1035. He was born into an aristocratic Arab family toward the very end of the reign of Córdoba's dictatorial *hājib* al-Manṣūr (r. 976–1002), and grew up under the succession of sovereigns who struggled for power during the civil wars that brought about the ruin of the Umayyad political edifice. We have, consequently, the case of a man who from his earliest youth was exposed to the vicissitudes of a politically unstable period of history.¹

In al-Andalus the tenth century A.D., which immediately preceded the times of Ibn Shuhaid, was a crucial turning point at once the result of what had been achieved through two centuries of political wisdom and the cause of new conditions that were to bring about a radical change in the structure of society. This change can be spelled out briefly as the decline of Arabism as a meaningful political force, and the rise in its place of Islamism.

When the Arabs arrived in al-Andalus in 711 the Visigothic monarchy was ruling over a largely agrarian and quasi-feudal society that had resulted from the decline of urban prosperity during the late Roman Empire. The conquering Arabs were soon marrying the native aristocracy. Sarah, the granddaughter of Witiza and owner of vast estates in the southwest of the peninsula was married off to an Arab gentleman, and from this union were born the family of the Banū Ḥajjāj, the ruling clan of Seville.² As a result, the Arabs in al-Andalus in turn became a landed aristocracy, often dwelling in the city as the absentee landlords of a largely agrarian society, and for a long time the economic conditions of feudalism, if not classical feudalism itself, were to prevail in the peninsula. At the same time, the policy of the Umayyads, by encouraging conversion to Islam among the lower classes and by stimulating trade and industry, succeeded in creating an urban metropolis out of Córdoba, to the steady growth of which the periodic additions to the Great Mosque bear eloquent testimony.

¹ James Dickie, "Ibn Shuhayd: A Biographical and Critical Study," *Andalus*, XXIX (1964), 243–310.

² Ibn al-Qūtiyya, *Ta‘rīkh iftitāḥ al-Andalus* (Beirut, 1957), p. 32.

With the urban revival came a new ruling class made up primarily of bureaucrats, Sclavonian guards, and Berber military leaders, the common link between whom was no longer Arabism but Islam. This new class, which partially displaced the old, was in the slow process of formation during the ninth century, but by the tenth it had won its independence and the right to be respected. ^cAbd ar-Rahmān III (r. 912–961) enlarged the army, which had been organized by Arab tribal units, and added a standing contingent of 13,750 Berber, Christian, and Sclavonian mercenaries, thus attempting to amalgamate the various racial groups.³ Córdoba grew to be enormous, at least eight times its present size, and the cost of government, plus that of maintaining an army sixty thousand strong to wage a suicidal war against the Fatimids, appears to have strangled the provincial centers with an ever-increasing burden of taxation. The growing discontent of the provinces with the macrocephalous capital as well as that of the different ethnic groups within the capital itself, seems to have been an underlying cause for the civil wars that so suddenly divided al-Andalus into a large number of city-states during the eleventh century. Thus the tensions produced by the economic growth of the tenth century destroyed the centralizing power. The realm became ungovernable and was once more plunged into a period of separatism, although this time the separatism was basically urban in character, not agrarian as in former times.

Along with the social changes from the old order to the new, a subtle transformation is traceable in the poetry of the caliphate. This can be observed clearly in Ibn Shuhaid's direct predecessor, the Berber poet Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī (958–1030) who flourished at the court of al-Manṣūr in the heyday of Cordovan hegemony.⁴

In 1933 R. Blachère wrote an article in which he gathered together the few extant fragments of Ibn Darrāj's poetry and attempted to trace a biography of the poet from the historical allusions he could find in them.⁵ The recent discovery followed by publication of Ibn Darrāj's almost complete *Dīwān* offers us 163 poems plus a considerable number of fragments and sheds much new light on his figure as a poet. It also allows us to observe his poetic production in relation to the society he lived in.

Upon first examination, the political historian is likely to be disappointed with Ibn Darrāj's *Dīwān* as a historical source, as the following example illustrates. In the year 997 al-Manṣūr led a famous expedition against Santiago de Compostela during the course of which that center of Christian pilgrimage was destroyed. Ibn Darrāj accompanied the victorious general on his campaign and has left an eyewitness

³ E. Lévi-Provençal, *España musulmana hasta la caída del califato de Córdoba (711–1031 de J.C.): Instituciones y vida social e intelectual*, trans. E. García Gómez, *Historia de España*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Vol. V (Madrid, 1957), pp. 44–48.

⁴ He was born toward the very end of the reign of Córdoba's first caliph, ^cAbd ar-Rahmān III an-Nāṣir (r. 912–961), he received his education in the vigorous intellectual climate fostered by the famous library of al-Ḥakam II al-Muṣṭanṣir (r. 961–976), and he won his first poetic laurels at the court of the ^cĀmirid *ḥājib* al-Manṣūr, in the year 992 at the age of thirty-four. Later he lived through the civil wars (*fitna*) and became a wanderer, traveling from one local prince to another in search of a living. His youth and maturity were sheltered by the security of a golden age, but he was exposed to misfortune in his waning years.

⁵ "La vie et l'oeuvre du poète-épistolier andalou Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī," *Hesperis*, XVI (1933), 99–121.

account of Santiago in three previously unknown poems. He describes that city as follows:

It is the tent pole of the Christian's polytheism, lofty in height, while the Byzantines, the Abyssinians, and the Franks are its tent rope.

The infidel sects repair to it in pilgrimage in a steady stream like the air, the meeting place of whose currents grows dark.

Deposited in the ravines of the earth in its faraway location, the soaring mountains and fathomless sea are its veils.

Each pilgrim is dusty because travel has clung to him, and his face is emaciated, while his exhaustion derives from the length of night travel.

Each one is guided to the mainstays of his Church, on his way being neither niggardly of himself nor of his property.

For a long time have kings caused their feet to walk barefoot in it, and have fallen down prostrate on their beards out of reverence for it.

You did not depart until Santiago's two sides had raised a dust cloud spread by the feet of full-grown steeds.

The winds blow it into the air, at times as smoke and at times as dust,

While Saint James was unable to help it, nor did he help himself by averting his own ignominy.

If it was defeated in the very heartland of the north, the conquest of it was achieved both in highlands and lowlands.⁶

What we find here are a series of poetic allusions rather than a concrete and realistic picture of Santiago in the tenth century. Historical events are not expounded in detail. Instead the place where they have occurred is mentioned and described in general terms. This trait indicates that there is no way to understand this poem unless we previously know something about the events to which it refers. Without historical traditions; without chronicles that serve as a commentary to it, it would be largely incomprehensible. The poem can therefore be understood only if we possess a parallel account deriving from the historiographical tradition.

On the other hand, these three poems are of value to the historian because they embody and express the ideals of an age. In them Ibn Darrāj affirms:

These are victories that spread out over the whole world while the necks of Easterners and Westerners bow down before them,

⁶ Ibn Darrāj al-Qastallī, *Dīwān*, ed. Maḥmūd ʿAlī Makkī (Damascus, 1961), no. 120, ll. 8–13; no. 128, ll. 21–24 (hereafter cited as *Dīwān*).

While in every land the Cross has respected them, lying prostrate on its forehead and both hands.⁷

Your victory covered the earth with universal light, like the sun when it spreads daylight over the earth.

Hence devote yourself to pilgrimage with Muslims now that you have uprooted the Christians' shrine of pilgrimage,

For Egypt and Kairouan have expanded, while the eyes of al-Hijaz strain in expectation.⁸

Whereas the poet shows little interest in the particulars of the Christian faith, and in fact, presents it as a debased form of Mosque worship (the kings fall down prostrate and barefoot in the shrine of Santiago), he is very concrete in alluding to an Andalusian imperialist propaganda that throughout the tenth century argued for the reconquest of the eastern Islamic regions from the Fatimids. This political goal was of course never achieved. It was initiated by an-Nāṣir and was still very much in people's minds during the reign of al-Manṣūr. As a result the destruction of Santiago, the most important shrine in western Christendom next to Rome, and rivaling the latter itself, is treated by Ibn Darrāj as a secondary episode leading to the reconquest of Mecca and the Islamic heartlands which was far more important for the Umayyad dynasty. Ibn Darrāj's poetry, as that of many Andalusian poets of that period, is of value in that the ideals and political aspirations it expresses can serve to fill in the bare bones of political history as recorded by the medieval chroniclers. The poetry of Ibn Darrāj is the expression of a political commitment; it is *poésie engagée* and not merely *poésie à gages*. It can be of use to the historian in his attempt to measure the gap between the actual achievements and the avowed goals of Hispano-Arabic dynasties.

If one turns to examine the way in which his personal experiencing of history is reflected in his poetic production, it would not be amiss to stress the fact that Ibn Darrāj was a Berber descendant of the original conquerors of al-Andalus, that is to say, his background on the social level was inferior to that of the Arab conquerors. This is significant in the context of Andalusian culture. In 1953, when H. Pérès published his now classic book on Hispano-Arabic poetry,⁹ he pointed to one poem then extant in which the poet had congratulated the Umayyad, Sulaimān al-Musta'īn, on his ascension to the caliphate in 1013 and in which he was reminded by the poet that the event had been brought about thanks to the timely support of Berber contingents freshly imported from North Africa. From this evidence Pérès wrongly concluded that Ibn Darrāj was chiefly motivated by his Berber nationalism. An examination of the complete *Diwān* makes a different conclusion necessary, for we find that soon after, once the African Berbers had gained control of Córdoba and installed the Berberized

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 102, ll. 64–65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 128, ll. 37–39.

⁹ *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au XI^e siècle: Ses aspects généraux, ses principaux thèmes, et sa valeur documentaire* (2d ed.; Paris, 1953).

ruler al-Qāsim ibn Ḥammūd on the throne, the poet's support for the Ḥammūdis lasted for only a short time. He went to Ceuta complaining that his "homeland had become a hard land for learning."¹⁰ Soon after, disillusionment with his rustic ethnic brethren set in, and he sailed back to al-Andalus, finding that as an Andalusian sophisticate he had little in common with them. It was precisely to the court of the Sclavonian general, Khairān of Almería, that he made his way, that is to say, to the remnants of al-Manṣūr's faction, a faction that had sought the base for its power not in Arabism or Berberism, but in the new Islamic class of townsmen and converts which had developed in al-Andalus. The panegyric to Khairān also marks an epoch in the poet's life. Whereas before, his poetry had always been filled with enthusiasm and an unbounded optimism in the political stability of al-Andalus, now the first true notes of despondency can be detected. In that poem he leaves a vivid description of his first encounter with a storm at sea, which he equates with his own personal sufferings and exile:

Toward you did we lade the ship, having been scared away from the west, advancing swiftly like a flock of crows,

Over green depths such that when the east wind blew, Mounts Thabir and Thahlān tossed us back and forth on them,

Bending down, grazing on their surface, resembling the way idols were worshiped in pagan times.

And when the winds subsided from us, a mournful sigh impelled us to remember our loved ones.

They say, when the waves of the sea, of care, and of gloom rage about us, having eyes and ears:

"Lo, is there any means of return to this world, and is there any grave for us but the sea, or any shroud but the water?

Suppose we see the sight of land, is there any refuge on land for us, or any benefit to be expected from mankind,

When the misfortune of death appears to us and is arrayed with joy before the closest landing place?"¹¹

Thereafter, with systematic regularity, Ibn Darrāj toured the kingdoms of all the Sclavonian generals to the east of the peninsula, namely those of Mubārak and Muẓaffar of Valencia, Labib of Tortosa, and al-Fath ibn Aflah of Játiva. When he finally found a more stable life in the Arab kingdom of Saragossa, his happiness seems never to have been achieved totally. He pines for Córdoba, and complains of being neglected by the Tujibid dynasty. Finally, toward the end of his life, he once more emigrated, this time, once again to a Sclavonian kingdom, that of Mujāhid of Denia, another of al-Manṣūr's generals, of whom it is known that he was a Christian convert

¹⁰ *Dīwān*, no. 31, l. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 33, ll. 3–5, 9–13.

to Islam, that he protected non-Arabs who were exposed to discrimination elsewhere, after the collapse of Córdoba, and that his son and successor ^cAli promoted a Shū'ubite, or anti-Arab, attack against the Tujibid branch of Almería, written by another convert to Islam named Abū ^cAmir ibn García.¹² In his panegyric to Mujāhid, Ibn Darrāj says:

In what fame, other than yours, can I find rest, and from what ocean,
other than yours, can I draw water?¹³

Furthermore, it should be noted that whereas he had been lavish in praising the Arab origin of the Banū Tujib in Saragossa, here he makes no attempt to praise the less illustrious lineage of the Sclavonian former slave. Instead he praises him for his merit and brave deeds, suggesting not that he descended from a great lineage, but that his glory was that of a self-made man:

You were elevated by a name and a deed, each of which, by reason
of your sword in battle, was very bright and clear.

The army [*jaish*], when you appropriated it as a name [Abū l-Jaish]
is such that with its glory other armies rise up and destroy.

The paternity of ancestors to the sons of his kingdom is the likeness
of men impelled by truth and pure speech.¹⁴

The unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from these lines is that Ibn Darrāj was motivated not by a Berber sentiment, but by the all-encompassing Islamic sense of cohesion that had been fostered by the tenth-century Umayyad caliphate. As is shown later, this was also an urban phenomenon. Once the power of Córdoba was broken, a form of racism reemerged as the Berbers gained control of Córdoba, Albarracín, Toledo, and Granada, the Sclavonians of the east coast, and the Arabs of Saragossa and Seville. It was therefore inevitable that Ibn Darrāj should have gravitated toward the Sclavonian kingdoms that strove to keep alive the older, more open spirit, rather than to the Berber ones.

The poetry of Ibn Darrāj is all panegyrical in one way or another and it follows the Neoclassical tradition represented in the East by Mutanabbī. Indeed, the Cordovan scholar Ibn Ḥazm calls him the Mutanabbī of the West. Prior to the proclamation of the caliphate, the extant fragments of Andalusian poetry are either of a political nature, cultivated to express the party spirit of each faction, or they are a frivolous poetry dealing with love and wine, as the invention of the *muwashshahāt* during the emirate of ^cAbd Allāh (r. 888–912) indicates. The Modern and Neoclassical movements had been imported from Baghdad and the renowned Eastern poets were all studied in al-Andalus. But with the proclamation of the caliphate a new, official court panegyric was needed.

¹² See James T. Monroe, *The Shū'ubiyya in al-Andalus: The Risāla of Ibn Garcia and Five Refutations*, University of California Publications: Near Eastern Studies, Vol. XIII (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970).

¹³ *Dīwān*, no. 134, l. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 134, ll. 9, 11–12.

Its earliest exponents seem to have been Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih and Ibn Hāni¹⁵, the first of whom has never been properly studied as a poet, while the second, who left al-Andalus to serve the Fatimid caliph al-Mu‘izz, was described by al-Ma‘arri as “a mill grinding corn, so little sense is there in his verse.”¹⁶

From this it may be inferred that Andalusian poets had not yet succeeded in achieving that smoothness of wording characterizing the Abbasid poets. It was not until Ibn Darrāj that the Neoclassical technique was successfully mastered in the West, so that in many respects to him belongs the distinction of being the first true poet of al-Andalus whose poetry was appreciated in the Islamic heartlands, as the manuscript history of his *Dīwān* shows, and as he himself never tired of boasting. In one case, while praising Mundhir ibn Yaḥya of Saragossa, he declares:

The writing reeds of your guest hearkened to your exploits whereupon
Bosra [town in Syria] and Jāsim raise their ears to listen to them.

Al-Iraq and its Syrian province envy me on your account, yet it is you
that ‘Abd Shams [the Umayyads] and Hāshim [the Abbasids] envy
on my account.¹⁶

The main purpose of Arabic panegyric poetry is not historical. It is a type of poetry composed during the life of the person it seeks to praise, and is heavily dominated by the rules of the poetic art, but what chiefly characterizes it are a series of commonplaces arranged in such a way as to indicate how exceptional is the person who has inspired the poem. The genre is thus governed by the need to use a series of commonplaces, of *topoi*, and it is an important source for studying the ideals that predominate in the society at the time the poem is composed. It must also be taken into account that the form of these poems significantly influences the content, not only because of the formal rules they adhere to, or because of the poet’s obligation to use literary *topoi*, but because a specialized language is used, different from colloquial speech, and because some ideas are expounded in detail whereas others are omitted. This phenomenon should be taken into account in analyzing the poetry of Ibn Darrāj.

As is well known, from pre-Islamic times the connection between the poet (in Arabic *shā’ir* or ‘kenner’) and the sorcerer or *kāhin* was a very close one, while the magical effect of language was held to be such that satirical poetry, solemnly recited, played a major role against the enemy in war. That this basic attitude to poetry had not entirely died out, although it had been modified by Islam, is illustrated in tenth-century al-Andalus by the fact that in his campaign against Barcelona, al-Manṣūr was accompanied by a contingent of forty poets. If the function of satire was to bring into effect the destruction of the enemy, that of the official court panegyric was to ensure the permanence of the ruler, of the dynasty, and of the social order. Since the ultimate objective sought was continuity, it follows that the poetic form, language, and conceptual world had to be fixed, “permanent” ones, and that

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1st ed.; Leiden and London, 1913–1934), II, 383 (hereafter cited as *E.I.*).

¹⁶ *Dīwān*, no. 44, ll. 85, 89.

departure from this fixed form was not tolerated or desired. If this is kept in mind it becomes possible to enter into the thought world of the medieval Arab poet with greater sympathy than is common to modern critics.

Ibn Darrāj's panegyrics almost invariably contain six basic elements that need not follow any particular order within the poem, but all of which function to stress its main theme, namely the enhancement of the ruler's figure. They are: (1) erotic, (2) floral, (3) heroic, (4) dramatic, (5) genealogical, (6) benedictional. This much he has in common with Eastern poets. It is, however, in the treatment of each theme, in its development or lack of development, that the individual poet's originality and personal outlook on life may be detected, and a closer scrutiny of Ibn Darrāj from this viewpoint may help to evaluate his work and what it reveals about his outlook on society.

Ibn Darrāj's erotic passages take the form of the traditional love prelude, but in every case they are subservient to the main theme of the poem. It is in the novel treatment of the material that he is original. Blachère first pointed out that in one of Ibn Darrāj's poems he substituted for the stereotyped beloved of the love prelude an unusual reference to his own wife and eight-year-old daughter, introducing a new and personal note in Andalusian poetry.¹⁷ Although this theme had already existed in pre-Islamic poetry, it seems to have died out later. Its revival by Ibn Darrāj is therefore curious. An examination of the complete *Diwān* now makes it possible to affirm that this was his common practice, for he repeatedly alludes to his sorrow at parting from his family and to their sufferings in his absence. One example goes as follows:

How excellent is the mistress of my harem, whose tears were like pearls, and whose remoteness sorely afflicts my heart,

As well as an eight-year-old daughter such that my remembrance of her heart's throb continues to disturb me, despite separation!

How wondrously she stood, when the inevitability of separation had become grievous, her two hands suspended from my two shoulders' thongs!

She complained of my ill-treating close relatives when cruel parting exiled my saddle to distant lands.

May the liberality of the 'Āmirid [al-Mansūr] distribute gifts so that he who once treated her cruelly may return showing regard for her.

She eagerly desired to dwell with her father, for dwelling with him, in times of oppression, is one of the evils that disappoint her enemies.

Yet what is dwelling with her father to her, when the bright clouds of the 'Āmirid's hand have summoned her father?

¹⁷ Blachère, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

My little child, be off from me today for mine are firm decisions
of which the goal is the 'Āmirid's helpful hand.¹⁸

A point to be made here, is that for a medieval Muslim, family ties were sacred, and in particular that in post-Islamic times it was not considered polite to mention one's womenfolk in public without adding the formula *ḥashā-ka* 'pardon me for mentioning the subject.' What Ibn Darrāj is therefore implying is that for him the honor of serving the dynasty is placed above family ties, that is to say, the centralizing principle of Córdoba has greater value in his eyes than the tribal ties that had formed the basis of society in an earlier age. The erotic element thus serves to introduce the panegyrical theme; it has social implications and is not presented merely for its own sake.

The floral elements function similarly. It appears that during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik al-Muzaffar, son and successor to al-Manṣūr, floral poems were particularly appreciated, since eight of them, dating from this period, are preserved in the *Dīwān*. The following is a description of the daffodil:

Emerald branches have produced their silver leaves and golden flowers for us,

When they are gathered together in silken cords and stand before you like gossamer.

Hence it is their right to observe the drinkers when their carousing is enlivened with toasts,

And to ask God to lengthen the life of 'Abd al-Malik, the lord of the Arabs,

For were it not for his generous deeds they would excite no wonder, and were it not for his virtues they would not be fragrant.¹⁹

He describes lilies in the following context:

They are fortresses whose structure the hands of spring have raised over slender reeds.

Their battlements are of silver; their defendants surround the emir with swords of gold,

Waiting for his orders, for he has climbed to the breach in the building and has drawn his blade while spying out over the enemy,

Like the emir of Luna who arose to survey us when 'Abd al-Malik drew near to him with a noisy army.

Hence, if in Luna you won statuesque maidens as spoils, here you have the abodes of musk, so despoil and plunder

¹⁸ *Diwān*, no. 3, ll. 36–43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 16, ll. 4–8.

Rare gifts from the month of Sha'bān who has shown his face to you in exchange for the rose that the month of Rajab gave you as a gift.²⁰

In both cases the floral element serves to introduce the panegyric theme. In the second case, the reference is a specific one to the expedition in which 'Abd al-Malik conquered the fortress of Barrios de Luna in León, in the year 1005. It should be added that this use of the floral element as an introduction to panegyric is novel to al-Andalus. It is the result of an essentially urban and cultured appreciation of the nature that could be found in the gardens and palatial residences of Córdoba, and indicates that it was the urban point of view that Ibn Darrāj was reflecting, for city dwellers, not rustics, turn gardens into art.²¹

The heroic elements function similarly. Battles are described in which the sovereign has bravely overcome the enemy. The actual descriptions are brief and couched in commonplaces the purpose of which is to prove the military prowess of the hero. They are always accompanied, however, by the suggestion that it is Islam, truth, and justice that the ruler is defending against unbelief, error, and injustice, that is to say, they defend the caliphal claim to universality, for the wars fought are presented as "just wars."

In a larger context, the dramatic elements have to do with this same point, for they underline the confrontations between Islam and its enemies. In a narrower sense, there are dramatic confrontations between sovereign and sovereign, describing the numerous visits of Christian monarchs who come to Córdoba to sue for peace, to submit to the rule of Islam, or to ask for help from al-Manṣūr in their factional struggles. Sancho Garcés of Navarre is introduced as follows:

Here is the great lord of polytheism, who has come in all humility,
submitting to your arbitration;

The offspring of the kings of unbelief in the apex of his glory; the
heir to the kingdom of the Rūm, the most ancient of the ancient;

Placed amid the genealogies of the Caesars, for he descends from
proud-necked princes and from kings, with the closest of blood
ties.

.

Here he is, humbled before you; a hostage to what you, as judge
have decided for him.

He betook himself under constraint, to the sovereign whose slave
he has seen fate to be, whereupon he has learned his lesson.

Were it not for the swords of victory when you drew them, this
benefit would be hard to imagine,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 15, ll. 7–12.

²¹ For a study of this point see G. E. von Grunebaum, "Aspects of Arabic Urban Literature Mostly in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *Andalus*, XX (1955), 259–281.

For he came with the fetters of fear shortening his step, yet lengthening it while he advanced in the bond of abasement,

Discoursing out of alarm though he is not eloquent; speaking out of fear though he is not an Arab.

Whenever awe of the army frightened him so that he drew back in terror, the thought of your good cheer reached him so that he advanced.²²

In this way, to the dramatic conflict within the Christian monarch between fear and hope of pardon, is added the dramatic confrontation with al-Mansūr, leaving no room for doubt as to the superior power and magnanimity of the latter.

The genealogical elements are always introduced to praise the panegyricized person's ancestry, and since ancestry was an important component of the medieval Arab's idea of honor, the treatment these elements receive in Ibn Darrāj's hands is significant and deserves to be examined in some detail.

The Arabic word for honor, *sharaf*, derives from a root implying both physical height and social rank, and was originally used to express a tribal concept of honor very different from our own. *Sharaf* includes both the tribal concept of pride in lineage (*nasab*), and that of personal merit (*hasab*). But with the advent of Islam, a new notion was introduced, namely the idea that men of honor form a larger community of believers. To the question of who was more noble within Islam, Muhammad's reply was that the basis for nobility lay in piety (*tuqā*), not in lineage.²³ By this means he sought to undermine intertribal rivalries and to substitute a broader collective body for that of the tribe, thus welding many tribes together. The three basic roots of Arab honor thus came to be lineage, merit, and piety. A particularly valuable concept for understanding the medieval Andalusian honor system is that formulated by the Spanish ethnologist Julio Caro Baroja, who speaks of "outhonoring others" (*valer más*),²⁴ that is to say, of competing with or rivaling others for the possession of honor, since honor can only be defined by contrast with what is less honorable. This attitude, which was likewise essentially pre-Islamic, finds its expression through constant warfare, and usually had little regard for the humane ideals of Islam. In this way a conflict arose between the pre-Islamic honor system based on tribal rivalries and the more complex and universal notion of an Islamic community within which warfare was theoretically not allowed. The concept of "outhonoring others" is collective and is closely connected to a patrilineal system of family relationships including the blood members of the tribe as well as its protégés (*jirān*). Each lineage, each tribe, attempts to outhonor the others, and the result is an endless struggle to obtain public honors, to acquire property which then becomes the common patrimony of the tribe. From this collective notion of property it follows that the science of genealogy was of extreme importance to the Arabs, since one's right to wealth was determined by one's descent from and rank within the tribe. The literary

²² *Diwān*, no. 107, ll. 9–11, 31–36.

²³ Koran, 40:13: "Verily the most honorable among you before God is the most pious among you."

²⁴ Julio Caro Baroja, *La ciudad y el campo* (Barcelona, 1966), p. 74.

genres of panegyric and satire, the peculiarly Arabic poetic theme of *fakhr* or “boasting” also respond to the need for proclaiming one’s own honor or undermining that of one’s enemies. The lack of inhibition with which Arab poets ask their patrons in the body of their poems to remunerate their efforts also is related to a collective notion of property. In the pre-Islamic system, it was common practice to take the law into one’s own hands, and blood vengeance, the *lex talionis* (*tha’r*), was a recurring feature of the tribal system, so that the two ideas of *outhonoring others* and of *vengeance* were closely associated. Islam attempted to humanize this system, but despite Islam, vengeance and blood feuds continued for a long time. In al-Andalus this factional violence was a key feature of tribal groupings up to the tenth century. The most admired virtues were the heroic ones found everywhere in early Andalusian poetry. Thus the two basic and antagonistic concepts of honor, namely the tribal and the religious, coexisted in al-Andalus, as elsewhere in the Islamic world. The first developed in the Arabian desert, to the conditions of which it was well suited, and was easily adapted to the Iberian peninsula where a similar system had arisen under Visigothic rule as a result of the decline of urban life. The second was more suited to the city, where men of different tribes and ethnic backgrounds were forced to consort harmoniously with one another, and it began to reappear with the rise of the city. The campaigns of an-Nāṣir succeeded in uprooting much of the older system of tribal honor, or at least, in bringing it under control. Ibn Khaldūn tells us that the Arabs in al-Andalus declined politically because they forgot their lineages in the urban melting pot and adopted names derived from the towns in which they resided, that is to say, they lost what he termed their *‘aṣabiyya* or ‘tribal solidarity.’²⁵ What had happened was that with the rise of the Andalusian caliphate a new situation developed. The caliphs awarded from above honors to individuals as a reward for their service to the dynasty. A bureaucratic and military class of non-Arabs developed and the court and administration of the kingdom modified the tribal system of honor by upholding in its place the Islamic system. The right personally to take vengeance was restricted, as we learn from an incident in which al-Manṣūr imprisoned the Umayyad prince and poet known as ash-Sharif at-Taliq for killing his own father out of rivalry over a slave girl.²⁶ Under the new system one could rise swiftly from relative obscurity through military excellence or bureaucratic efficiency as the brilliant career of al-Manṣūr shows. The cultured court life organized around the Islamic notion of honor came to view the older tribal system as backward and uncivilized. The Shū‘ibite, Ibn García, a Christian convert to Islam, despised the Arabs, and behind his attack on them lies a rejection of the older tribal society over which they had presided. To the Arab claim that they were superior because the Prophet was an Arab, he replies that the Prophet was “He by whom God delivered us non-Arabs as well as you Arabs from blindness and error: as for us, he delivered us from the worshipers of the Trinity and the reverence of the Cross; whereas you he delivered from the followers of an abominable religion and from the worship of idols. Yet it is not astonishing that his origin and root came from among you Arabs, for after

²⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddima: An Introduction to History*, trans. F. Rosenthal, Bollingen Series, Vol. XLIII (New York, 1958), I, 61–62.

²⁶ See E. García Gómez, “El príncipe amnistiado y su ‘Diwān,’” in *Cinco poetas musulmanes* (Madrid, 1945), pp. 55–75.

all, pure gold is found in the dirt, and musk is part of the secretions of the gazelle, and sweet drops are deposited in foul-smelling waterskins.”²⁷

In sum, this sense of honor is based on the religious, not the tribal principle. In the same way, Ibn Darrāj exalts the Arab lineage of al-Manṣūr, although it was in fact an obscure one (a requirement of the literary convention), but in every case he stresses even more the *ḥājib*’s service to the Islamic cause. At the same time, there is in his mind no hesitation in praising on an equal level the lineage of Berbers, of Christian kings, and even of Sclavonian rulers, while always being careful to stress their merit as well. In a panegyric to Mubārak and Muẓaffar of Valencia, he adds that their glory is not due to their Sclavonian ancestry, but to their previous service to al-Manṣūr:

You were adorned with a victory and power derived from al-Manṣūr,
so that on the day of the test, the enemy caused you to put your select
men to the test.

When, on the day of the attack with the spear, you trace back your
lineage to ‘Āmir, then beware of your lives, O heads of the enemy,
may you not live long!²⁸

Thus, although the old sense of genealogical honor by no means vanished entirely, Ibn Darrāj incorporates into it the concept of honor derived from service to Islam, which embraced all the community of believers as well as their non-Muslim allies. We are thus in a new world where positive law is defended by the poet, in tune with the policy of supraracial harmony adopted by the caliphate.

The final element in the panegyrics of Ibn Darrāj is the benedictional. So far the other elements analyzed above were skillfully handled to express the ideal of caliphal authority. There remains only to invoke the blessings of God and fate in order to secure the permanence of the social order. This is achieved by a final envoi that Ibn Darrāj seems to have introduced in his poetry and that often assumes a parallelistic form expressing the desired ideal of harmony in literary terms. To Mubārak and Muẓaffar he says:

Let the religion whose sword you are, not be forsaken, and let the
kingdom whose *ḥājib* you are, not become desolate!²⁹

To al-Manṣūr:

I ask God for a kingship that is not awed by fate’s vicissitudes, and
for a good fortune that will not decline and perish.³⁰

In conclusion, by the use of erotic, floral, heroic, dramatic, genealogical, and benedictional elements in the courtly panegyric, the figure of the ruler is solemnly

²⁷ Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁸ *Dīwān*, no. 35, ll. 41–42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 8, l. 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 118, l. 139.

portrayed and he is extolled as a servant of Islam. Seen from this point of view, the panegyric is not a loosely knit, inorganic conglomerate in which isolated comparisons and rhetorical embellishments are used for the mere empty display of virtuosity as has too often been maintained, but rather, in a larger context, it is a carefully worked, totally organic, artistic expression of the ideal of kingship designed to proclaim the unifying Islamic principle against tribalism and localism. It thus is an art reflecting the ideals of urban society, and it attempts to persuade men to submit to the latter. There is no place in this solemn and ritualistic poetry for the aristocratic frivolity of the Andalusian *muwashshahāt* that had been invented in the ninth century, and this may help to explain why these strophic poems seem not to have been cultivated at court in the tenth century, but reappeared in the eleventh when the ideal of a strong central government had broken down.

DATE OF IBN SHUHAID'S *Risālat at Tawābi^c wa z-zawābi^c*

In contrast with the unbounded optimism of Ibn Darrāj's panegyrics to al-Manṣūr, the works of Ibn Shuhaid, who was brought up during the collapse of Cordovan hegemony, reveal a significant departure in their outlook.

The age of Ibn Shuhaid, known by Arab historians as the *fitna*, may be subdivided roughly into three periods that run parallel to the poet's career: (1) internal struggle in the Umayyad family (1009–1016); (2) Ḥammūdid interregnum (1016–1023; 1025–1026); (3) Umayyad restoration and final collapse of the caliphate (1023–1031). The extant biographical material for Ibn Shuhaid has been carefully collated by James Dickie in a learned and readily available article,³¹ so that without describing the incidents of the poet's life in detail, it suffices to single out the significant fact that Ibn Shuhaid's political fortunes reached their peak during the Ḥammūdid interregnum. After the Umayyad Muḥammad III al-Mustakfi was proclaimed caliph in Córdoba in 1024, ousting the Ḥammūdids, Ibn Shuhaid's enemies made life in Córdoba difficult if not dangerous for him, so that he fled and sought refuge in Málaga at the court of Yaḥya ibn Ḥammūd, with whom he was on excellent terms, and whom he urged to recapture Córdoba. This feat was accomplished in November 1025, but Yaḥya was expelled in March 1026. The Ḥammūdids were a half-Berberized Alid dynasty and they were suspected of Shi'ism by the orthodox Andalusians. In an article on the subject,³² Maḥmūd ʻAlī Makkī discusses the possibility that Shi'ism could have been adopted by some of the poets of this period, such as Ibn Darrāj, Ibn Shuhaid, and others. Makkī adduces as proof for his claim that when Ibn Shuhaid fled from Córdoba to Yaḥya's court in Málaga, he wrote a poem expressing preference for the Ḥammūdids as opposed to the Umayyads. But only the names of the dynasties are mentioned in the poem he quotes, not their respective sectarian affiliations. We have shown how Ibn Darrāj, who also flirted with the Ḥammūdids, left them in disgust for better pastures in the Sclavonian kingdoms. Ibn Shuhaid, too, later switched sides and again served the Umayyads when the latter were restored to their last tenure in power. From this it seems clear that the poet's praise for the Berber dynasty was

³¹ Dickie, *op. cit.*

³² "at-Tashaiyu^c fī l-Andalus," *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos de Madrid*, II (1954), 93–145, esp. pp. 140–141.

based more on political opportunism than on religious convictions. It must not be forgotten that the Ḥammūdids were an Alid (but not therefore necessarily a Shi'ite) dynasty ruling over a profoundly orthodox population guarded by the ever-watchful eyes of the Malikite jurists. Any attempt to convert the population of Sunni al-Andalus would have led to open resistance, so that heterodox ideas would have had to remain restricted to underground minorities. It is hard to find any clear traces of specifically Shi'ite ideas in the works of Ibn Shuhaid despite his sympathy for the Ḥammūdid dynasty.³³ His friend Ibn Ḥazm's *Fīṣal* is furthermore full of anti-Shi'ite passages. But although there is no outward trace of an active Shi'ite campaign in Córdoba at this time, the Ḥammūdids, being half-Berberized, promoted another individual named Ibn García (not to be confused with the one quoted above), and also famous for his Shū'ubism, to the post of chief qadi.³⁴ This appointment was a direct affront to the old Arab aristocracy and its partisans, the Malikite jurists. In other words, the Ḥammūdids seem to have tried hard to maintain order in the city by furthering the old supraracial spirit at a time when racial strife among Arabs, Berbers, and Sclavonians was undermining national unity. Parallel to the muzzling of the jurists, the Ḥammūdid reign presided over an elitist literary renaissance of a markedly aristocratic character. Of this intellectual rebirth we find clear traces in Ibn Shuhaid and his close friend the famous scholar Ibn Ḥazm, both of whom led a group of young aesthetes who revolutionized Cordovan letters.

In the introduction to his edition of the *Risālat at-Tawābi^c wa z-zawābi^c*, the Lebanese scholar Buṭrus al-Bustānī has performed a valuable service in attempting to date that work.³⁵ Since the results of al-Bustānī's research are published in Arabic and are not readily available to the general reader, it is not amiss to refer to some of the main points he has raised, although modifications and corrections are added to suggest a more precise date of composition.

There is no complete manuscript *Dīwān* of the poetry of Ibn Shuhaid, but from the scattered poems and fragments preserved in other Arabic sources, Charles Pellat collected and published a partial *Dīwān*,³⁶ of which a new version has recently been made by James Dickie.³⁷ The *Risāla* is likewise incomplete, and was edited by Bustānī from the major fragments contained in Ibn Bassām's *Kitāb adh-Dhakhira*,³⁸ which the editor collated with other, secondary sources. Bustānī introduced the chapter

³³ His poem in praise of Ibn Ḥazm is totally orthodox in its anti-Mu'tazilism (see below, pp. 89–90). In another poem he mourns over Córdoba in the following terms:

It is a town—may God raise up its people's stumbling!—whose inhabitants
became Berberized, and adopted the ways of the Maghrib as well as those of
Egypt!

The implication is that they adopted the Shi'ism of the Fatimids and Moroccans, which he obviously does not approve of (Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, ed. Charles Pellat [Beirut, 1963], p. 75, l. 3).

³⁴ Fernando de la Granja, "Ibn García, cadí de los califas Ḥammūdías," *Andalus*, XXX (1965), 63–78.

³⁵ Ibn Shuhaid, *Risālat at-Tawābi^c wa z-zawābi^c*, ed. Buṭrus al-Bustānī (Beirut, 1951) (hereafter cited as *Risāla*).

³⁶ The references to Ibn Shuhaid's poems quoted in this monograph are to the Pellat edition cited in n. 33 above, and hereafter cited as *Dīwān*.

³⁷ *The Dīwān of Ibn Shuhaid al-Andalusī*, ed. Yūsuf Zaki (James Dickie) (Cairo, 1969).

³⁸ *Kitāb adh-Dhakhira fi mahāsin ahl al-Jazīra* (Cairo, 1939), I, part 1, 210–257.

headings in order to reduce the work to a coherent form and I have retained them in the present translation for the reader's convenience.

None of the Arabic sources give any indication of the *Risāla*'s date of composition. According to Brockelmann it was written about twenty years before al-Ma'arri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, the date of which has been set at 1032. This would mean that Ibn Shuhaid must have composed his work around 1013, but Brocklemann offers no evidence to support his conclusions.³⁹ It is known, however, that Ibn Shuhaid suffered from hemiplegia that led to partial paralysis during the final years of his life. Although his *Diwān* contains several poignant poems alluding to the effects of this disease, it is not mentioned at all in the *Risālā*. The clue to the date of composition must therefore be sought in the *Risālā* itself. In it the poet has the addressee, Abū Bakr Yaḥya ibn Ḥazm, exclaim: "How did he [i.e., Ibn Shuhaid] come to be given such ability as a youth (*sabīyyan*)?"⁴⁰ Similarly, in his encounter with the familiar spirit of al-Mutanabbi, the author is condescendingly treated as a budding young poet: "If the length of his life is prolonged he will no doubt eject pearls from his mouth, and I am sure he will die in possession of a native genius like a live ember and an ambition that will place his sole on top of the full moon."⁴¹ When Zuhair ibn Numair, the poet's familiar spirit, first appears before him, he asks: "Are you unable to continue, O youth (*fatā*) of human race?⁴² The word *fatā* 'a youth in the prime of life' is repeatedly used by the poet in the *Risāla* to refer to himself, and Abū 'Isā's mule encounters him with the proverb "'Amr has outgrown (*shabba 'an*) the neckring,"⁴³ implying that he has ceased to be a *sabi* 'boy' wearing child's clothes, and become a *shābb* 'a youth between sixteen and thirty-two years of age.'

All this points to the fact that the work was written not toward the end of Ibn Shuhaid's life, but rather when he was a young man. He alludes to having studied with his teachers as if that experience were still fresh in his mind: "I used to long for men of letters and yearned to compose eloquent discourse; hence I frequented literary gatherings and sat at the feet of teachers."⁴⁴ But at the same time he criticizes them for their pedantry, and the entire *Risāla* is couched in a tone suggesting the irreverence toward authority of a young man who has completed his education and now finds himself in a safe position from which to revolt against and chide his former mentors.

An examination of the datable poems inserted in the work yields further evidence. In one of these he alludes to being slandered by three characters at the court of Sulaimān al-Musta'in (r. 1012–1016).⁴⁵ In another he mentions his imprisonment by 'Alī ibn Hammūd (r. 1016–1017).⁴⁶ One ode appears to refer to the latter's son Yaḥya, who came to power in Córdoba in 1021 but had to flee for his life in 1022.⁴⁷

³⁹ Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, trans. J. Carmichael and M. Perlmann (New York, 1960), p. 196.

⁴⁰ See p. 51 below.

⁴¹ See p. 70 below.

⁴² See p. 52 below.

⁴³ See p. 94 below.

⁴⁴ See p. 51 below.

⁴⁵ See p. 77 below.

⁴⁶ See p. 67 below.

⁴⁷ See p. 59 below.

The elegy on Ibn Dhakwān was recited at that qadi's funeral, which took place in 1022, when the poet was thirty years old.⁴⁸ As Dickie has discovered, The *Risāla* also quotes from an elegy on the vizier Abū 'Ubaida Ḥasan ibn Mālik who died in 1025.⁴⁹ Another poem, in praise of Ibn Shuhaid's friend Ibn Ḥazm, alludes to the latter's Shafi'iite doctrines.⁵⁰ Although the exact date of Ibn Ḥazm's conversion from Shafi'iism to Zāhirism is not known, it must have taken place according to Miguel Asín Palacios, no later than 1027 when he appears in Játiva writing the *Tauq al-hamāma* and the *Fīṣal*.⁵¹ This necessarily means that the work must have been composed after 1025 at the earliest, yet before Ibn Ḥazm became a Zāhirite, that is to say between the years 1025 and 1027, when the poet was in his early thirties, and from only five to seven years before al-Ma'arrī wrote his *Risālat al-Ghufrān*.

Such a date would agree with the poet's conception of himself as a young man, as well as with the psychological attitude he manifests toward his teachers, for in his early thirties he would still be technically a *fatā* or a *shābb*, and yet his literary reputation would have become sufficiently established for him to have made the considerable number of enemies he attacks in his *Risāla*.

The work was most probably composed in Córdoba during the brief reign of Yahya ibn Hammūd (November 1025–March 1026) for the following reasons: (1) The work expresses enthusiasm for the Hammudids. (2) No subsequent events are mentioned. (3) The poet's contempt for the Malikite jurists in the *Risāla* is still of the order of good-natured banter and rebuke, quite different from the savagery of his attack on them when he was ordered to chastise them publicly in June 1030.⁵² (4) By 1027 Ibn Shuhaid would surely have learned of Ibn Ḥazm's conversion to Zāhirism, or at very least, that his faith in Shafi'iism was wavering. (5) In 1025–1026 Ibn Shuhaid would have been thirty-three years old, that is to say, a *shābb* by almost one year. Although none of these arguments are conclusive, together they point to an early date for the composition of the *Risāla*, under the reign of the Hammudids, when ideological ferment had reached a peak among the native Andalusians of aristocratic background dissatisfied with the Berber rule. As I show later, the philosophical structure of the work is in harmony with the political aspirations fashionable among such circles.

ANALYSIS OF THE *Risāla*

In its present form the *Risāla* of Ibn Shuhaid may be subdivided into five sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Part One: The Familiar Spirits of the Poets; (3) Part Two: The Familiar Spirits of the Prose Writers; (4) Part Three: The Literary Critics among the Genii; (5) Part Four: The Animals among the Genii.

INTRODUCTION

The author addresses his *Risāla* to a certain Abū Bakr, who can now be identified

⁴⁸ See p. 66 below.

⁴⁹ See pp. 60–61 below. According to Pellat, Ibn Mālik died in 1029.

⁵⁰ See p. 89 below.

⁵¹ Miguel Asín Palacios, *Abenázam de Córdoba y su "Historia crítica de las ideas religiosas"* (Madrid, 1927), I, 130, 136. Dickie gives the date of conversion as 1029.

⁵² See Dickie, "Ibn Shuhaid: A Biographical and Critical Study," pp. 281–282.

as Abū Bakr Yaḥya ibn Ḥazm,⁵³ a vizier and secretary who from the context and allusions in the work seems to have slandered Ibn Shuhaid at the court of Sulaimān al-Musta^cīn by accusing him of plagiarism. The *Risāla* is thus addressed to a hostile critic; it attempts to clear the author's name of the accusation leveled against him and to expose the mediocrity of critics in general. Ultimately the purpose of the work is a literary one (unlike al-Ma^carri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān* which is theological), for it examines the bases of artistic creativity and provides a uniquely original example of Andalusian literary criticism at its best. Along with Ibn Ḥazm's *Tauq al-ḥamāma* it has often been considered one of the two greatest prose masterpieces of Andalusian literature.⁵⁴ Abū Bakr had implied that Ibn Shuhaid's poetry was too good to be his own, that it must have been inspired by a genie, thereby insinuating that it was stolen property. Taking up the gauntlet, Ibn Shuhaid bases the structure of his work on the ancient pre-Islamic belief that every poet is inspired by an individual genie.⁵⁵ He then mentions his early studies at the literary schools of Córdoba and relates how, after an unfortunate love affair, his beloved had died. He tells the reader that he then attempted to compose an elegy to mourn her passing, but became so choked with emotion that he was unable to finish it. At this point his inspiring genie, Zuhair ibn Numair, appeared before him and helped him to finish the poem. Zuhair is introduced as a member of the Banū Ashja^c of the genii, and since Ibn Shuhaid descended from the human tribe of the Banū Ashja^c, a close blood bond is established between the two.⁵⁶ It is implied that emotion alone is not sufficient for artistic production, but that the individual poet must be guided in his work by a spiritual partner who can help him to reduce emotion to harmony. From then on, whenever Ibn Shuhaid needed help, Zuhair would appear before him, and he would "go in the direction he desired and attain with his native genius (*gariḥa*) what he sought."⁵⁷ From the very beginning of the *Risāla* greater importance is therefore attributed to poetic inspiration, to genius, and to intuition than to education and technical mastery of the poetic craft.⁵⁸

⁵³ See ad-Ḍabbī, *Kitāb Bughyat al-multamis fī ta'rikh rijāl ahl al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1884), p. 485; Ḥumāidi, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fī dhikr wulāt al-Andalus* (Cairo, 1966), p. 374.

⁵⁴ For two recent appraisals see W. Montgomery Watt and Pierre Cachia, *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 126, and Juan Vernet, *Literatura árabe* (Barcelona, 1968), pp. 114–115.

⁵⁵ Ignaz Goldziher, "Sejtān vor dem Islam: Ginn als Eigename" and "Die Ginnen im Islam," in *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie* (Leiden, 1896), pp. 106–117.

⁵⁶ To the ancient Arab belief in jinns the philosophers later added the belief in the Greek demons: See the Plotinian Arab source attributed to Shaikh al-Yūnānī ('the Greek sage'): "In the air which is contingent to the earth and the orbit of the moon, there exist living beings with fine bodies in the opinion of [the author of the book]. The quantity and purity of soul in them are above those in man and below those in the stars. In the old books of religious and political laws of the ancient philosophers, these [beings] are called the 'guardians of the world'" (F. Rosenthal, "Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source," *Orientalia*, ser. 2, XXIV [1955], 47). Cf. *Theology of Aristotle*, trans. Geoffrey Lewis, in *Plotini Opera*, ed. P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer (Paris and Brussels, 1959), II, 145, 383–385, 387, 403, 465.

⁵⁷ See p. 53 below.

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥazm was also aware of the distinction between poetic craftsmanship and natural talent: "Poetry is divided into three parts: *craftsmanship* (*śinā'a*), *natural talent* (*tab^c*), and *total perfection* (*barā'a*). *Craftsmanship* is composition comprising description of objects, grasping of ideas, and applying of metaphors to them. The master of this part among the Ancients was Zuhair ibn Abī Sulmā and among the Moderns Ḥabib ibn Aus. *Natural talent* is that wherein affectation has no place, for its language is ordinary, not exceeding its idea, so that if you wished to express that idea in prose you could produce nothing easier, nor anything more succinct than that expression. The master of this part among the Ancients was Jarir, and among the Moderns al-Ḥasan. *Total perfection*

Henceforward, Zuhair will act as the poet's spiritual guide through the land of the genii where Ibn Shuhaid will interview the familiar spirits of the major classical poets and prose writers, as well as some contemporary critics and pedants. The *Risāla* is therefore a voyage to the medieval Arab Parnassus, in the course of which the author will make value judgments and indicate his own literary preferences and ideas.

PART ONE: THE FAMILIAR SPIRITS OF THE POETS

In this section Ibn Shuhaid interviews the demons of Imru⁵⁸ al-Qais, Tarafa, and Qais ibn al-Khaṭīm among the pre-Islamic poets, and those of Abū Tammām, al-Buhtūrī, Abū Nuwās, and al-Mutanabbi among the Modern and Neoclassical poets. He follows that order, which is chronological with the sole exception of Abū Nuwās who flourished before Abū Tammām. It should be noted that there is a significant omission from this list, namely the Umayyad poets Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, al-Akhtal, and Dhū r-Rumma. Not only the selection, but also the omissions will help us to form a picture of what Ibn Shuhaid considered to be good poetry.

Imru⁵⁹ al-Qais was the earliest composer of a *mu'allqa*, and has generally been considered by critics to be the greatest of the pre-Islamic poets, largely because of his intuition and mastery of the poetic craft.⁵⁹ The poet Tarafa came after Imru⁵⁸

is full control over fine and difficult ideas, abundance in what people have no familiarity in saying, success in comparison and in embellishing a subtle idea. The master of this part among the Ancients was Imru⁵⁸ al-Qais and among the Moderns 'Ali ibn 'Abbās ar-Rūmī.

"The poetry of all people reverts to the three styles we have mentioned, and is a combination of them. As for him who wishes to excel in the different divisions of poetry, in its choice parts, and who wishes to enjoy the various kinds of mastery over its beauties, let him consult the book of Qudāma ibn Ja'far called *Naqd ash-shi'r* (Poetic Criticism), as well as the books of Abū 'Ali al-Hātimī, for in them there is more than enough gathered on the subject. The quality of being a poet is not acquired but rather it is an innate power, although we can strengthen its possessor by increasing his knowledge of poems and making him study them" (Ibn Ḥazm, *at-Tagrib li-hadd ad-mantiq wa-l-madkhāl ilai-hi*, ed. Ihṣān 'Abbās [Beirut, 1959], pp. 206–207). The distinction between inspiration and craftsmanship in Arabic poetry has been compared with its Greek background by G. E. von Grunebaum, "The Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature," *Comparative Literature*, IV (1952), 323–340. He quotes the following significant passage from Plato: "But he who, having no touch of the Muses' madness in his soul, comes to the doors of poesy persuaded that he will be an able poet because of his technical skill (*ek technēs*)—he, I say, will remain uninitiated (*ateles*), and the poetry of the sober will vanish before that of the frenzied (*ton mainomenon*)" (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245A, *apud. ibid.*, p. 325).

⁵⁸ "The Prophet of Islam described him as 'the most poetical of the poets, and their leader into Hellfire.' The second caliph 'Umar, however, reached a more favorable verdict; for him the poet prince was 'their forerunner—he excavated for them the well of poesy, opening a most true vision where formerly there had only been purblind notions.' 'Ali the fourth caliph also admired him for the excellence of his invention and his outstanding intuition, and because 'he never uttered out of fear or for favor.' Ibn Rashiq (d. 1064), the eminent critic of Kairouan, quotes a more considered opinion: 'Imru⁵⁸ al-Qais was not the pioneer of the poets in the sense that he said things which had never been said before; it is rather the case that he was the first to express certain ideas, and then other poets admired them and followed his lead.' Among his inventions are enumerating the comparison of women with gazelles, wild cows and eggs, and the likening of horses to eagles and stags—he excelled in the use of metaphor and simile; he was also the first to separate the erotic prelude from the rest of the ode. Numerous other instances are cited by Arab writers to illustrate the overwhelming impact by the poetry of Imru⁵⁸ al-Qais on the minds and imaginations of later composers. Many of his phrases acquired the universal currency of proverbs. It is no exaggeration to say that his *Mu'allqa* s *iat* once the most famous, the most admired and the most influential poem in the whole of Arabic literature" (A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* [Edinburgh, 1957], pp. 40–41).

al-Qais and is said to have been put to death between the ages of twenty and twenty-six. The account of his life is somewhat legendary, but it is claimed that he composed his first lines of poetry at the age of seven and that he was gifted with extraordinary powers of improvisation.⁶⁰ These two poets were gifted with true natural talent and were not servile imitators. They are both treated with deep respect by Ibn Shuhaid, for he honors them by politely requesting that they recite examples of their poetry before he displays his own talent, thus adopting the humble attitude of the student before his teachers. In contrast the more conventional figure of Qais ibn al-Khaṭīm is presented as that of a wild intruder who bursts upon the scene unsummoned and rudely demands a hearing. Qais is in fact more famous for the courage with which he avenged the deaths of his father and grandfather than for the intrinsic value of his somewhat conventional poetry.⁶¹ It is probable from the context of the *Risāla* and its caricature of him that a third-rate figure like Qais is introduced as a deliberate afterthought in order to establish a contrast between the naturally gifted poet and the one whose poetry is a servile imitation of tradition.

The same contrast is established insofar as the Modern and Neoclassical poets are concerned. First Ibn Shuhaid interviews the spirit of Abū Tammām, and then as if by accident he stumbles upon that of al-Buhtūrī. This whole section contains reminiscences of the medieval polemic over the relative merits of these two poets. Abū Tammām was generally considered by critics to have been less careful in his craftsmanship, but more gifted and daring than the younger al-Buhtūrī,⁶² who in

⁶⁰ “He was taken by his uncle on a hunting expedition, the quarry being skylarks which the Arabs have always regarded as a delicacy. The party alighted by a pool, and the child set his snare in a grassy meadow and waited all day for the birds to land. But he caught nothing; the company loaded up and rode off, and then at last Tarafa to his vexation saw the birds swoop down and peck at the grain he had scattered to entice them. As to the manner born, he improvised these verses:

Skylark winging a grassy meadow,
the air is all yours: lay your egg, and sing!
Peck about whatever it pleases you to peck
the fowler has gone from you, so be of good cheer;
the snare is lifted, nothing is left to fear.
One day you must surely be caught; be patient now!”

Ibid., p. 69.

⁶¹ “The fragments and relatively extended pieces attributed to him are often *qaṣidas* with a *nasib*; they are apostrophes, challenges, responses of a traditional inspiration. They all recall the style of Medinese poetry at the beginning of the first/seventh century” (R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines à la fin du XV^e siècle de J.-C.* [Paris, 1961], III, p. 311).

⁶² “Abū Tammām did not hesitate to imitate the Ancients when his nature harmonized with their themes. But it was his own nature that he obeyed when it came in conflict with the traditional themes. He was confident of himself and of the perpetual renovation of poetry. He has enriched Arabic poetry with a considerable number of themes and images of unequal value.

“Abū Tammām was furthermore aware of the value of form in poetry and made it a point of honor to polish it. There are passages in his work that constitute masterpieces of Arabic poetry in every age. These are the lines in which his creative spirit is in alliance with the requirements of form. But these requirements were at times severely demanding, whereupon he ignored them in order to salvage his ideas. That is why some of his lines are obscure or careless, or even lacking in harmony. Furthermore Abū Tammām affected the *bādī^c* style. In this new field he found the means to create new turns of phrase and new combinations. This must have satisfied his love for novelty. He likewise deliberately subjected himself to the constraints of poetic ‘artifice.’ If he was able to derive many beautiful poetic ‘arabesques,’ we also owe him a number of grotesque puns.”

“His work was not of the sort to satisfy the partisans of the Ancients who must have considered it heretical both in meaning and form” (Amjad Trabulsi, *La critique poétique des arabes jusqu’au V^e siècle de l’hégire (XI^e siècle de J.-C.)* [Damascus, 1955], p. 91).

contrast specialized in polishing his style and eliminating from it the roughness and irregularities encountered in the poems of his mentor.⁶³ The quarrel between the partisans of either poet was summed up by al-Āmidī in his *Muwāzana baina Abī Tammām wa l-Buhturī* ('Balanced Comparison between Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī') written a century after Abū Tammām's death.⁶⁴ In this work al-Āmidī attempted to be as impartial as possible in his judgment, but at one point the result of the comparison was four victories for al-Buhturī versus a single one for his adversary, so that despite the author's protestations of impartiality Abū Tammām was defeated by a narrow margin.

But if al-Āmidī had proved to be a partisan of al-Buhturī, Ibn Shuhaid, who was a poet and not a critic, adopted the opposite attitude. He alludes amusingly to the narrow viewpoint of the early Arab critics for whom only the pre-Islamics were good poets (as had been the opinion of al-Asma'i) by showing us Abū Tammām's familiar spirit dwelling in the bottom of a well where he lurks out of "shame in affecting the name of poetry, since I do not compose it well,"⁶⁵ but immediately thereafter Ibn Shuhaid, as a poet, identifies with the cause of the Moderns by exclaiming: "Woe to me because of him; these are the words of a Modern,"⁶⁶ and he begs Abū Tammām to recite his own poetry first, out of respect for him. Ibn Shuhaid is not unaware of the criticism that Abū Tammām had made of his disciple al-Buhturī's work, for he makes the former say to him: "When you have completed your poem; rest for at least three days. After that polish your poem . . . for you are a good poet despite the badness of your age."⁶⁷ This is the exact advice offered to al-Buhturī by his mentor. Afterward, Ibn Shuhaid neglects to visit al-Buhturī and encounters him only by chance, while the outcome of the poetic contest between the two is that al-Buhturī's familiar spirit is worsted and departs in a fit of rage. In this handling of the subject matter Ibn Shuhaid betrays his partisanship for the Tammāmite,

⁶³ "Insofar as form is concerned, both poets generally employed a select vocabulary that was appropriate to the century. Both of them occasionally make use of archaic language by necessity or from snobbishness. Such usage is more frequent in Abū Tammām than in al-Buhturī and this makes the verses of the latter generally easier, more natural, and more harmonious. Both use *badi'* and in this they outdo the Ancients. Nevertheless, Abū Tammām's passion for such verbal conceits was greater. His work contains more original discoveries but it is also more contrived."

"Insofar as meaning is concerned, both poets use the classical themes. In general, al-Buhturī is inclined to remain satisfied with them. He attributes less importance to novelty of meaning than to perfection of form. Abū Tammām in contrast is a tireless creator. Among the themes we owe him there is much that is sublime but there are also an equal number of platitudes."

"In brief, the work of Abū Tammām is the newer and more powerful of the two; but it is more vulnerable to criticism. That of al-Buhturī is less daring, but it is more polished. In other words, the work of al-Buhturī is more traditional. For this reason the 'Buhturites' may be considered Ancients, and in the measure that Abū Tammām's poetry at that time seemed to be relatively new, the quarrel between 'Buhturites' and 'Tammāmites' may be considered a new conflict between Ancients and Moderns" (*ibid.*, pp. 92–93).

⁶⁴ Ed. Muhammed Muhyī d-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (3d ed., Cairo, 1959).

⁶⁵ See p. 59 below. On the theme of inferior spirits condemned to lurking in wells and pits in the afterlife, cf. Shaikh al-Yūnānī: "The stupid souls which were soiled by the [human] bodies and their coarseness are prevented by that fact from ascending to their world. From this world, they go to places which befit their state of mind and the lives which they led, while they were [in] the very ignorant and dirty bodies. *They get into deep pits*, from which they are released only after long periods" (Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

⁶⁶ See p. 59 below.

⁶⁷ See p. 61 below.

that is to say, the Modern school, over the more traditional Buhturites. He once again favors the poet of intuition over the craftsman.

Up to now Ibn Shuhaid had anxiously awaited meeting the familiar spirit of Abū Nuwās, the most famous of the early Abbasid poets. Abū Nuwās had turned his back on the deliberately archaic and largely tradition-bound verse of the Umayyad poets, all of whom are omitted from the *Risāla*. By so doing he became the champion of Modernism in his day. He introduced lighter meters and a contemporary diction that was simpler and more suitable to the scandalous love lyrics and wine songs with which he poked fun at the old Bedouin themes. Abū ‘Ubaida had said of him that he “was for the Moderns what Imru’ al-Qais was for the Ancients.”⁶⁸ Ibn as-Sikkīt (d. 857) had added: “Were you to transmit Imru’ al-Qais and al-A‘shā among the pre-Islamic poets, Jarīr and al-Farazdaq among the Islamic poets, and Abū Nuwās among the Moderns, that would be enough.”⁶⁹

Once again, therefore, Ibn Shuhaid favors the truly gifted poet who has had the courage and genius to renovate tradition creatively. This attitude, coming as it does from a poet, stands in sharp contrast with that of the critics who usually tended to prefer the traditional poet to the innovator.⁷⁰

Al-Mutanabbi is the greatest of the Neoclassical, and to many, of all Arab poets. Upon meeting his familiar spirit, Ibn Shuhaid is accused by him of plagiarism. Ibn Shuhaid’s defense is an indirect reply to his own critics at Córdoba, and the passage is highly ironical, because this is the very same accusation with which al-Mutanabbi had been charged by his own enemies,⁷¹ and to which the critic al-Jurjānī (d. 1001) had replied in his *Wasāṭa baina l-Mutanabbi wa khusūmihi* (Mediation between al-Mutanabbi and his Detractors).⁷² If the Arabic literary criticism of the major poets

⁶⁸ Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen Abbāsidenzzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 459.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 461. “Abū Nuwās, well known to the readers of the *Thousand and One Nights*, is a true poet and a versatile, skeptic, somewhat Voltairean spirit. In the opinion of those who are not shocked by the libertine nature of the poet as well as his production, he should be ranked above all Arab poets without exception. . . . That in which he has had no equal, that in which his poetic inspiration has found its most original and at the same time simplest expression, is the wine song and the purely animal and more often than not homosexual love poem. His most successful poems are his wine songs. Unfortunately few of these can be found in which the poet has refrained from including obscenities” (Abd el-Jalil, *Brève histoire de la littérature arabe* [Paris, 1943], pp. 95–97).

⁷⁰ Ibn Qutaiba, for example, “had condemned every attempt at reform and every departure from the ancient conceptions introduced by the Moderns. . . . The anti-Shū‘ibism of Ibn Qutaiba as well as his basically Arab and Islamic culture could only lead to a narrow form of conservatism. Thus for him ancient poetry is the ideal, and it is only by choosing the Ancients as models that the Moderns can rival them” (Trabulsi, *op. cit.*, p. 73).

⁷¹ See al-Hātimī, *Risālat al-Mūdiha fī dhikr sariqāt Abī Ṭ-Taiyib wa sāqīt shi‘ri-hi* (Clarifying Treatise on the Plagiarisms of Abū Ṭ-Taiyib and the Slips in His Poetry), ed. Muhammad Yūsuf Najm (Beirut, 1965).

⁷² “The longest part of the book running to more than two hundred and fifty pages, is taken up with a minute and fully documented discussion of al-Mutanabbi’s alleged plagiarisms. ‘Not a single verse of his is exempt, not a single one of his ideas untainted’: such is the charge brought by the hostile critics. Al-Jurjānī. . . . concedes that there is justice in the accusation; only by no means the whole justice. What in fact is the truth about ‘plagiarism?’ One must make a clear distinction between it and simple filching; between ideas which are common property and which therefore cannot be stolen, and ideas invented by an earlier poet and taken over by a later author. The invention of a new phrase or refinement causes in the sensitive reader a *frisson* of joy which attests the unique originality of the inventor, that was what the poets were doing from the earliest times, as al-Jurjānī goes on to demonstrate at length, distinguishing between simple plagiarism and legitimate emulation. . . . ‘Plagiarism

mentioned above is kept in mind, it becomes possible to understand Ibn Shuhaid's ideas on what constituted good poetry. The few great poets whose work opened a new chapter in the development of Arabic literature are included in the *Risāla*, whereas the myriads of versifiers the medieval Arab world produced are omitted because in each of the poets chosen, talent and the ability to innovate predominate over mere craftsmanship.⁷³

(he sums up) is an ancient disease and an inveterate blemish. If you are just, you will realize that the people of our age, and of the age after us, are more excusable and less blameworthy, because those who preceded us have exhausted the ideas and outstripped us to them, using up the great majority; what remains has been left, out of either aversion or disdain or remoteness or intractability. When any of us makes a great effort and applies his whole mind and thought to produce an idea which he thinks to be strange and original, and to compose a verse he supposes unique and unprecedented, and then searches through the *diwāns* for it, he will not fail to find it exactly, or to find something like it which diminishes its beauty.'

"With this extensive prologue al-Jurjānī then dissects one by one the instances in which al-Mutanabbi took over ideas from his predecessors and varied or developed them. It is a masterpiece of literary analysis; and is followed by an equally brilliant investigation of the other charges brought against the poet, of grammatical errors and solecisms, inconsistency, obscurity, excessive use of artifice, and the rest. After conceding points which he grants to be justified, the judicious al-Jurjānī acquits his client of the major burden of the prosecution, and passes judgment in his favor as a truly great poet.

"Al-Jurjānī succeeded in his chosen task of raising the criteria of literary judgment above the level of grammatical niceties and lexicographical minutiae, beyond the point where poems were discussed in terms of isolated lines torn from their context, and instead assessed as organic wholes. That is our modern standpoint, which leads us to recognize in al-Mutanabbi certain timeless qualities" (A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbi* [Cambridge, 1967], pp. 12–13). For a detailed analysis of the concept of plagiarism in Arabic literature, see G. E. von Grunebaum "The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, III (1944), 234–253.

⁷³ In a fragment from another *Risāla* on poetry addressed to a certain Abū Bakr Ishkīmyāt (published in Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 195–210), Ibn Shuhaid elaborates this idea in the following terms: "As for the attainment of eloquence, it is not helped by memorizing many rare words, nor even by fully mastering grammatical niceties, but rather by talent (*yab'*), when it is balanced by the former two. The degree of a man's talent depends only upon the nature of his soul's combination with his body, for he whose soul controls his body in the basic essence of his structure is naturally talented and spiritual, and he discloses the forms (*ṣuwar*) of both speech and ideas in their loveliest shapes and comeliest dressings. As for him whose body controls his soul and overpowers his senses, in the basic essence of his structure, he is such that those forms he discloses fall short of the first rank in perfection and completion; in their splendid beauty and organization. Yet he whose soul controls his body is such that beautiful forms of speech derive from him in beautiful order, filling men's hearts and affecting their souls. But if you were to search for the source of their beauty you would never find it, and if you were to search for the basis of their structure you would be unable to learn of it. This alone is a rare wonder, namely that beauty should be composed from what is not inherently beautiful, as in the words of Imru' al-Qais:

Lo, good morning, O worn out ruins....

And in his words:

I perceived her from Adhri'āt when her family were in Yathrib, with a noble
glance that approached her abode.

For if you were to seek a basis for the idea of this poetic construction in the usage of rare words, you would not find it. The same is true of Abū Nuwās' words:

You alluded to a matter, namely departure, that grieved us, for were you to
depart, death would greet some of us at dawn.

Then he added:

I shall complain to al-Fadl ibn Yaḥya ibn Khālid of my love for you; perhaps
al-Fadl can reunite us.

In general the literary criticism that prevailed among the Arabs up to the time of Ibn Shuhaid, with few exceptions, based its preferences on philological rather than literary criteria, and restricted its scope to form, to the neglect of content. The result was an increasingly elaborate, yet arid classification of rhetorical devices that failed somehow to explain or convey the reasons for poetic beauty.⁷⁴ The preceding analysis leads to the conclusion that in early eleventh-century al-Andalus a voice of protest was raised against this system of literary criticism based on the classification of rhetorical devices, and that this protest was all the more valuable because it came not merely from the pen of a critic, but from that of a poet. Ibn Darrāj had represented the peak of the Andalusian Neoclassical school of poets. Now their teachings were no longer felt to be satisfactory.

Furthermore, the question of plagiarism raised by Ibn Shuhaid's critic Abū Bakr, explains why in this section the poet replies to each of the spirits he encounters, ode for ode. Ibn Shuhaid is attempting to show that legitimate emulation (today we would speak of *influences*) does not lie in the same category with outright plagiarism; he is defending his right to base his work on the poets of previous ages, just as these had done in their own day. In like vein, with astonishing modernity of outlook Ibn Shuhaid rejects the idea sometimes espoused by Arab critics, that the pre-Islamic poets had been intrinsically superior and that the Moderns could aspire to excellence only insofar as they imitated the Ancients. Possibly for the first time in the history of Arabic criticism he accepts the concept of historical evolution in literature with a positive attitude.⁷⁵

For this is meager speech and threadbare language such that if a crippled ass were to attempt it he would succeed, and yet, as you may observe, it clings to the soul and gains mastery over the heart" (*ibid.*, pp. 197–198).

On the theory of the beautiful soul producing beautiful works, cf: "We say that the maker is either ugly or beautiful or between the two. If the maker is ugly it will not make its opposite, and if it is between the beautiful and the ugly it is not more likely to make one of the two things rather than the other. If it is beautiful its product will be beautiful too" (*Theology of Aristotle*, p. 379). The idea of the soul controlling the body is also Plotinian: "If the soul can reject sense and the transient sensory things and does not hold fast to them, she then controls this body with the slightest effort, with no fatigue or toil, and assimilates herself to the universal soul and becomes like her in conduct and control, with no difference or variation between them" (*ibid.*, p. 251).

⁷⁴ "Both the *Kitāb al-Bādi^c* [by Ibn al-Mu^ctazz] and the *Naqd ash-shi^cr* [by Qudāma ibn Ja^cfar] follow a system of literary criticism based on a framework of stylistic figures. Later authors, though they often discussed Arabic literature with much taste, held to this system. Unable to perceive the essential beauties of literary expression, they added a number of figures of their own, which when applied to the composition of poetry and prose resulted in the superfluous and affected embellishments from which Arabic literature suffered in the period of its decline. Al-Jurjānī . . . who freed himself from those contributions of his predecessors which he considered unessential and approached the problem of literary art from a new side is, as far as we can judge from the surviving literature of this kind, an isolated phenomenon" (S. A. Bonebakker, *The "Kitāb Naqd al-shi^cr" of Qudāma B. Ḥaṣṣāb al-Kātib al-Bagdādī* [Leiden, 1956], p. 46).

⁷⁵ In the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīyāt he says: "Just as every place has a proper form of speech, every age has a proper form of eloquence, every time has a proper form of language, and every succeeding group of nations has a proper form of discourse and of rhetoric, to which it alone is suited and to which it alone takes kindly. Just as the world suffers changes, speech suffers transformations and variations in usage. Do you not observe how when time had elapsed it transferred part of the early custom in this art to the method of ^cAbd al-Ḥamīd, Ibn al-Muqaffā^c, Sahl ibn Hārūn, and other masters of eloquence, so that the radius of art became broader, its forearm grew stronger, and its light brighter thanks to them, because of the dominance of their minds and the breadth of their geniuses for the sciences?

It should also be noted that after his interview with each poet, Ibn Shuhaid is dismissed with the formula *idhhab fa-inna-ka mujāz* ‘go, for you are qualified.’ This formula has technical connotations that can be understood in reference only to the medieval Islamic higher educational system, which unlike the European university stressed far more the personal contact between master and disciple. European universities grew out of, and were patterned after, the guild system with its elaborate hierarchy. They were corporations of scholars who, as a corporation, granted the student a degree upon the successful termination of a set curriculum. The validity of the degree in Europe was thus backed up by the reputation of an institution.

The theory that corporate bodies existed in medieval Islam has recently been rejected for lack of evidence.⁷⁶ At least such bodies have left no trace on the Islamic madrasas. The Muslim student, upon completing a course on a monographic topic with a particular teacher, was granted an *ijāza* or “qualification, permission” by his teacher, in writing, to transmit the specific work or works studied, and no others. He was also granted permission to quote his teacher as an authority.⁷⁷ In this way chains of officially licensed transmitters for a given work were developed. Unlike the Western diploma, the *ijāza* was thus a license to transmit a limited topic; it was backed by the reputation of a single teacher, not by that of a corporate body of scholars. In this system, a student who wished to make a name for himself for the breadth of his scholarly attainments, had to go from teacher to teacher, collecting as many *ijāzas* as possible. The “wandering scholars” of medieval Islam thus wandered from teacher to teacher, rather than from university to university.

This clarification now reveals that Ibn Shuhaid’s purpose throughout this entire section of the *Risāla* is to collect *ijāzas* from the very greatest poets of medieval Arabic literature. By this device he establishes his competence to discuss poetry with his critics. It is implied that in poetry, poets themselves, and not critics, are the only true authorities competent to create and to make valid literary judgments, since they possess exclusive “rights” to the work of their predecessors. For Ibn Shuhaid, in the realm of literature the poet, not the critic, should be king.

Then time passed and another change took place in favor of the method of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Abbās, Muḥammad ibn az-Zaiyāt, the two sons of Wahb and their equals, so that talents became refined and the heaviness of men’s souls became light. Then time passed and pride in conceits absorbed its contemporaries, along with an affectation for subtlety in language, so that another change occurred in favor of the method of Badi^c, Shams al-Ma‘āli, and their companions.

“In the same way the poets were transferred from customary usage in art with the passage of time, and every contemporary of an age sought what was permissible in it and what the hearts of its people were well disposed toward, so that at the hands of Ṣarī’ al-Ghawāni, Bashshār, Abū Nuwās, and their companions, a well-known adoption of rhetorical embellishments took place, the many species of which they cultivated, adding to the ramification of their branches. Then came Abū Tammām who used puns (*tajnīs*) excessively and abandoned customary usage. This, on his part, became pleasing, and people imitated him so that today any poem that contains no puns or their equivalent is rejected by the ears. Yet a happy medium is preferable in the matter, for which reason the inhabitants of Basra preferred Ṣarī’ al-Ghawāni to Abū Tammām, for he donned the embroidered construction of the Moderns on the breastplate of the Arabs, so as to obtain a striking beauty from the beauty of the two” (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–203).

⁷⁶ See S. M. Stern, “The Constitution of the Islamic City,” in *The Islamic City*, ed. A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern (Oxford, 1970), pp. 25–50; C. Cahen, “Y a-t-il eu des corporations professionnelles dans le monde musulmane classique?,” in *ibid.*, pp. 51–63.

⁷⁷ See *E.I.*¹, II, 446.

PART TWO: THE FAMILIAR SPIRITS OF THE PROSE WRITERS

After visiting the genii of the major Arab poets, Ibn Shuhaid asks to meet those of the prose writers, and is taken to a literary gathering presided over by the spirits of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd and al-Jāḥiẓ. The former, a Persian secretary to Marwān II (the last Umayyad caliph of Damascus), is reputed to have been the founder of Arabic literary prose. His pioneering style was simple and unaffected; it avoided the use of rhyme, and was even rough and unpolished at times.⁷⁸

In contrast, the style of al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), the great Abbasid essayist from Basra, is far more elaborate and sophisticated. It is heavily influenced by the translations into Arabic of Greek philosophical and scientific works, from which it acquired the flexibility to construct the long and elaborate sentences needed to convey complex ideas and subtle arguments. Al-Jāḥiẓ used assonant prose, but with moderation. His style would later be developed into the ornate consonant-rhymed prose of the tenth century. Up to al-Jāḥiẓ, Arabic prose remained relatively sober, but from the tenth century on, a taste for decoration sets in. Whereas at first assonant rhyme had been introduced hesitantly, prose later adopts full consonant rhyme, and comes to be even overloaded with it.⁷⁹

In the *Risāla*, as a result, al-Jāḥiẓ’s genie, who speaks in assonant prose (*mumāthala*), is shocked when he hears Ibn Shuhaid use full consonant rhyme (*saj^c*) in his speech, and reacts to it as though it were an abominable innovation. To his objections Ibn Shuhaid replies that it is the result of foreign influences on Arabic style and language, and he paints a somber picture of the low level of the Andalusian Arabic of his day: “I have been deprived of the knights of eloquence in my country, and have been affected by the ignorance of my contemporaries.”⁸⁰ Even their speech is ungrammatical: “Sibawaih has nothing to do with it, nor does al-Farāḥidī have any means of reaching it, nor has eloquence left its mark upon it. It is merely a barbarous non-Arabic babble with which they convey meanings after the fashion of the Magians and the Nabateans.”⁸¹

The genie of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd becomes suspicious of Ibn Shuhaid’s concessions to the flowery taste of his contemporaries, yet in rebuking the poet for his ornate style,

⁷⁸ “No prose writer from that period considered the use of rhyme to be a necessary requirement in his epistles or speeches. At times they rhymed sporadically, but always with a pleasing simplicity and with no attempt at affectation. The great writers, who are rightly considered to be the glories of post-Islamic Arabic literature, such as Ibn al-Muqaffā’ and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yahyā, did not use rhyme as a regular ornament; instead, they used it only rarely. . . . We have here, in sum, mere embryos of affectation in the prose of the period; mere embryos, that still appear pleasing, but that later on, through excessive development, were to burden style with overornamentation, with emphatic devices, and with periphrases that are often unbearable” (Zakī Mubārak, *La prose arabe au IV^e siècle de l'hégire (X^e siècle)* [Paris, 1931], pp. 29, 32).

⁷⁹ “The rigorous laws of rhythm from which prose had, to put it thus, lived free, now govern it strictly. Even those of assonance are observed carefully by all authors, even in private correspondence. . . . It is true that prose writers had rhymed earlier, but not as a regular and absolute rule. In the tenth century, however, only a few such as ash-Sharīf ar-Rādi or Abū Ḥaiyān at-Tauḥidī neglected assonance, although they rapidly gave in to the imperious fashion of their time. We observe to put it thus, the blossoming . . . of all the embellishments of language that had appeared hesitantly before then. It was thus . . . that the use of rhymed prose was not invented by the tenth-century writers but rather they made use of it a general rule” (*ibid.*, pp. 35, 40).

⁸⁰ See p. 72 below.

⁸¹ See p. 73 below.

he commits a grammatical lapse typical of the early pioneers of Arabic prose before subordination was properly developed. As a result he is ridiculed for the uncouthness of his style, while Ibn Shuhaid declares his preference for the more urbane and polished style of al-Jāḥīz: “Eloquence now comes from Iraq, not from Syria.”⁸² After having opted in prose for the Moderns as opposed to the Ancients, Ibn Shuhaid now recites

⁸² See p. 73 below. That this judgment was a relative one for Ibn Shuhaid is clear from his criticism of al-Jāḥīz contained in the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīmāt: “Consider the words of al-Jāḥīz: ‘If we were to hire someone to teach our children grammar and lexicography he would be satisfied with twenty dirhems a month from us, yet if we were to hire someone to teach them eloquence he would not be satisfied with a thousand dirhems from us.’ He made this statement only after having composed the *Kitāb al-Bayān* (Book of Eloquence), yet had he examined the method of instruction in eloquence and outlined the way of teaching it, he would have shown how to deliver speech and embellish eloquence; how to achieve a good beginning and convey the expression to the audience upon ending; he would have revealed to them how to handle endings and beginnings, for these are the sources of art and the places into which method’s keys may be fitted. Instead, he stuck to what was profitable for him, and gave grudgingly of himself, being stingy with his knowledge and miserly with the fruit of his understanding, since he knew that although the usefulness of such a book would have been great, those grateful for it would be few. As a result, with the part of eloquence he clarified, he performed a service only to its own professional cultivators; to those who sip from its basin and inhale its fragrance, while he never once attempted to train a beginner or to educate an ignorant student” (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, p. 198).

“One day Sahl ibn Hārūn and al-Jāḥīz were mentioned in the presence of Abū l-Qāsim [ibn al-Iflīl], and he applied to them the popular proverb: ‘Between the two there lies the difference between the angels and the children of the guardsmen.’ This is a great injustice to Sahl, and it would be more fitting to call both of them excellent writers, save that Sahl was a secretary to kings while al-Jāḥīz was a mere compiler of anthologies. Examination leads to the conclusion that each of them followed a different method, and that each of them excelled in his own field, save that no one has ever been more neglectful with regard to himself than al-Jāḥīz. If he was outstanding in rhetoric during his age, why did he not seek through the latter an honorable rank corresponding to the nobility of the art, when he saw that Ibn az-Zaiyāt and Ibrāhīm ibn al-‘Abbās had attained public fame through it, while he merely sought the advantages and rank they enjoyed through their influence? In this matter he was either deficient in the art of secretarial writing and lacked the proper qualifications for it, or he was lowly in his ambition, or else the excessive protrusion of his eyes kept him from it, just as my hardness of hearing has kept me from it, and the thickness of his nose has kept Abū l-Qāsim from it, for a king must have a secretary whose appearance is acceptable when his eye falls upon him; whose hearing is keen when he listens to his voice; whose nose is clean, so that his breath will not be found reprehensible when he comes close to him. For this reason kings have approved in the secretary that he be sweet scented, sound in his sensory perceptions, clean garbed, that his molars be not dirty, nor his lip upturned, nor his nails blackened, nor his collar greasy. Yet perhaps someone will deny what we have declared concerning all the qualifications necessary for secretarial writing and affirm: ‘Lack of what qualification lessened al-Jāḥīz’s status?’ To this we reply: ‘The primary qualification of a secretary is intelligence; there can be no secretary who is not intelligent.’ Yet we often come across a scholar who is not intelligent; a polemicist whose judgment is unsound; an unforesighted jurist, and we have often come across those who attribute more intelligence to Sahl than they do to al-Jāḥīz. Had al-Jāḥīz observed Sahl outwitting another kingdom for ar-Rashīd’s sake, waging war for him, carefully extinguishing the ember of rebellion for him, bearing all that burden by himself alone, thanks to his intelligence and the profusion of his knowledge, he would have realized that that sort of governing is not the same as composing treatises describing the genitals of mules, nor discussing rats and wood lice, and he would have understood that there is a great difference between the scholar and the secretary” (*ibid.*, pp. 207–208).

Ibn Ḥazm records that Ibn Shuhaid was himself occupied in composing a book on eloquence (*balāgha*) which seems not to have survived: “Aristotle discussed the subject [of eloquence] and so have others, at great length. Qudāma ibn Ja‘far the secretary composed an excellent book about it. We were informed while writing this that our friend Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Shuhaid had written a book on the subject, for he is solidly based in the science of eloquence, very strong in it indeed. He wrote to inform us of that fact, but we have not seen the book thereafter. Therefore we have dispensed with an extensive discussion of the subject, restricting ourselves to the books we have mentioned” (Ibn Ḥazm, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

several short descriptive treatises in which the Maqāma structure is evident, as well as the influence of Bādī^c az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (ca. 969–1008). This author gained fame for inventing, or at least giving a finished form to, the genre of picaresque tales known as *Maqāmāt* or Séances,⁸³ characterized by a highly ornate and “euphuistic” style. It is probable that the influence of al-Hamadhānī on Ibn Shuhaid goes deeper than mere style. The former’s “*Maqāmat Iblisiyya*” (Séance of the Demons) contains an encounter with the familiar spirits of the poets and may have served as a model for the *Risāla*.⁸⁴ Indeed, the function of Zuhair ibn Numair as an alter ego or persona for the author reminds one of the imaginary narrator of the *Maqāmāt*. In the *Risāla*, the first treatise (“On Sweets”) recited by Ibn Shuhaid, is in fact a brief *maqāma*, in which the irony of the genre is used to criticize the false piety of the Cordovan jurists.

The author then alludes to three enemies who slandered him at the court of al-Muṣṭafā^c: a certain Abū Muḥammad, who has not been identified, Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Iflīlī, a famous Cordovan philologist, and Abū Bakr Yaḥyā ibn Ḥazm, the addressee himself of the *Risāla*. Thereupon the spirit of al-Iflīlī appears. He is described as being physically deformed and looking ridiculous, these defects being external manifestations of his spiritual shortcomings.⁸⁵

⁸³ “The surviving Séances by that author appear to be short stories related by a single narrator, ‘Isā ibn Hishām, to a circle of listeners including Hamadhānī. In fact, this is a convention, for the true narrator is Hamadhānī himself. As ‘Isā tells his adventures, the outline of his character is revealed. He is a prosperous middle-class citizen whose fortune allows him to refrain from regular employment; he is a dilettante and, whenever he engages in business, he does so merely to amuse himself. On one occasion alone does he tell us that he occupied a position in the provincial administration. One passion has control of him: the love of travel; we therefore see him wander from town to town, in Persia, in Iraq, and even as far as Armenia, impelled by the stimulus of his curiosity. He is also a man of letters, a lover of poetry, eager to hold endless discussions with other aesthetes like himself. He has a kind heart, is quick to take pity on the misery he encounters; he is therefore a dupe to the thousand tricks of vagrants. At times, furthermore, in moments of hardship, he does not hesitate to sponge off others; occasionally also, in the company of young dandies, he loses his dignity in order to enjoy forbidden pleasures” (R. Blachère and P. Masnou, *al-Hamadhānī: Maqāmāt (séances) choisies et traduits de l’arabe* [Paris, 1957], pp. 30–31).

“With the Séances we come close to a satire on customs. . . . The edifying speeches placed by Hamadhānī in the mouth of Abū l-Fath are parodies; beneath the rags of the ascetic and the preacher may be found the tricks of the vagrant; behind the deeds of the heroes in the ‘Séance of Wine,’ may be found the hypocrisy of certain middle-class citizens. . . . Judging by the fashion of the times, the subject alone would probably not have sufficed to assure the vogue enjoyed by the Séances had not the form corresponded to the demands of the educated public Hamadhānī was addressing. In the ‘Séance of al-Jāhīz,’ our author has his hero, Abū l-Fath say: ‘Al-Jāhīz harvested one extreme of elegant discourse but fell short of the other. The truly eloquent man, however, is the one whose poetry is as good as his prose. . . . Do you know any outstanding verses by al-Jāhīz? Let us go on to his prose. Al-Jāhīz has profound ideas, but he employs few metaphors and prefers ordinary expressions. Subjected to a denuded language, that is all he uses; rebelling against an affected style, he flees from it.’

“This passage is not written in jest, but rather it is a literary manifesto. ‘Each age has its al-Jāhīz.’ The flowing and lively prose of that author, so learned in its apparent simplicity, no longer suits a century in which rhymed and rhythmic prose prevail. Hamadhānī therefore does not make the mistake of going back to the past. It is likely that for him the séance was a portrait of customs and a satire of character. It is certain, however, that each one of the portraits afforded him a chance to display his mastery over the Arabic language, his virtuosity in handling rhythmic and rhymed prose” (*ibid.*, pp. 33–35).

⁸⁴ See Bādī^c az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, “*Maqāmat Iblisiyya*,” *Maqāmāt*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī d-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (2d ed., Cairo, 1962), pp. 253–277.

⁸⁵ In the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīmīyat, Ibn Shuhaid describes teachers, and al-Iflīlī in particular, in a

In the ensuing discussion between pedant and poet, the latter vehemently rejects the authority of Khalil and Sibawaih, the Basran philologists who had initiated the study of grammar and lexicography. Instead, Ibn Shuhaid maintains that instruction derives not from books, but from God; that it is divinely inspired, not acquired through study, and he quotes the authority of the Koran to prove his point: "It is the Clement who taught the Koran, created man, and instructed him in eloquence."⁸⁶ As proof of his own genius Ibn Shuhaid now describes a flea and a fox in the ornate style of his age. The spirit of al-Hamādhānī, the great master of this style, then appears, and

similar way: "This group is not surprising, save for Abū l-Qāsim [ibn al-Iflīlī], for he exceeded them in skill and got the better of them with the abundance of his talents. He became one of the many prose writers and borrowed their glory and elegance; he came in contact with mathematicians and profited from their method of argumentation; he discussed with polemicists and learned the rules of their science, becoming familiar with the elements of speech, for he aspired fully to every science, and everything conceived in jest or in earnest is connected to him and derived from him! Yet despite everything in his favor and conceded to him, he earnestly desires that there should be no other good writer in al-Andalus than himself, and no good poet save for himself. It is my opinion with regard to him, that he ought to dwell in the land of Galicia, or in some region lying far away from Islam, so that he may not hear the mention of any other orator therein, and not perceive the faint and distant sound of any other poet. Then would he stand out alone indeed!"

"Another surprising thing in his case is that every secretary among us who has written for kings, and every poet who has eulogized them are such that their poems and epistles have been transmitted, save for Abū l-Qāsim alone, despite the fact that he never sat in a gathering but to inform people about the situation. Often did he hint that part of his poetry and epistles had been plagiarized by others, yet no disciple answered him, for the unfortunate is indeed unfortunate! Yet had he bought raisins for the boys in the mosques, and the rind of the walnut root to dye the lips of the tavern whores, and had he asked these two groups to publicize his works, they would have broadcast his compositions (along with his bribes!), and related his poems and epistles, singing them on the highways, at the water tanks, and from the top of dung heaps as they sing their own poems and give vent to their own foolish chatter. Thus his works would have advanced, become fashionable, gotten used to flying, and taken off, while people would have taken note of them and they would have become known! Yet despite all this, he calls us a violent ruffian, and he calls Bādī⁸⁷, aṣ-Šābī, and Shams al-Ma'āli rogues and nobodies. Without a doubt he is the miserliest man on earth, and only our respect for the whiteness of his hoary head restrains us from attacking him. He finds that some of our lads have disturbed him by saying: 'His gait is not that of a scholar, nor is his face that of a clever person, nor is his sitting posture that of a learned man, nor is his nose that of a secretary, nor is his melody that of a poet.' They have related that when he hobbled about, advancing a little and then retreating, staff in hand and saddlebag on shoulder, he was the cleverest person in playing the game of the Jew. In this way they disturbed him with what he heard, yet how would he fare were unnotched fangs to bite him, and were unpared claws to scratch him?" (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–207).

Ibn Hazm shares the idea that study alone does not make a scholar learned: "Intelligence (*aql*) has limitations so that it is useless when it is not supported by the help of religion or by fortune in this world" (Ibn Hazm, *Épitre morale* [*Kitāb al-Aḥlāq wa-l-siyār*], ed. and trans. Nada Tomiche [Beirut, 1961], p. 22). "Know, likewise, that there are many men avid for knowledge (*ilm*), who devote themselves to reading, to study, and to research with great application, but who do not profit from their effort. The man of knowledge must realize that if application alone were sufficient, many other men would be superior to him. Knowledge is thus indeed a gift from the Almighty" (*ibid.*, p. 83). The idea that a mediocre soul produces an ugly or deformed body is implicit in the *Theology of Aristotle*: "We are beautiful and complete so long as we continue to see and to know our souls and to abide by their nature. If we do not see and know our souls, and shift to the nature of sense perception, we become ugly" (p. 409). Cf. "Mind is the cause of the beauty and grace of bodies, and it is the cause of the intelligence of souls and their knowledge of the truth" (al-Fārābī, *De Scientia Divina*, trans. Geoffrey Lewis, in *Plotini Opera*, p. 411). "We . . . shall say that the soul is prior to harmony. For it is the soul that originates the harmony in the body and is the governor of it and subdues the body and prevents it from doing many of the vile bodily acts" (*ibid.*, p. 207).

⁸⁶ See p. 78 below.

the poet outdoes his famous description of water contained in the “Séance of the Mađira,” whereupon al-Hamadhāni’s spirit rolls down into a pit that opens in the ground, in sign of defeat. Finally, the pedantic spirit of al-Iflīlī is once more worsted in a test of poetic description. A secretary named Abū Ishāq ibn Ḥumām⁸⁷ attempts to defend the pedantic philologist, but Ibn Shuhaid indicates that the latter has behaved as a malevolent critic, whereupon the protagonist is unanimously declared an outstanding prose writer as well as a poet by the assembly.⁸⁸ Just as in Part One the primacy of poets over critics had been established, it has now been shown that critics are inferior to poets because their knowledge is derivative, not directly creative.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Practically nothing is known about him: “Abū Ishāq ibn Ḥumām the vizier and secretary. A Cordovan famous for his literary education, outstanding in poetry and prose. He was mentioned by Abū l-Walid ibn ‘Āmir, and lived after the year 400/1009” (Humaidī, *op. cit.*, p. 391).

⁸⁸ In the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīyāt, Ibn Shuhaid elaborates further in his criticism of pedantic teachers: “A proof of the failure of the class of teachers is that they are unable to organize the knowledge they bear, nor is their material sufficiently abundant for them to produce it in the form of literary works. Their breaths merely fart it out noiselessly among their students, while its blast is unable to increase enough for the fart to be heard. Thus they are like locusts in this, and similar to black beetles. They do not compare to the polecat in the intensity of its noiseless fart, although they exceed its stench, nor do they come up to the rank of the wild ass in the intensity of his audible farting, although they have a share in his name. Thus no rare anecdote is ascribed to them, while no popular proverb is related about them in the land.”

“One of the things known about the nature of this group is that when their eyes gaze at us, they receive us with flattery although they are hiding inner envy and rancor. Thus when we come together in gatherings and are contained in assemblies, you will see them fawning upon us while they avoid coping with ideas. Yet the inferiority of the inferior and the superiority of the outstripping champion is only distinguished when knees tremble, throats are constricted, speech is accelerated, no respite is found for thought, no delay is possible for an idea; or else in the assemblies of kings, during their social occasions and moments of relaxation, for there takes place in them, and occurs during their course, that for which previous preparation is of no avail, and in which only talent and gushing instinct are effective. At that moment you will observe the swift, outstripping steed prick up its ears, scrape the rugged ground of excellence with its forefoot, raise high its glance, and neigh clamorously, whereas the mere craftsmen of poetry remain mute and no sound is heard from them, for all they can do is sip from the cup, inhale the fragrance of myrtle, heave deep sighs, their complexions having shrunk as though they were tribesmen of the Banū ‘Udhra. Moreover, I do not remember having escaped with danger from such an assembly more than once, in the presence of Hishām ibn Muḥammad, when the assembly was crowded with Arab turbans as well as stammering non-Arabs from the native populace. At that moment I replied to a certain chieftain about a disgraceful, pointed question to which there was no answer and no excuse. There took place something I am loath to mention, because it would involve discussing the harem’s dwellers, and lessening the estimation of friends, although that is exactly what they deserve for their lack of fairness toward us and their outrageous slandering of us” (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 209–210).

⁸⁹ The distinction between the purely intellectual mind of the artist and the rational mind of the critic is explained as follows by Shaikh al-Yūnāni: “When soul enters bodies, she does not see things as she saw them formerly when she was disembodied, so she is bewildered and confused and full of cares and anxieties. She therefore grows weak and takes refuge in thought and reasoning. For thought is the deficiency of the mind, because mind is defective and imperfect when it needs reason and thought. *Similarly, in the case of perfect art, the artist does not need thought but does his work without reflection or thought, while in the case of defective art the artist needs thought and reflection because, if he wishes to do something and is a weak craftsman, he reflects and thinks how he should act.* When she is in her own world, she can dispense with thought and the use of reason. Someone may ask: If souls do not think in their own disembodied world, how can they be rational? We reply: They can do without reason there—the reason which exists in potentiality, with thought and reflection. But the intellectual reason, which exists in actuality, never departs from the soul but is with her always, and she does not think” (trans. Geoffrey Lewis in *Plotini Opera*, p. 37).

PART THREE: THE LITERARY CRITICS AMONG THE GENII

Ibn Shuhaid attends a gathering of literary critics who are discussing poetry. The discussion centers on four topics of paramount importance for Arab critics: (1) How a single theme is gradually refined by later poets. (2) How from the imitation of a single theme the original poet may succeed in deriving new themes. (3) A distinction is made between the plagiarist, who is reduced to mouthing the poetry of others, and the original poet, who is able to create poetry on any number of given themes. (4) The good poet is noble, and descends from a noble family in which there is a deeply rooted poetic tradition spanning several generations.

The problem of plagiarism versus legitimate emulation in Arabic poetry led to a scholarly interest among critics in classifying the origin and development of themes or motives (*ma'āni*),⁹⁰ for if it could be shown that a particular theme had been improved and refined in form by a poet, he could then be considered original in his treatment and acquitted of the charge of plagiarism, despite the similarity in content with his predecessor.⁹¹ It is important to note, however, that the idea of originality in Arabic criticism applies to form rather than to content.⁹² Ibn Shuhaid takes a well-known, and to our modern taste, somewhat grisly theme: that of a flock of birds hovering over a battlefield, waiting for the wounded to die in order to feed on their flesh. The development of this theme had been studied previously by al-Āmidi in the part of his *Muwāzana* in which he enumerates the alleged plagiarisms committed by Abū Tammām. The specimens of the theme quoted by Ibn Shuhaid are all derived from the *Muwāzana*, save for a line by al-Mutanabbi,⁹³ and one by the

⁹⁰ See von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism," pp. 234–253. The title of a book of *ma'āni* by Ibn Shuhaid, called *Hānūt Ḩāfiṭar* (Perfume Seller's Shop) has been preserved by Humaidi, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁹¹ A typical discussion of plagiarism is that of al-Askari (d. 1005) summarized as follows: "1. To use *ma'āni*, motives already employed by others is inevitable—the caliph 'Ali (d. 661) said: If speech could not be repeated, it would have long been exhausted. 2. The later author must (a) present the borrowed *ma'āna* in his own words, without the verbal embellishments (*hilya*) of his model, and in a context of his own; or (b) add to the beauty of its composition, its context, and its verbal embellishment. By fulfilling this second requirement, the later author acquires a better claim to the *ma'āna* than his predecessor. 3. The clever author will veil his borrowing. His means of 'concealing the theft' (*ikhfā' as-saq*) include: (a) presentation in prose of a *ma'āna* taken from poetry; (b) presentation in poetry of a *ma'āna* taken from prose; and (c) use of a borrowed *ma'āna* to different purpose, e.g., in a eulogy instead of a descriptive passage. 4. The borrowing becomes objectionable, *qubh al-akhḍh*, when (a) the poet takes the *ma'āna* verbatim, or nearly so, or presents it in an unbecoming context or when (b) he spoils the *ma'āna*, or its context, obscures it, and in any other way falls short of his predecessor's achievement. 5. The views expressed in Paragraphs 2 and 4 are based on the conviction that the *ma'āna* itself is common property, *musharak*, of all intelligent people: a *ma'āna* may occur to the vulgar, even to a Nabatean or to a Zanjī. Differentiation in quality depends on the wording. 6. Al-Askari recognizes the fact that later authors sometimes invent *ma'āni* which without their knowledge had been anticipated by their forerunners. He quotes Abū 'Amr ibn al-Alā' (d. ca. 770) in corroboration but considers the use of such material blameworthy. Al-Askari's contribution to terminology is restricted to the distinction between the *sāriq* who takes over the *ma'āna* with its wording and the *sālikh* who borrows it with only part of the wording. Both *sāriq* and *sālikh* incur al-Askari's disapproval" (von Grunébaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 236–237).

⁹² "The decisive fact about the attitude to literature which is in the back of the whole development of the theory of plagiarism is the precedence accorded to wording over meaning, to form over content. And the concept of form itself is being reduced so as to mean little if anything more than phrasing" (*ibid.*, p. 246).

⁹³ al-Āmidī, *Muwāzana*, pp. 58–59. The line by Mutanabbi is not included in Hātimī.

“genie” Fātik ibn aş-Şaq^cab which was of course by Ibn Shuhaid himself. Ibn Shuhaid lists the derivations of the theme in order to give their due to “those poets who improved the loan, and those who failed to do so.”⁹⁴ Examples from six poets are listed in chronological order, after which the theme is taken up by Fātik (i.e., Ibn Shuhaid) and the assembly accepts this final example as the best. Then Fātik turns to a second theme: that of the lover who rises softly at night to visit the beloved in secret. A good example by Imru^z al-Qais is given, followed by a bad one written by ʻUmar ibn Abi Rabī^a. Both examples are in the same meter, *tawil*, but the second is judged inferior because in order to imitate his predecessor the poet had displaced the caesura and produced an awkward line. In cases where the poet must imitate, he is therefore advised to put the theme into a different meter. Two examples are then given of how the same theme had been reworked in a different meter: one by Ismāʻil ibn Yasār in *sart*^c and another by Fātik in *mutaqārib*. It is implied that these examples are successful because in them the poets have avoided servile imitation and have instead reworked the theme in their own words, adjusting the idea harmoniously to the structure of a new meter rather than forcing it clumsily into that of their model.

After this preliminary study of how individual one-line themes may be imitated successfully, the author proceeds to the problem of how they may be expanded and developed into a series of new themes constituting a short piece, this being the mark of a truly skillful poet as opposed to the mere imitator. He gives two examples in which he develops a line by al-Mutanabbī into a short piece containing “a clever and novel addition” and in which he claims to have “created elegant themes.”⁹⁵

Ibn Shuhaid has now proved his ability to imitate the themes of other poets creatively, and also to derive new ones from them. He now introduces a genie who criticizes his technique and dares him to imitate several themes that are taken from the poetry of al-Mutanabbī. Ibn Shuhaid first points out that his critic is himself unable to compose original poetry, implying that in mouthing that of al-Mutanabbī he is a mediocre plagiarist, and then he comes forward and displays his own rapid powers of improvisation.⁹⁶ The hostile critic asks Ibn Shuhaid to identify the authorship of several poems and is surprised to discover that they have been composed by Ibn Shuhaid’s own father, brother, uncle, grandfather, and great-grandfather. In this whole passage the concept of Arab pride in race and family is brought to bear on poetry, and it is implied that not only must the poet be skillful at his craft, but that since the latter is a noble one, it should be cultivated by men whose noble souls, corresponding to an innate family nobility, are superior to those of the ordinary run

⁹⁴ See p. 82 below.

⁹⁵ See p. 86 below.

⁹⁶ The importance of improvisation to Ibn Shuhaid, in that it is the mark of a true poet, may be compared with the *Theology of Aristotle*: “He must put away and reject the sensory external hearing and employ the intellectual hearing that is inside him, for then he will hear the sublime, pure, splendid and melodious strains of which no hearer grows weary. And the more he hears them the more his pleasure and emotion increase and he knows that the corporeal sensory strains are but images and likenesses of those strains. And when he perceives those exalted and lofty essences, the originators of these strains, to the extent of his power and capability, his gladness is complete and his joy perfect” (p. 289).

of mankind. The good poet is therefore an Arab of noble ancestry, or at least a man whose soul is noble.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ According to von Grunebaum, “the school traditions of Arabic poetry, *not infrequently coinciding with family traditions*, favored conservatism, as craftsmanship—as opposed to art—always does” (*op. cit.*, p. 247). In the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīyāt Ibn Shuhaid claims that different social classes produce different levels of poetry: “Often has a dabbler in the name of poetry, one of those who confuse the general with the particular in his questioning, come to us, yet received from us an inauspicious welcome that bears little favor for him, for we meet him and immediately excuse ourselves. Yet at times we may happen to acquaint him with verses such as greengrocers and chief butchers are attracted by, so that when such verses smite their ears and enter their minds, they grow generous, the knots of their purse strings are loosened, and the person of that poor wretch waxes great in their eyes. Yet what can you expect from a soft loaf stuffed in his sleeve, a fat neck buried in his nosebag, a mug of beer poured into his mouth, a fresh fig choking his gullet, a fat meat pie thrust under his tongue, a fresh pastry chewed by his jaw? The poor wretch can hardly finish it all when he comes to us bending over our hands to kiss them and over our feet to lick them, asking us to reveal to him the secret that stirred the common masses to give him what they possessed, and to throng toward him with their property. Yet we cannot teach him that bewitching grammar, because what he wants from us is to be taught eloquence, but a veil lies between the latter and his mind, for every class of people has a suitable kind of discourse and style of eloquence, and one cannot cleave another’s rock except if one comes to master it via clear and explanatory demonstration, and unless one is of those who deduce the various artistic methods from fixed rules and firm principles. Thus the result is what you have just heard.

“What is even more difficult than this is to arouse misers among the great to be generous, for by habit they cannot be changed, due to their power and to what is contained within the robes of their glory. Hence eulogizing them is useless, for in this the sharpest possible mind is needed as well as the amplest possible skill. This group cannot be aroused by the stupid, and will necessarily remain attached to the class to which part of its success and promotion naturally belongs. For this reason attacking noblemen is difficult if not impossible, for you will find that bad words roll away from them, while evil speech will not demolish them, because of the solidity of their construction and the firmness of their foundations. It is therefore hard to overturn the construction of the abovementioned, for which reason the Arabs boasted of the eloquent among them whom it was impossible to demolish, and for which reason [they reproved?] attacking noblemen, and approved of Safwān’s words about Shabib: ‘He has no friend in secret, and no enemy in public’” (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–202). In the same *Risāla*, Ibn Shuhaid coincides with Ibn Ḥazm’s distinction among three classes of poets: “Artisans of language are dissimilar to one another in rank and are rivals for an honorable position in accordance with the degree of their ability and versatility.

“Among them there is the one who puts descriptions into verse, creates themes, and achieves excellent expression, save that language is hard for him and composition exhausts his genius to such an extent that he frequently fails in description and spoils his composition. Such a person is a winner where only a few lines of poetry are concerned; he moves about among those whose source is close by and easily attainable, and enters into the method of the greatest multitude, until when they throng around him, gather about him, and demand brilliance from him along with a lofty rank, he stops short, is defeated, is reduced to nought and dwindles away.

“Among them there is the one who sips from the sea of abundance, who strikes fire from the rays of perfection, who advances like a dashing torrent and a pouring shower, never complaining of failure, and never tiring over the length of his work. When the demands of discourse beset him, when aims cling to the borders of his mind, when difficulties and unfamiliar words assemble against him, the base of his neck proves able to carry their weight, while a glance from his eye and a spark from his mind frees them. Then he emits them from his sides, well watered and having donned the rays of their splendor, while he remains like a swift eagle on a lookout spot, its glance sublime, its wings contracted, poised on its claws, while no bird of prey falls its way without being pursued, and no bird descends to fight with it without being seized. His courage is sharp as his sword’s edge and his intuition is as quick as his mind. Such a poet is the most eloquent on the day of the war of words; his blow never fails and he is never struck unawares.

“Among them there is the one who recoils from discourse and avoids speech, so that when he is tested by it he seizes hold of the mere ends of beauty and shares in the mere fringes of art. The major part of what is in him is forgery and deceit, with which he befriends the times and goes along with his contemporaries. He has no intelligence with which to hide over his deficiency nor any authority with which to master the great poets of his age. As for him who is excluded from these

PART FOUR: THE ANIMALS AMONG THE GENII

The final part of the *Risāla* is full of allusions to Ibn Shuhaid's contemporaries and enemies among the intellectuals of Córdoba, none of whom have been identified with certainty. The familiar spirits of these individuals appear in the guise of asses and a goose with literary pretensions.

The poet is first asked by a herd of asses to judge the relative merits of two poems written by a mule and the ass Dukain, who are introduced as love poets. Both poems are parodies of the 'Udhrite style, ending with a scatological punch line, the purpose of which is to ridicule the emotion expressed in the main body of the poem. The piece by Dukain further modifies the inflection of a verb in order to force a rhyme, and this defect is humorously portrayed as a peculiarity of the dialect of asses. Ibn Shuhaid then recognizes one of the mules to be that of Abū 'Isā, an unknown contemporary. The mule asks him to convey its greetings to the littérateurs of Córdoba,⁹⁸

three categories, he does not deserve the title of eloquence, nor can he be included among the artisans of discourse" (*ibid.*, pp. 203–204). This classification of poets is related to Plotinian sources: "In the opinion of [the author of the book], some souls are nobler than others, according to their nearness to or remoteness from the world of the intellect. The souls who stick close to the world of the intellect are the noblest and finest in substance. The opposite applies to those souls who stick close to the world of the senses. The essences of the souls differ in nobility [either because of . . .], or because of the different fineness and coarseness of the bodies" (Shaikh al-Yūnāni, trans. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 47). Cf.: "One class, when they see the sensible things, suppose that the discrimination of things has been exhausted. Followers of sense-perception call this knowledge 'wisdom.' There is also another class of them, raised a little above sense perception, because the intellectual soul has stirred them from the thing that is shunned[?] to the quest for the better thing, but they have abandoned the search for the noble virtues and have employed base earthly practices, and made the First Thing, beyond which there is nothing else, one of the earthly sensible things. . . . And there is a third class, superior men: they are those who have risen up from the depths to the heights, and have seen the radiating light by the superior, penetrating, and keen power within them, so that they have come to be above the clouds and are raised up over the effluvium of earth, which fog intellects" (al-Fārābī, *De Scientia Divina*, p. 411). "For some minds are near to the first minds and are therefore more luminous than others. Some are secondary to them, and some are tertiary. Therefore some of the minds here are divine, some rational, while some are irrational because of their remoteness from those noble minds" *Theology of Aristotle*, p. 457).

⁹⁸ In the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīmīyat teachers and pedants are also compared to asses: "Here you have a group of teachers in this Córdoba of ours, namely those who master many grammatical questions and memorize many words of the classical language, who yet contain thick livers and hearts like those of camels, who rely on sluggish thoughts and rusty minds that cannot penetrate the rays of elegance nor creep into the lights of eloquence. Books on stylistic figures and literary criticism fell their way, of which they have understood about as much as the Yemenite monkey understands about dancing to music and playing melodies on the flute, for they inflect the rare words contained in those books according to the fashion current among them, as one does who is not sustained by the intellectual faculty. Yet he who does not possess the faculty necessary for a particular art—and no art may be successfully cultivated without the faculty necessary for it—is like an ass who cannot learn the art of playing the lute and the mandolin because of the stiffness of his pastern joint and the roundness of his hoof, while he has no fingertips with which to finger the keyboard. Were it possible for an ass to sing:

Why do the stars of this night lose their way? Have they strayed from their
goal, or are they not attached to a celestial sphere?

and its like, because he has a jaw, a tongue, and a windpipe, it would still be impossible for him to pluck the strings with the plectrum, to complement this by fingering the strings, and to relax the string along the place where the forefinger and ring finger move, for he throws his recital into disorder and wails to his own accompaniment. This then is the state of teachers as a group: they succeed as far as their nature is concerned, yet fail in the means, while their failure in the means corresponds to their internal defects, namely the corruption of those means subject to the spiritual faculty, and

and then Ibn Shuhaid encounters a goose, the familiar spirit of an unnamed professor, who accuses him of having passed judgment unfairly in the poetic contest. She argues that poetry is based on mastery of grammar and lexicography, not on inspiration. To this the poet replies that he specializes in “improvising poetry and extemporizing prose according to the rule of being original (*muqtarah*) and following fixed guidelines (*nusba*),”⁹⁹ thus stressing not only the influence of tradition, but also personal inspiration. In discussing this point he adds that he has learned dialectical argumentation from God’s revelation, and quotes a Koranic passage to prove his point. Finally it is proclaimed that intelligence (*aql*) is superior to education (*adab*), and that natural intelligence (*aql at-tabi'a*) is even superior to intelligence acquired by experience (*aql at-tajriba*).¹⁰⁰

Philosophy

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM OF IBN SHUHAID

Ibn Shuhaid was strictly speaking a poet and not a pure philosopher, so that any discussion of his “philosophy” should begin by making it clear that philosophy is present in the *Risāla* only insofar as it is applied to other, literary aims. Yet there is in his work an underlying philosophical structure that gives unity and coherence to the work. From the analysis of the *Risalāt at-Tawābi^c* wa z-zawābi^c plus the extant fragments from the *Risāla* on poetry addressed to Abū Bakr Ishkīmyāt, it is possible to reconstruct the philosophical system used by the poet to build his theory of literary creativity. In that system, as in all medieval Islamic thought, God and the Koran enjoy the supreme and central role (“It is the Clement who taught the Koran, created man, and instructed him in eloquence”).¹⁰¹ The Koran, as the cosubstantial and coeternal word of God, is by Islamic dogma the prototype of all literary perfection, in form as well as in meaning. From it derive beauty and eloquence as well as truth and good.¹⁰² This sublime literary beauty of the spiritual world is communicated

serving the intellectual faculties; those that impel thin blood through the veins to the heart. It is a result of an excessive coarseness of the nerves in the brain, and of the deficiency of the natural disposition. One of the outward manifestations that betrays this to our observation, through the method of physiognomy, is the corruption of the external state, as is the case with a big and broad head, a protruding occiput, a writhing jaw, a blinking eye, a thick nose, a wiggling nose tip. We seek refuge in God lest he deform the shape of our hearts, harden the mass of our livers, thicken our sinews and nerves, increase the size of our noses, and make us a bad example for the worlds” (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–206).

⁹⁹ See p. 95 below.

¹⁰⁰ “According to the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) *aql* (‘intellect,’ equivalent to the Greek *nous*) is a source of knowledge and, as such, is the antithesis of *naql* or tradition; the word *fīra* and *tabi'a* (*physis*) are also used for it. *Aql* is thus a natural way of knowing, independently of the authority of the revelation, what is right or wrong. (Thus it corresponds to the *logos* of the Stoics, who understood by this term a ‘natural light’ (*lumen naturale*), which was their criteria for distinguishing between good and bad.)” (*Encyclopaedia of Islam* [2d ed.; Leiden and London, 1960], I, 341). *Aql tajribi* is explained by Ibn Khaldūn as “the reason through which man learns opinions about and rules relative to dealing with members of his species and to governing them. Most of these are judgments gradually acquired through experience until their use is perfected. This is what is called experimental reason (*aql tajribi*)” (*Muqaddima*, *apud* Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History* [2d ed.; Chicago, 1964], pp. 173–174).

¹⁰¹ See p. 78 below.

¹⁰² See G. E. von Grunebaum, *A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism: The Sections on Poetry of al-Baqillāni's “Ijāz al-Qur'ān,”* (Chicago, n.d.).

to the gifted poet via the inspiration of a spiritual counterpart to his human soul, namely his personal genie, who lives in the upper world of the spirit but is sent to the world of nature to inspire the gifted poet's soul and to impose harmony and beauty on the conflicting emotions of his life. The world of the spirit stands in sharp contrast with that of nature; the objects in the former are perfect, and all in it is beauty, whereas in the latter all is ugliness and disharmony, except when it can share in a small measure in ideal beauty. Men live in an imperfect state, and it is the function of the genie, an Arab counterpart to our muses, to inspire the noblest of them with a vision of the world of spiritual beauty and perfection. In the world of nature there are two categories of men who are able, up to a point, to perceive this supreme beauty with varying success, according to the nobility and perfection of their souls: poets and teachers. Poets are superior to teachers, but not all poets are equal, for they may be good, bad, or indifferent according to the degree to which their souls control their bodies. The more the soul controls the body, the freer it becomes to perceive the world of the spirit, and the better the poet will be, since he will rely more on direct intuition. Thus the best poet is the one who in composing is able to improvise, for at that moment his soul is in direct contact with the spiritual world, he is "possessed" by his genie.¹⁰³ The worst poet is the servile imitator of tradition, who relies merely on a craftsmanship he has acquired through instruction, whereas the good poet perceives ideal beauty and creates a beautiful literary work that is harmonious in its structure. The good poet's body is controlled by a beautiful soul, and while he will be noble, his poetry will be beautiful. In the poet there are two principles at work: intelligence (*aql*) and education (*adab*). The first is that faculty of the soul (*nafs*) that puts him in contact with the spiritual world and fills him with spiritual substances (*mawāddu ruhāniyya*), while the second represents the literary heritage that man has accumulated with the passage of history. The first is superior to the second, because the creator is superior to the creation, and therefore the poet to his poem.¹⁰⁴ Both

¹⁰³ Cf. *Theology of Aristotle*: "Now the Jinn (*daemones*) receive the affectations of speech, and feel and remember and are enchanted by nature and take delight, and hearken to him who prays, and answer him, particularly such of them as are near to the earthly world, for whichever of them is near is quicker to answer than any other" (p. 145). "Often have I been alone with my soul and have doffed my body and laid it aside and become as if I were naked substance without body, so as to be inside myself, outside all other things. Then do I see within myself such beauty and splendor as I do remain marvelling at and astonished, so that I know that I am one of the parts of the sublime, surpassing, lofty, divine world, and possess active life. When I am certain of that, I lift my intellect up from that world into the divine world and become as if I were placed in it and cleaving to it, so as to be above the entire intelligible world, and seem to be standing in that sublime and divine place. And there I see such light and splendor as tongues cannot describe nor ears comprehend" (p. 225).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Theology of Aristotle*: "We say briefly and concisely, that every doer is superior to the thing done and every pattern superior to the reproduction derived from it. For the musician is from music and every beautiful form is from another form prior to it and higher than it, for if it is an artistic form it is from the form in the mind and knowledge of the artist, and if it is a natural form it is from an intellectual form prior to it and worthier than it. The first, the intellectual form, is superior to the natural form, and the natural form is superior to the form in the knowledge of the artist, and the known form in the knowledge of the artist is superior to and more beautiful than the form executed: art imitates nature and nature imitates mind. If anyone blames art for imitating nature in her works, we say: In that case you must blame nature, for in her activities she imitates other things, that is, the intellectual things that are above her and higher than she. We say too: When art wishes to imitate something she does not merely cast her gaze on the pattern and model her work on it, but ascends to nature and takes from her the description of the pattern, and then her work is more beautiful and perfect. Often art finds defective or ugly the thing whose design and figure she wishes to take, so she

intelligence and education are necessary components of the poet's craft, but the good poet will rely more heavily on intelligence, and as a result his soul will be predominantly *intellectual*.

Teachers (and critics) form the second group. They are basically inferior to poets because they are merely the guardians of a tradition which souls superior to them have created. They possess education and reason, through which they are able to think, and deduce the principles of grammar, while memory helps them to master lexicography, but they are unable to rise to the level of direct communion with the world of the spirit through lack of intelligence.

At most their contact with spiritual matters is indirect, via the accumulated literary and philological heritage of the past. Thus teachers are *rational* souls, but reason, being potential, is inferior to the pure actuality of intelligence, and their reasons are incapable of explaining the essential beauty of a poem, while the grammatical rules they formulate are of no avail in teaching the art of poetry when the student does not possess a noble soul. Thus poetry cannot be acquired through instruction; it is the product of inspiration. At worst, teachers, like bad poets, sink to a third level, that of pedants, and their souls, seduced by envies and base passions, become more like those of animals than men. They thus become *animal* souls because in the combination of body and soul, the body controls the soul. Then the body will be coarse and ugly, the soul base, and its literary output mediocre.

The system above, which forms the philosophical basis for the whole *Risāla*, with its theory of beauty as a divine emanation, with its sharp distinction between spirit and matter, and its classification of the soul's parts into intellectual, rational, and animal, is recognizably Neoplatonic. A large part of this Neoplatonism, of course, goes back directly to Plato himself, but generally speaking, the latter's influence on Islam was indirect and was transmitted chiefly through the Neoplatonic texts of Plotinus.¹⁰⁵ The history of the transmission of Plotinus in Islam is a complicated one of which not all the details have been clarified. In the ninth century a compendium of Plotinus appeared, spuriously attributed to Aristotle and called the *Theology of Aristotle*. It is a translation and paraphrase of the last three *Enneads*, and outlines the main features of the Neoplatonic system; its theory of emanations, of the soul, and the precedence of spirit over matter.¹⁰⁶ Because of the confusion of Plotinus with Aristotle, these doctrines were attributed to the latter of the two philosophers, and no clearly distinct Neoplatonic current developed. In the tenth century, a Plotinian tradition did appear independently of Aristotle, attributed to a certain "Shaikh al-Yūnāni" ('the Greek sage'). Franz Rosenthal has shown that the Shaikh's teachings are also authentic paraphrases and summaries of the *Enneads*.¹⁰⁷ This tradition reached Arab philosophers who blended it with Aristotelian thought.

completes and beautifies it. It is because of the surpassing beauty and loveliness that has been set in art that she has the power to do this; consequently she can beautify the ugly and complete the defective" (p. 377).

¹⁰⁵ See *E.I.*¹, I, 174.

¹⁰⁶ Arabic text: *Die Sogenannte Theologie des Aristotles*, ed. F. Dieterici (Leipzig, 1882; reprint, Amsterdam, 1965); Eng. trans. Geoffrey Lewis, *Plotini Opera*, ed. P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer (Paris and Brussels, 1959), Vol. II.

¹⁰⁷ F. Rosenthal, "Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnāni and the Arabic Plotinus Source," *Orientalia*, ser. 2, XXI (1952), 461–492; XXII (1953), 370–400; XXIV (1955), 42–66. Eng. trans. in *Plotini Opera*.

In the tenth century it appears in al-Fārābī's treatise on *Divine Knowledge* as well as in his *Ideas of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*, in the Neoplatonic encyclopedia known as the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān as-Ṣafā' ('Brethren of Purity'), and in the *Nabatean Agriculture* of Ibn Wahshiyya, a book containing sections on philosophy within an agricultural treatise.¹⁰⁸ Neoplatonism became influential in Baghdad and was transmitted by Shahrastānī (1076–1153) in his *Book of Religions and Sects*.

In al-Andalus, Neoplatonic doctrines soon began to arrive from the East. The *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān as-Ṣafā' are said to have been introduced by the famous astronomer Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. 1004?) after a trip to the East from which he returned to Córdoba with Arabic and Greek manuscripts.¹⁰⁹ That Neoplatonism was known to Ibn Shuhaid's intellectual circle is certain because Ibn Ḥazm uses technical terminology derived from the *Theology of Aristotle*, while his doctrines of the soul, of love, and of beauty embodied in the *Taqṣīr al-hamāma* (written at the same time the *Risāla* was being composed by his friend) and the *Akhlaq* are clearly Neoplatonic.¹¹⁰

Plato, in the *Republic*, had already discussed men in terms of three intellectual classes. The idea reappears in al-Fārābī¹¹¹ for whom the chief of a virtuous city is likened to the heart of an organism, for he must be its most perfect organ. His intellect, having acquired all intelligibles, becomes intelligence in act, an acquired intellect ('*aql mustafād*) halfway between the pure actuality of the active intellect and the mere potency of the passive intellect. Such a man is a philosopher king. When the virtuous city lacks such a perfect leader, the next in rank is the man who can apply the laws formulated by a previous philosopher king and who can use them as a source of guidance when there is no precedent to guide him. But if at a given moment in history the ruler lacks wisdom, a power vacuum will result as the masses take over, and the city will be exposed to ruin if a philosopher king does not appear to govern it.

The history of this intellectual caste system in Islamic thought was a long one. It will appear in Aristotelian garb in Averroes's (d. 1198) *Kitāb Faṣl al-maqāl* dealing with the contradictions among the approaches of philosophers, theologians, and

¹⁰⁸ Private communication from Dr. Gerard Salinger, who plans to publish an edition and translation of the section on viticulture of the *Nabatean Agriculture*. See also, *E.I.*¹, II, 427.

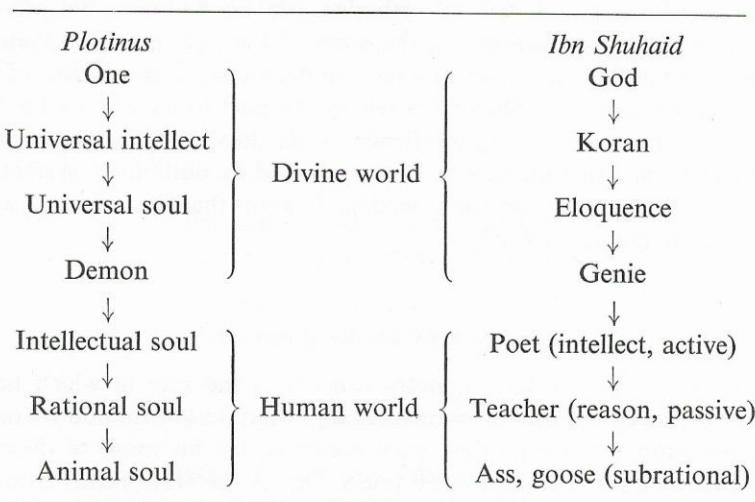
¹⁰⁹ The *Rasā'il* are based on eighth- and ninth-century Arab Neoplatonism. Plato is quoted often and considered superior to Aristotle. Likewise the *Rasā'il* avoid the more Aristotelian philosophy of al-Kindī, and expound the familiar theory of emanation peculiar to Neoplatonism. This is harmonized, through allegorical interpretation of the Koran, with the religious teachings of Islam. Some of the works attributed to Maslama al-Majrīṭī are spurious, and therefore this fact is not certain (see *E.I.*¹, III, 97). But E. García Gómez has found early allusions to the Ikhwān as-Ṣafā' in Andalusian poetry, which would prove that their works were known at about this time ("Alusiones a los 'Ijwān al-Ṣafā'" en la poesía arábigoandaluza," *Andalus*, IV (1939), 462–465). Ṣā'īd of Toledo says that al-Majrīṭī's disciple, Abū l-Ḥakam al-Kirmānī of Córdoba, traveled to the East and upon his return "brought back with him the treatises known as the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān as-Ṣafā'", and we know of no one who brought them to al-Andalus before him" (*Kitāb Tabaqāt al-umam*, ed. L. Cheikho [Beirut, 1912], pp. 70–71.)

¹¹⁰ See Miguel Cruz Hernández, "El neoplatonismo de Ibn Ḥazm de Córdoba," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebreos*, XI (1962), 121–128. In the *Akhlaq* Ibn Ḥazm says for example: "Grace (*halāwa*) is delicateness of features, ease of movements, lightness of gesture; it is the plasticity of a soul in harmony with the accidents of form" (*op. cit.*, p. 65). Among the Jews in al-Andalus, Ibn Gabirol, a generation later developed a Neoplatonic system in his *Fons Vitae*. Furthermore, the *Theology of Aristotle* had been known in Córdoba since the mid-tenth century. See George F. Hourani, "The Early Growth of the Secular Sciences in Andalusia," *Studia Islamica*, XXXII (1970), 149.

¹¹¹ *Idées des habitants de la cité vertueuse*, trans. R. P. Jaussen, Y. Karam, and J. Chlala (Cairo, 1949), pp. 85 ff.

the masses in interpreting scriptural truths.¹¹² The philosophy of history contained in the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) is presented in a complex style designed to explain the philosophical substructure of history to philosophers in such a way that theologians will not be disturbed by the book's contents, and will be satisfied with its apparent dialectical appeal to them.¹¹³

An examination of the accompanying chart comparing the system of Plotinus with that of Ibn Shuhaid will reveal that the latter's *Risāla* is a Neoplatonic aesthetics in a fanciful Arab and Islamic guise, at least in its theoretical structure. Ibn Shuhaid



has thus developed a metaphysics into an aesthetics to account for the origin of beauty and the creative process in Arabic literature. As far as is known, he was the first Arab poet to approach this problem from a Neoplatonic point of view, and to reject deliberately the elaborate system based on rhetorical devices that had been developed by earlier Arab critics but that was proving not only incapable of explaining the essential beauty of poetry, but was also stifling poetic creativity. It appears therefore, that in the last days of the caliphate a Neoplatonic intrusion stimulated intellectual circles in Córdoba. Why? What were the local conditions that favored the adoption of this philosophical current? Perhaps one obvious explanation lies in the social and political decline sensed so strongly in the works of Ibn Shuhaid and Ibn Ḥazm. When reality became dim, men turned to the ideal in the hope of finding in it some means of correcting and controlling the forces that were tearing apart the body politic. Ibn Shuhaid on the one hand was a cultured man. For him there could be no question of siding with the narrow orthodoxy of the unenlightened jurists of al-Andalus, whom he criticizes in his *Risāla*.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, he was a noble

¹¹² See G. F. Hourani, *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, E. J. Gibb Memorial Series, new ser., Vol. XXI, (London, 1961). 33.

¹¹³ See Mahdi, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴ Among the allusions to the *Ihwān as-Ṣafā'* discovered by García Gómez two are in ascetic poems by the caustic Malikite jurist Abū Ishāq of Elvira who dislikes them:

I studied the *Ihwān as-Ṣafā'* and found that they were counterfeit coins, like my deeds. In whom will I find pure gold?

Arab; a member of an aristocracy whose fortunes had begun to wane since the tenth century (he himself died in poverty after having squandered his wealth), and he could not look lightly upon the collapse of the edifice his ancestors had helped to build, nor upon its takeover by non-Arab parvenus. As an aristocrat, siding with orthodoxy, he could not adopt Aristotelian philosophy with its dangerous appeal to reason and logic, as had the Mu'tazilites, for this could result in further undermining the Islamic faith. Torn between two opposites, the solution, for a man of intellectual integrity was not easy, and it is reasonable to suppose that he looked with favor upon Neoplatonism because it was the one philosophy of antiquity which could be successfully assimilated by orthodox Islamic doctrine, but which could also serve as a corrective measure to the vices of the age. Had not Plato himself written during the decline and crisis of Athenian democracy? The decline of Córdoba breathed in the works of Ibn Shuhaid is felt by the poet to have caused a decline in literary, scientific, and even moral excellence.¹¹⁵ He thus attempts to raise standards by exposing and chastizing the defects of the age, and by outlining a system whereby the truly gifted should be recognized as leaders. It seems that this at least is a constant idea running throughout his work.

THE POETRY OF IBN SHUHAID

A brief analysis of Ibn Shuhaid's poetry can reveal the way in which he put his theories into practice, and can show incidentally, what he understood by originality. The first impression received by the casual reader is that his usage of themes differs little from that of other medieval Arab poets. One is therefore rather astonished to find Ibn Shuhaid affirming: "I myself excel only in improvising poetry and extemporizing prose discourse according to the rule of being original and following fixed guidelines."¹¹⁶ Indeed, to the modern mind such a statement is a totally confusing contradiction in terms. What then does a medieval Arab poet adhering to a fixed tradition mean when he claims to be original? What, for him, constitutes originality?

Up to the eighteenth century, our own culture subscribed to a reverence for tradition, to an idea that truth was to be found in the accumulated lore of the past. Such has been the fundamental approach of all "pre-modern" cultures that, adhering to a static ideal in which the past is granted preeminence over the present, view the world as a motionless entity in which the personal and subjective is recognized only insofar as it can be projected into static categories.¹¹⁷ This attitude is directly responsible for the highly "static" or stylized literary forms and *topoi* cultivated by medieval

(Garcia Gómez, *op. cit.*, p. 463.) It is instructive to contrast this negative attitude of a jurist with that of an unknown libertine, Abū l-Hasan ibn Zinba^c, who in a garden poem with wine song overtones declares:

The conversation of the Ikhwān as-Ṣafā^a is a pleasure that can be enjoyed in safety from sin.

(*Ibid.*, p. 464.)

¹¹⁵ See especially p. 69 below.

¹¹⁶ See p. 96 below.

¹¹⁷ "The craving for absolute and largely static truth . . .—for change degrades, and becoming is inferior to being—excludes acquiescence in psychological and operational truth. The human experience

Arab writers. In literature as in life, radical change or innovation was to be avoided insofar as it implied the decay of a perfect model that has been set up for eternity. Thus it was not a matter of the poet's being "enslaved" by tyrannical literary forms and themes, but of his willingly adopting them to produce poetry by exercising his virtuosity. Medieval Arabic poetry, it has often been affirmed, is a poetry of virtuosity, yet it is a basic lack of sympathy for the implications of this phenomenon which has led to the misunderstanding with which many modern critics have approached its study.

The following analysis of two typical poems by Ibn Shuhaid, on their own terms rather than ours, illustrates how the Arab poet created original poetry out of commonplace themes and a fixed form.

1	<i>wa-lammā tamalla²a min sukri-hi fa-nāma wa-nāmat [‘]uyūnu l-^casas</i>
2	<i>danautu ilai-hi [‘]alā bu^cdi-hi dunuwwa rafiqin darā mā ltamas</i>
3	<i>adibbu ilai-hi dabiba l-karā wa-asmū ilai-hi sumuwwa n-nafas</i>
4	<i>wa-bittu bi-hi lailatī nā^ciman ilā an tabassama thaghru l-ghalas</i>
5	<i>uqabbili min-hu bayāda t-^ctulā wa-arshufu min-hu sawāda l-la^cas</i>

- 1 When he was filled by his drunkenness so that he fell asleep, and the eyes of the night watch slept,
- 2 I drew nigh to him, despite his distance, as does a friend who knows what he is after,
- 3 Creeping toward him as does slumber; rising up to him as does a sigh,

reflects not merely the human condition but an objective reality independent of the structure of the human 'soul.' Introspection does not stop short at self-cognition but aspires to the exteriorization or reification of psychological experiences and its causes. . . . Accordingly, the universe and, with it, the individual life are centered on God or on fate; man's purpose is outside himself and so are the source and rationale of the incidents that make up his life. . . . As there are no firm criteria to distinguish fact from figment, figment from theory, and again theory from fact, man is reduced to wonderment and fear to an extent no longer imaginable to ourselves, hence subjected to alternations of extreme emotions which make him grasp at any cue by which to secure orientation in a universe that by its very construction defies orientation. . . . Hence, also, man's dedication to an ideal of cosmic and social stability with fixed lines of causation and symbolization. . . . Psychological phenomena tend to be interpreted as representing objective, nonphysical 'outside' reality; they constitute a means of obtaining objective, factual information about this outside reality and, up to a point, of controlling it. . . . There is, to put it differently, no mandatory or even no clearly perceived dividing line between the natural and the supernatural, any more than between the possible and impossible" (G. E. von Grunebaum, "The Cultural Function of the Dream as Illustrated by Classical Islam," *The Dream and Human Societies*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966], p. 5).

- 4 And I spent the night in bliss with him, until the mouth of night's end smiled,
- 5 Kissing the whiteness of his neck and sipping from the darkness of his deep red lips.¹¹⁸

This poem is a particularly good example, because Ibn Shuhaid quotes it in the *Risāla* and gives the theme's sources. The poem became famous and was included in later anthologies.¹¹⁹ Thus the end result may be compared with its models. Whereas the verses of his predecessors had been in *tawil* and *sari^c*, the theme is recast into the *mutaqārib* meter by Ibn Shuhaid. This meter is described as "a tripping measure more commonly used in Persian than in Arabic."¹²⁰ Here, the rapid and rhythmic progression of the meter is wholly in keeping with the theme of the poem, namely the swift-paced movement of the lover on her way to the beloved. The rhyme, a prolonged, hissing *s*, further suggests the sleeping of the guards and of the lover, and is in keeping with the secrecy (*sirr*) of the occasion.

The first line has a careful structure in which the nasal consonants *l*, *m*, and *n* are repeated in carefully alternating patterns, and in conjunction with *a*. These nasals, along with the repetitive effect of *nāma* 'he slept' and *nāmat* 'they slept,' evoke the idea of drowsiness. Line two repeats stop consonants (*d*, *t*, *b*, *q*), as well as the verb *danautu* 'I drew nigh' and *dunuwwa* 'as draws nigh,' and this repetition is continued in the first hemistich of the third line with *adibbu* 'I creep' and *dabiba* 'as creeps.' The stop consonants punctuate the rhythmic patter of the advancing lover's feet as he approaches. Then the second hemistich of line three again evokes the sleepers by repeating *s*, *m*, and *n*, and with *asmū* 'I rise' and *sumuwwa* 'as rises.' So far the meter has followed a regular pattern suggestive of the tripping advance of the lover. In line four she arrives before her beloved, at which point there is a break in the regularity of the second foot which scans $\text{˘˘}-$ instead of the correct $\text{˘}-\text{˘}$ or $\text{˘}-\text{˘}$. This irregularity stresses a sudden pause in movement. The skillful repetition of certain sounds and words, of rhythm and meter thus creates an impression of secrecy, sleep, and movement which enhances the actual meaning of the words themselves. Ibn Shuhaid had explained the possibilities of alliteration to his students, saying: "Consonants have relationships and affinities that appear in words, so that when one related consonant lies close to another and one related word mingles with another, the association is pleasant and the proximity becomes beautiful. If the forms of language are structured according to this principle the appearance is beautiful and the experience is agreeable."¹²¹ It can immediately be perceived that despite the banality of the poem's theme its treatment by Ibn Shuhaid has transformed it into a unique poetic vignette, and that in this it differs from previous attempts.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, no. 34.

¹¹⁹ See p. 85 below. It is quoted by Shaqūdī, *Elogio del islam español* (*Risāla fī Faḍl al-Andalus*), trans. E. García Gómez (Madrid, 1934), pp. 66–67.

¹²⁰ A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 11.

¹²¹ See n. 123 below.

1 $\text{anūhu} \ ^{\circ}\text{alā} \ \text{nafsī} \ \text{wa-andubu} \ \text{nubla-hā}$
 $\text{idhā} \ \text{anā} \ fī \ d\ddot{\text{-}}\text{darrā}^{\circ}\text{i} \ \text{azma}^{\circ}\text{tu} \ \text{qatla-hā}$
 2 $\text{rađitu} \ \text{qađā}^{\circ}\text{a} \ l\text{-lāhī} \ fī \ \text{kulli} \ \text{hālatin}$
 $\ ^{\circ}\text{alaiya} \ \text{wa-ahkāman} \ \text{tayaqqantu} \ ^{\circ}\text{adla-hā}$
 3 $\text{azillu} \ \text{qa}^{\circ}\text{ida} \ d\text{-dāri} \ \text{tajnubunī} \ l\text{-}^{\circ}\text{aşā}$
 $\ ^{\circ}\text{alā} \ da^{\circ}\text{fi} \ sāqin \ \text{auhana} \ s\text{-suqmu} \ \text{rijla-hā}$
 4 $\text{wa-an}^{\circ}\text{ā} \ \text{khasisāti} \ bni \ ādama \ ^{\circ}\text{āmilan}$
 $\text{bi-rāhati} \ \text{tiflin} \ \text{aļkama} \ d\text{-durru} \ \text{naşla-hā}$
 5 $\text{alā} \ \text{rubba} \ \text{khaşmin} \ qad \ \text{kafaitu} \ \text{wa-kurbatin}$
 $\text{kashaftu} \ \text{wa-dārin} \ \text{kuntu} \ fī \ l\text{-maļli} \ \text{wabla-hā}$
 6 $\text{wa-rubba} \ \text{qarıđin} \ ka\text{-l-jariđi} \ ba^{\circ}\text{athtu-hu}$
 $ilā \ \text{khu}^{\circ}\text{batin} \ lā \ \text{yunkiru} \ l\text{-jam}^{\circ}\text{u} \ \text{fa}^{\circ}\text{qla-hā}$
 7 $\text{fa-man} \ \text{mubligu} \ l\text{-fityāni} \ anna \ akhā-humū$
 $akhū \ \text{fatkatin} \ shan^{\circ}\text{ā} \ mā \ kāna \ \text{shikla-hā}$
 8 $\ ^{\circ}\text{alai-kum} \ \text{salāmun} \ min \ \text{fatan} \ ^{\circ}\text{adda-hu} \ r\text{-radā}$
 $\text{wa-lam} \ \text{yansa} \ ^{\circ}\text{ainan} \ \text{athbatat} \ fī\text{-hi} \ \text{ nabla-hā}$
 9 $\text{yabīnu} \ \text{wa-kaffu} \ l\text{-mauti} \ \text{yakhla}^{\circ}\text{u} \ \text{nafsa-hu}$
 $\text{wa-dhākhila-hā} \ \text{ḥubbun} \ \text{yuħauwinu} \ \text{thukla-hā}$

- 1 I mourn for my soul and lament its nobility, for in distress I have resolved upon suicide.
- 2 I have accepted God's decree on my behalf in every instance, along with those verdicts of whose justice I am certain.
- 3 I remain crippled at home, with the staff by my side, because of a weak leg whose foot illness has disabled.
- 4 I lament the vile state of a mortal man, working with the hand of a child whose spearhead was trained by adversity.
- 5 Lo! Many an adversary have I satisfied; many a grief have I removed; and in drought, many are the encampments whose generous downpour I have seen.
- 6 Much agonizing poetry have I consigned to a speech whose excellence is not denied by the public.
- 7 Therefore, who will inform the noble youths that their brother is the victim of an unequalled destructive violence?
- 8 Farewell from a youth whom death has stung, yet who has not forgotten an eye that fixed its arrows in him.
- 9 He is departing, and the hand of death is releasing his soul, yet inside it there lies a love that makes light its loss.¹²²

¹²² Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, no. 53.

This piece was composed twenty days before Ibn Shuhaid's death from hemiplegia, and in it he expresses his resignation to the dictates of fate. The meter used is *tawil*, by far the most commonly used measure in Arabic poetry, whose "long" and stately rhythm is particularly suited to the elevated style of panegyric and elegiac poetry.

In the first hemistich, the idea of the soul's nobility is introduced, along with a lament over its passing. The latter is stressed by the use of two cognate verbs, *anūḥu* 'I mourn' and *andubu* 'I lament.' The second hemistich hints at distress, which has led to the poet's determination (*azma^ctu*) to commit suicide. The contrast between the passivity of resignation and mourning and the activity of the determination to die sets up a basic duality and poetic tension between life and death, while it also implies that the poet is the active partner in the event.

The second line expresses total resignation and fatalism. This is expanded in line three to describe the poet's physical disability, but the weakness of the body is treated as though it were of secondary importance to the commanding soul, since the latter is mentioned in an emphatic position (before a pause) both in the first and last lines, and is echoed by the displaced caesura of line two ('*alaiya* 'on my behalf'). It is suggested, however, that physical strength cannot be entirely dispensed with as long as the soul is imprisoned in the body, and line four expands this idea by alluding to adversity (*durr*). The second hemistichs of the third and fourth lines, both of which describe physical weakness, are parallel in syntactic structure.

The next two lines are likewise parallel in both form and meaning; in form because they are linked by the repetition of *rubba* 'many a,' and in meaning because they develop the theme of the nobility of soul introduced in line one. Here it is seen to consist in magnanimity toward the enemy, sympathy and generosity toward the unfortunate (l. 5), plus excellence in prose and poetry (l. 6). Thus we have progressed from physical handicaps to spiritual qualities which alone are capable of controlling the body. In line six, poetry is "agonizing" and is compared with the suffocating saliva of a dying man (*jariḍ*), and the effect is emphasized by the use of the rhetorical figure known as *jinās al-mudāri^c* (using two words that differ only in a single root letter, here *qariḍin ka-l-jariḍi*), while the harsh sound of the *q* echoed three times in the line adds to the idea of distress.

Up to this point Ibn Shuhaid has been involved with his own personal sorrow and has referred to himself in the first person singular. Now he attains a form of release from the immediacy of emotion by objectifying his state and viewing it through the eyes of his friends, the "noble youths" of line seven. At the same time, as if to stress this objectification, he switches to the impersonality of the third person "he" and in this way is able to rise to a level of equanimity and consolation. There is still bitterness, however, for in the second hemistich of line seven he refers to his illness as a "destructive violence," while this is heightened by the harsh sound of the consonants *kh* and *sh*. But now he rises above this idea to stress the soul's firm control over the body in which it is imprisoned. In line eight, the note of sadness caused by the sting of death immediately gives way to the satisfaction caused by love. The concluding line picks up this theme and is dominated by a Neoplatonic conception of love: the soul is released through death; love is lodged in the soul; through love the soul may aspire to ascend to a higher, spiritual world. Thus all the preceding pessimism about the poet's misfortune, his physical suffering, and resignation to fate, lead up to a final optimistic view of

the soul's ascent through the ennobling power of love, away from the physical world.

The metrical rhythm of the poem is generally regular and grave, as befits a serious subject. It should be noted, however, that just as the initial tension between the physical and the spiritual is finally resolved in favor of the latter after a hard struggle, the basic binary structure of the Arabic verse, with its caesura in the middle (which should ideally correspond to a pause in meaning), is here broken, for the caesura is deliberately displaced in every line except the first and the last two, giving rise to lines with a tripartite structure. A ruptured form thus expresses the disharmony in the poet's mind which is not harmonized until the end (e.g., l. 2, *radītu qaḍā'i l-lāhi / fī kulli ḥālatin 'alaiya / wa aḥkāman tayaqqantu 'adla-hā*). Throughout the poem there are words expressing mournfulness, disease, death, as well as harsh and gloomy sounds (*n, b, d, d, kh sh*) and a predominance of the vowels *ū* and *ī*, particularly in lines five and seven.

The rhyme *lahā* further adds to the mournful effect by its suggestion of sighing that punctuates the end of every line. From such observations it may be intimated that the use of the many structural devices of Arabic poetry (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, rhetorical figures) at the hands of a skilled poet can definitely succeed in giving a new lease on life to an old and outworn theme. The effective and masterly handling of these devices is what Ibn Shuhaid understood by originality, and judged by his standards—not by our own—he is indeed a very skillful poet.

Ibn Shuhaid viewed the problems of literary beauty and originality through Neoplatonic eyes, but in claiming originality he meant originality of form, not of content. In this attitude he adhered to the tradition of Arabic literary criticism which in many ways coincides with the Aristotelian theory of imitation as the latter was interpreted by later Greek critics, for whom it came to mean imitation not of nature, but of earlier authors.¹²³ Also, for Ibn Shuhaid, as for other Arab poets, form is reduced largely to a

¹²³ "The identity of the basic views on plagiarism in classical and in Arabic theory should not go unnoticed. Both civilizations felt that subject matter was common property and that it was sufficient vindication of originality or independence to present the traditional subject in a new and preferably better *garb*" (von Grunebaum, "The Concept of Plagiarism," p. 251). "Whether or not they actually continued the Greek tradition, the Arabs are at one with their Hellenistic predecessors in the very limited sympathy they extend to originality in literature. As has been observed above, this attitude was, and had to be, accompanied by an almost unbounded respect for their ancestors' legacy and those ancestors themselves. This reverence, in turn, was based on, or at least fortified by, the conviction of the constant and inevitable decline of the human race" (*ibid.*, p. 253). That Ibn Shuhaid was acutely conscious of the problems of form can be seen from a passage in the *Risāla* to al-Ishkīmyāt in which he describes a "creative writing class" he conducted in Córdoba: "We had been nourishing one of our students with this food, and he found it pleasant, understanding its scope. Idleness, however, gains control of young men, and boredom gains mastery over them, so that whoever bases his teachings on the recognition of this fact will teach only noble men and men who apply themselves to their studies, for he who fails to produce a distinguished student will be accused of being deficient and suspected of being incompetent.

"One day Yūsuf ibn Ishāq al-Isrā'īlī, the most intelligent student who ever came my way, sat before me, while I was tutoring one of the inhabitants of Córdoba who was very dear to me, and saying to him: 'Consonants have relationships and affinities that appear in words, so that when one related consonant lies close to another and one related word mingles with another, the association is pleasant and the proximity becomes beautiful. If the forms of discourse are structured according to this principle the appearance is beautiful and the experience is agreeable. Do you understand?' He answered me: 'Yes, by God!' I replied to him: 'Furthermore, sweetness when it is sought, and purity of diction when it is desired, have linguistic rules such that he who follows them succeeds while he who neglects them fails. Do you understand?' He replied: 'Yes.' I continued: 'Just as you choose a good expression and elegant language, you should choose good grammar and correct usage of lexicography, avoiding

matter of subtle phrasing, although a careful structure and gradation of ideas is not absent from his poetry. In the history of literature the two main currents, Aristotelian (which stressed craftsmanship) and Platonic (which stressed inspiration), have led to two different results. Whenever the theory of imitation has prevailed, it has led to craftsmanship, to the formulation of "classical" literary canons, to a codification of rules, and to imitation of previous writers. Once this has happened, the tendency has been to restrict the writer to ever increasing virtuosity of expression, as is the case of Hellenistic and Byzantine poets, of "Modern" and "Neoclassical" Arabic literature, and of the European baroque. On the other hand, whenever Plato's appeal to inspiration and to individual poetic genius has freed the poet to pursue his own fancy, the theories of Longinus (himself apparently a Neoplatonist), of renaissance and romantic movements have broken the bonds of tradition. As a medieval Arab poet, it would be too much to expect Ibn Shuhaid to have forsaken his tradition entirely, which does not mean either that he was a bad poet or that he was a slave to tradition. He was a traditionalist on the one hand, but on the other, he lived during an age when his

what is bad and incorrect.' He answered: 'Yes.' I asked: 'Do you understand anything from the sources of the poet's words?

"By your life, I was very patient on the day they departed, since I did not die suddenly over their tracks;

On the morning we met, when you cast a glance, while we traveled on the road's surface.

Hence the eye's tears flowed until they seemed to their observer like a branch blown by the wind; watered by rain."

*la-^camru-ka inni yauma bānū fa-lam amut
khufātan ^calā āthāri-him la-ṣabūrū
ghadāta Itaqaina idh ramaiti bi nazratin
wa naḥnu ^calā matni t-ṭariqi nasīru
fa-fādat dumūu l-aini hattā ka-anna-hā
li-nāziri-hā ghuṣnun yurāḥu maṭīru*

He replied: 'Yes, by God, the word *khufātan* ("suddenly") fell in a delightful spot, and the words *ramaiti* ("you cast") and *matni t-ṭariqi* ("the road's surface") have been placed in a fine position, while the words *ghuṣnun yurāḥu maṭīru* ("a branch blown by the wind; watered by rain") have traced a subtle path.' At this I answered him: 'I hope you have inhaled somewhat of the breeze of knowledge. Return to me tomorrow with something you have composed yourself.' And the Jew remained silent all the while, taking in what I was saying. Meanwhile the Cordovan returned on the morrow and recited:

'I swear by the Lord of Mecca and of the camels that my anxieties are comparable to mountains . . .'

along with equally bad lines of poetry. Then the Jew arrived and recited:

'Did their riders make for an even plain after having stolen your heart within the howdah?'

He continued to the end of his ode, producing every sort of beauty, whereupon the Cordovan declared to me: 'The poem of the Jew is more beautiful than my poem.' I replied: 'There is nothing wrong with your mind if you are able to recognize this.' Nor did he cease to try time after time until his soil became moist and his herbage luxuriant. Then his flowers blossomed and his perfume spread. He saw me use uncouth speech in its proper place without noticing the appropriateness of the context, so he used some of it himself and showed it to me, at which I said: 'Hide it!' He answered: 'You grudge it to me,' and showed it to Ibn al-Iflili who told him: 'Avoid that language.' The Cordovan replied to him: 'But Abū Ḵāmir uses it.' Ibn al-Iflili said: 'Yes, but he places it in its proper context, for he is more skilled in its use than you are'" (*apud* Ibn Bassām, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–200).

tradition was in a state of crisis. His personal experience of life permitted him to view the past creatively, and by appealing to inspiration, to introduce a certain measure of freshness into Andalusian poetry. In this respect, his views coincide remarkably with those of Longinus, who in his treatise *On the Sublime* expresses his preference for the inspired poet who commits an occasional grammatical lapse, over the correct yet mediocre poet. Certainly the deep personal emotion in many of Ibn Shuhaid's poems strikes a new note, when contrasted with the solemn and perfect Neoclassical panegyrics of Ibn Darrāj al-Qastalli. With Ibn Shuhaid a vague feeling of what with all due allowances could be described as "romanticism" invades Andalusian poetry in the eleventh century. It is present likewise in Ibn Ḥazm, who by applying Neoplatonism to the older tradition of Baghdadi love (*ḥubb ibāḥi*) succeeded in introducing a spiritualized courtly love into al-Andalus at around the same time. This intimate, personal tone will find its fullest perfection in a younger poet, the great Ibn Zaidūn, who in his stylized courtly lyrics to the Umayyad princess Wallāda has passages of true personal inspiration, in which emotion clearly breaks through the shackles of convention. In this way, Neoplatonism served as the basis for a literary renaissance in eleventh-century Arab Spain.

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TRANSLATION
of
RISĀLAT AT-TAWĀBI^c WA Z-ZAWĀBI^c
(THE TREATISE OF FAMILIAR SPIRITS AND DEMONS)
by
Abū ʻĀmir ibn Shuhaid al-Ashjaʻī, al-Andalusi

INTRODUCTION

ZUHAIR IBN NUMAIR

How excellent, Abū Bakr,¹ is an opinion you expressed whereby you hit the mark, and a conjecture you formulated without missing the target! Through the two you manifested the countenance of truth and tore the veils from the bright forehead of exactitude, when you observed the friend you had won and saw that he had gained mastery over the extreme limits of heaven so that he joined together its sun and moon and united its two Farqad stars,² for whenever he saw a breach he stopped it up with its Suhā,³ or else, whenever he observed a gap he repaired it with its two Zubān stars,⁴ and did things similar to this. Hence you declared: “How did he come to be given such ability as a youth, and how did he shake the trunk of the palm tree of eloquence so that ‘it showered its ripe dates upon him?’⁵ Surely there is a demon guiding him and a devil frequenting him! I swear that he has a genie who helps him and a devil who aids him; this is not within the power of a human being, nor is such a breath the product of such a soul.” Yet since you have brought up the subject, Abū Bakr, then hearken and I will cause you to hear a wonderful miracle:

Ever since the days when I was learning my alphabet, I used to long for men of letters and yearned to compose eloquent discourse; hence I frequented literary gatherings and sat at the feet of teachers. As a result the artery of my understanding throbbed and the vein of my knowledge flowed with a spiritual substance, so that a small glance used to fill me up and a brief examination of books was useful to me, for the “waterskin of knowledge had found its cover,”⁶ nor was I like the snow from which you strike fire, nor like the “ass laden with books.”⁷ Thus I attacked the breach of eloquence without respite, making fast the foot of its bird with snares, so that marvels overwhelmed me and gifts without measure encompassed me.

¹ Abū Bakr Yaḥya ibn Hazm was a vizier and secretary from a family of jurists and men of letters. Ad-Dabbi says he was “a professor of literature well known in that field. It was he whom Abū ‘Amir ibn Shuhaid addressed in the *Risālat at-Tawābi*° wa z-zawābi° dubbed by its author ‘The Tree of Merriment’ (*Shajarat al-fukāha*). He descends from a different family than that of the jurist Abū Muḥammad ‘Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa‘id ibn Hazm” (ad-Dabbi, *Kitāb Bughyat al-multamis fi ta‘rīkh rijāl ahl al-Andalus* [Madrid, 1884], p. 485). Apart from this meager information nothing else is known about him. He should not be confused with the Ibn Ḥazm who became famous as a Zāhirite scholar and was a close friend of Ibn Shuhaid’s.

² The two Farqad stars are near the North Pole, in Ursa Minor.

³ Suhā is a very dim star in Ursa Major.

⁴ The two Zubān stars are in Scorpio.

⁵ From Koran 19:25.

⁶ “The waterskin has found its cover” is a proverbial expression (Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* [London, 1863–1893], V, 1826).

⁷ Koran 62:5.

During the early days of my youth I experienced a passion in which my attachment grew stronger. Later I was overcome by boredom during the course of that emotion. Then it chanced that the person I loved died during that period of boredom so that I was filled with grief and began to mourn over him one day in the garden, with its doors closed upon me, and as I was alone, I recited:

Death has subdued the harem's fawn and destruction has claimed the inexperienced gazelle.⁸

Until I came to apologize for the boredom that had occurred and recited:

I grew bored with you, not from dislike, nor from any corruption that entered my mind.⁹

Then my speech became choked and I was reduced to silence, and lo, I found myself facing a knight at the door of the chamber, upon a horse black as the hair that grew on his own face, who was leaning upon his spear and called out to me: "Are you unable to continue, O youth of human race?" I replied: "No, by your father; eloquence has its moments, and this is man's lot!" He answered: "Recite after it:

Like the young man's boredom with pleasure when he enjoys it continuously, and as is the case of joy."¹⁰

From this I ascertained his qualifications and said to him: "May my father be your ransom! Who are you?" He replied: "I am Zuhair ibn Numair from the Banū Ashja^{c11} of the genii." So I made answer: "And what has induced you to appear before me?" He replied: "A fondness I have for you and a desire to befriend you." I responded: "Welcome to you, O honorable one, you have found a heart filled with affection for you and a love inclined in your direction. We conversed together for a while and then he said: "Whenever you wish to send for me, recite these lines:

Come Zuhair of love; O mighty one such that when memories remember him he comes to them.

Should mouths ever express their remembrance I imagine that I am kissing her mouth.

For I conceal the abodes of those who remember, even though sand dunes are far from my abode, with a love for their love."¹²

⁸ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, p. 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ By claiming descent from a supernatural counterpart of the Arab tribe of the Banū Ashja^c to which Ibn Shuhaid belonged, Zuhair establishes a blood bond between himself and his human protégé.

¹² Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, p. 181.

Then he made the black horse leap over the walls of the garden and departed from me. And whenever my speech became choked, Abū Bakr, or my path was interrupted, or my poetic method betrayed me, I used to recite these lines, and my friend would appear before me, whereupon I would go in the direction I desired and attain with my native genius what I sought. Our friendship became confirmed and such adventures took place that I would mention most of them were it not that they would lengthen this book. Instead, I shall mention only a few of them.

PART ONE: THE FAMILIAR SPIRITS OF THE POETS

THE DEMON OF IMRU² AL-QAIS

One day, I was conversing with Zuhair ibn Numair on the subject of the orators and poets as well as the familiar spirits and demons who had frequented them, and I said: "Is there any way to meet those who associated with them?" He replied: "Let me first ask permission from our master." Then he flew away from me, returning fast as a wink. Having been granted permission, he declared: "Climb on the back of my swift steed." Hence we mounted it and it sped forth with us like a bird, crossing sky after sky and traversing desert after desert until I beheld a land that was unlike our land and looked out upon an environment that was unlike our environment, luxuriantly overgrown with trees, sweet scented because of its flowers. Then he informed me: "You have reached the land of the genii, Abū Āmir; with whom would you like us to begin?" I answered: "Orators are more deserving of precedence, yet I am more anxious to meet poets." He replied: "Who then, do you seek among them?" I said: "The familiar spirit¹ of Imru² al-Qais."² Then he turned the reins in the direction of a river valley filled with trees, whose branches clashed against each other in the wind and whose birds warbled. He cried out: "O 'Utaiba ibn Naufal,³ by the 'sandy edges of al-Liwā and moreover by Ḥaumal,'⁴ and by 'the day in the vale of Juljul,'⁵ I conjure you to show us your face, to recite some of your poetry to us, to listen to that of a human being, and to inform us how you qualify him as a poet!" Thereupon a knight upon a blazing sorrel mare appeared before us. He said: "Greetings to you and your companion, O Zuhair! Is he their champion?" I replied: "That I am, and a very bright ember, O 'Utaiba!" Then he said to me: "Recite." I replied: "Your lordship deserves to recite before I do." At this he raised his glance, shrugged his shoulder, seized the reins of the sorrel mare and struck her with the whip, whereupon she reared up, running away from us for a stretch. Then

¹ In the present translation the Arabic word *ṣāhib* 'friend, companion, master' has been rendered as 'familiar spirit' in accordance with the peculiarity of its usage in the *Risāla*. The word *ṣāhib* is used in a similar sense by Abū Zaid Muḥammad al-Qurashi, whose *Jamharat ash-ṣāfi' al-‘Arab*, probably composed around A.D. 1000 contains a chapter on the "Demons of the Poets" (*Jamharat* [Beirut, 1963], pp. 40–55).

² Imru² al-Qais was one of the earliest pre-Islamic poets and the author of a famous "Mu‘allaqa." He died around A.D. 540 (A. R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* [Cambridge, 1907], pp. 103–107).

³ The names of the familiar spirits of the poets are conventional, but it is curious to note that in Ibn Shuhaid's *Risāla* they differ from the names used by al-Qurashi. The latter calls Imru² al-Qais's demon Lāfiẓ ibn Lāhiẓ (al-Qurashi, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

⁴ This is a quotation from Imru² al-Qais ("Mu‘allaqa," l. 1). See Zauzānī, *al-Mu‘allaqāt as-sab'* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 10, p. 12.

he wheeled back and met us brandishing his lance, after which he rested it and began to recite:

“A passion of yours has been aroused after having been subdued. . . .”⁶

Until he finished it, after which he said to me: “Recite.” At this I became anxious to flee, but then my soul’s strength increased and I recited:

“Abodes and encampments of Sulaimā’s have grieved him. . . .”⁷

Until I reached the place in the poem where I said:

“Many a dome whose upper part the eye cannot reach is such that the gentle zephyr of the east slips upon it and falls down.

I became enamored of it when the night’s ocean had risen high and its waves had begun to break,

While next to my chest there is a white sword embellished with wavy streaks, and in my hand there is a dark, quivering lance from Khaṭṭ.⁸

These two have been my boon companions ever since I reached manhood, both raising up the young hero’s fortune when it stumbles.

The one is a stream in the sheath, whereby hopes are watered, while the other is a branch in the hand, which has been plucked, yet bears fruit.”

When I came to an end, ‘Utaiba reflected about me and then said: “Go, for I find you well qualified,” and he departed from us.

THE DEMON OF TARAFA

Zuhair then said to me: “Whom do you wish to meet next?” I replied: “The familiar spirit of Tarafa.”⁹ So we crossed ‘Utaiba’s valley and raced on until we came to a thicket the trees of which were of two kinds: a type of bamboo cane that exuded the perfume of the yellow narcissus, and a kind of tree redolent of Indian aloes and laurel. We saw a spring that flowed out upon the surface of the earth, while its water

⁶ Imru’ al-Qais, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), p. 56.

⁷ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 56–58.

⁸ Lances from Khaṭṭ, a place whose location has not been identified, were highly prized in pre-Islamic times and became proverbial for their excellence.

⁹ Tarafa was another famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a “Mu‘allaqa” (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–109).

swirled about endlessly. Zuhair declared: “O ‘Antar ibn al-‘Ajlān, Zuhair and his comrade have come to visit you, so by ‘Khaula’¹⁰ and ‘the night you spent with her,’ I conjure you to show us your face!” Immediately there appeared before us a knight with comely features who had girded on his sword and was dressed in a silken garment, while in his hand he bore a lance of Khatt. He declared: “Welcome to you both!” and asked me to recite, at which I replied: “The master is more worthy of reciting than I am,” so he recited:

“There are abandoned encampments of Su‘dā’s on the rocky slopes
of Mount Shuraif. . . .”¹¹

Until he finished the poem, and then I recited part of an ode to him:

“Are there ruined traces of an encampment in al-‘Aqiq, over which
years have elapsed?”¹²

Until I came to my words:

“And when we descended upon the rain-fed plants, their wild
animals became afraid, while we rode upon every horse lean in the
reins, sleek of face,

And the fillies of al-A‘waj rushed to the attack at midday, following
one another in single file on the road’s upper part; a pasture that
is not unwholesome for them.¹³

They were marked for battle and we prepared them choosing the
best of them for chasing game, or for chasing a party of warriors.

When the company of riders sings upon their backs under the
midday sun, they make answer from beneath them by neighing.

With them we trample upon untouched flowers that seem like the
mantle of a bride who has been notified of the groom’s arrival.

With them we attacked the flank of a herd of gazelles, so that they
killed a young fawn whom we slew without having to undergo
reprisal.

Then my companions hastened to alight, and joints of hastily cooked
tender roast appeared,

¹⁰ Khaula was a woman from the tribe of Kalb. This reference and the one immediately following below are quoted from Tarafa’s “Mu‘allaqa,” l. 1 (*Zauzani, op. cit.*, p. 80).

¹¹ Tarafa, *Dīwān de Tarafa ibn al-‘Abd al-Bakrī accompagné du commentaire de Yoûsouf al-‘Alam de Santa María*, ed. Max Seligsohn (Paris, 1901), p. 76.

¹² Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 133–135.

¹³ al-A‘waj was a famous pre-Islamic stallion (Ibn al-Kalbi, *Kitāb Ansāb al-khalil*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha [Cairo, 1946]).

With the loaves of which we wipe our hands after we have hunted not a little of it.¹⁴

Then said we to the cupbearer: “Pass round the wine made from the cool first juice of the grape, as well as the pure fresh wine of your glances.”

So he raised his two cups obeying our command, while coquetry caused him to sway in all directions,

And he mixed his two wines, nor did he cease to bend down the head and neck of each of the noble youths,

Until he had bent them all down, causing them to lie motionless because of what they had drunk, having lost their strength as well as the remainder of their wits;

Lying inebriated upon the grounds of az-Zahrā², prostrate as though they were the columns of some palace or the trunks of palm trees.”¹⁵

Then ‘Antar cried out: “God be with you! Go, for you are truly qualified,” and he left us, so we turned away from him.

THE DEMON OF QAIS IBN AL-KHAṬĪM¹⁶

Then Zuhair asked me: “For whom among the pre-Islamic poets does your soul now long?” I answered: “I am satisfied with those I have seen. Direct our journey toward Abū Tammām’s¹⁷ familiar spirit.” For a while we therefore raced toward the right, while a knight like a lion, mounted on a horse like an eagle, strained to follow in our track reciting on the way:

“I pierced Ibn ‘Abd al-Qais with the spear thrust of one seeking blood vengeance;¹⁸

A thrust so deeply penetrating that were it not for the blood that was shed, its spearhead would have shone.”

¹⁴ The Arabic word translated as ‘loaves’ reads *al-jaudān* which is not found in the dictionaries. It was corrected by the editor Bustānī to *al-haudhān* ‘a yellow flowered plant,’ in his edition of the *Risāla* ([Beirut, 1951], p. 127). Since this meaning is still unsatisfactory in the context of the line, I suggest the more plausible reading *al-judhāb* “a kind of food, prepared with sugar and rice and flesh-meat, or a cake of bread put into the oven, and having suspended over it a bird or some flesh-meat, the gravy of which flows upon it as long as it is cooking” (Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* [London, 1863–1893], II, 395).

¹⁵ A possible allusion to the Umayyad palace of Madinat az-Zahrā² on the outskirts of Córdoba.

¹⁶ Qais ibn al-Khaṭīm was a pre-Islamic poet who achieved fame for the vengeance he took for the murder of his father and grandfather (complete story in Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–97).

¹⁷ Abū Tammām (d. ca. A.D. 850) was a famous Abbasid poet (*ibid.*, pp. 129–130).

¹⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Qais was the murderer of Qais ibn al-Khaṭīm’s father, Khaṭīm ibn ‘Adī (*ibid.*, p. 94).

Because of this, I grew afraid of him, but Zuhair said to me: “Do not worry, this is Abū l-Khaṭṭār, the familiar spirit of Qais ibn al-Khaṭīm.” He captivated my mind with the verse he recited, while my fear increased because of his courage and because we had failed to visit him. Zuhair then turned the black horse’s face toward him saying: “God prolong your life, Abū l-Khaṭṭār!” He replied thus: “Is this how Abū l-Khaṭṭār is avoided and men fail to bestir themselves to visit him?” Zuhair replied: “We were aware that you were a hunter and feared to distract you.” He said to me: “Recite to us, O Ashja‘ī, and I swear that if you fail to do it well, this will be a very evil day.” So I recited some lines to him from an ode of mine:

“Their abodes mourn to you over their obliteration. . . .”¹⁹

Part of it goes:

“My two friends, halt—may God bless you both—at the ancient
vale so that we may greet its enclosure.

For I have seen no bevies of maidens like their statuesque bevies,
nor any wolf like myself who here watched over their ewes,

Nor any straying that was a better guide to my youth on the nights
when passion led me to their tents.

This yearning was aroused by doves to whom I mourned upon hearing
their mourning.

I became astonished at how love was made to rule my soul, and at
how lovely women aroused its scorn,

While if honors were to come my way, I would be satisfied with good
repute in place of them.

Yet it is the rats of ratholes that have attacked me, but I have added
to my honor by refraining from shedding their blood.

To you, Abū Marwān, did I recite, extolling the want of a soul of
whose modesty I have not been deprived.²⁰

I shook you in broad daylight by my victory, so that it seemed as if
I had shaken Mount Hirā^b upon going toward the mountains.²¹

I broke the grips of time’s firm resolve, although it was strong, with
the firm resolve of a soul whose permanence I do not long for.”

Thereupon, when I had concluded he smiled and said: “How elegantly and purely
you have expressed yourself indeed! Go, for I grant you your qualifications.”

¹⁹ Ibn Shuhaid, *Diwān*, pp. 18–20.

²⁰ Abū Marwān ^cAbd al-Malik ibn Idrīs al-Jazīrī was a vizier strangled in the prison of az-Zāhira by order of al-Muzaffar in 1004. To him Ibn Shuhaid addressed one of his earliest poems, written when he was only twelve (James Dickie, “Ibn Shuhayd: A Biographical and Critical Study,” *Andalus* XXIX [1964], 252).

²¹ Mount Hirā^b lies close to Mecca.

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF ABŪ TAMMĀM

Then we departed and raced on until we reached a green and tufty tree from whose root a spring like a bright pupil flowed forth. Zuhair cried out: “O ‘Attāb ibn Ḥabnā’, Zuhair and his companion have alighted at your abode, so by ‘Amr,’ ‘the rising moon,’ and the ‘note whose seal was broken’²² I conjure you to show us your face!” At this the water in the well parted to reveal the face of a youth like a slice of the moon. Then he cleaved the air, rising toward us from its bottom until he had reached our level and said: “God lengthen your life, O Zuhair, as well as that of your companion!” I asked: “What has inspired you to dwell in the bottom of that well, O ‘Attāb?” He replied: “My shame in affecting the name of poetry, since I do not compose it well.” Therefore I exclaimed: “Woe to me because of him; these are the words of a Modern,²³ by the Lord of the Ka‘ba!” He asked me to recite, but at first I refrained from doing so out of respect for him, after which I recited:

“When the group journeyed forth, did you mourn its departure?”²⁴

Until I reached my lines in it:

“I am a man with whose ambition time has sported, and I have been given the full cup of misfortunes to drink.

I have fallen down from on high like a noble steed, while the asses of mankind have laughed, and their braying does not cease.

When gifts were cast before me to seize, time detained them here and thus delayed them,

While if Abū Yaḥya’s soul delays, how can I hope to ever grasp them?”²⁵

When I came to an end he said: “Recite one of your elegies to me.” So I recited to him:

²² These quotations are from a poem by Abū Tammām (*Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abduh ‘Azzām [Cairo, 1965], IV, 386) and refer to an indecent episode that occurred between the poet and his catamite. For a full account, see Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb adh-Dhakhira fī mahāsin ahl al-Jazīra*, (Cairo, 1939), I, part 1, 238–240.

²³ In contrast with the pre-Islamic and early Umayyad poets, the Moderns cultivated an affected and complicated style that was regarded by their enemies as inferior to that of their predecessors. Since Ibn Shuhaid is even more “Modern” than Abū Tammām, he is amusedly implying that he has little chance of being recognized as a good poet by pedants.

²⁴ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 107–109.

²⁵ Abū Yaḥya has not been identified. He is perhaps the caliph ‘Ali ibn Hammūd, father of Yahya who came to power in Córdoba in 1021 and took the title of al-Mu‘tali. This sovereign greatly favored the poet, and the latter has left several panegyrics addressed to him (Dickie, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–269).

“Help a man whose eye is exhausted, and wonder not at eyelids that are congealed.²⁶

When the heart’s sorrow causes it to burn, then indeed do the tear ducts follow the traces of the heart.

The youthful hero seeks an empty watering place, for the Banū Sa‘d of fate are in every vale.²⁷

He spends on his existence what is in his hands, for existence is none but the preacher warning of nonbeing.

Fate has tripped up the foremost in the race, while the running of a swift steed has never impeded death.

By your life, no able fellow has averted death’s misfortune, nor has any toiler done so through his striving.

Fate’s arrows strike the noble hero even when obstructions are raised before him.

They struck the tribe of Jurhum despite the latter’s strength; they felled the men of ‘Ād in their very home.²⁸

They slew Kalb despite his might so that he could not glory in fine, fleet coursers.”²⁹

Until I came to my words in it:

“However, my very own group betrayed me when I roamed in search of pasture on a hill whose pasture was unwholesome.

Has the sword ever struck without a hand to wield it, and has the head ever remained steady without a neck?”

Then he declared: “Recite more of your elegies and lamentations to me.” So I recited to him:

“Is a great man felled every year? The fates have struck down my young one and my old.³⁰

The sun and moon of Qais ‘Ailān went down first, and the place of a Kalbite chieftain became desolate.³¹

²⁶ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 54–55.

²⁷ “The Banū Sa‘d are in every vale” is a proverb usually taken to mean that danger lies wherever one turns (al-Maidāni, *Majma‘ al-amthāl* [Cairo, 1892], I, 70).

²⁸ Jurhum and ‘Ād were two legendary peoples mentioned in the Koran who were destroyed by God in punishment for their wickedness.

²⁹ Kalb ibn Wabra was the eponymous ancestor of a famous Yemenite tribe.

³⁰ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 143–145. Elegy on Abū ‘Ubayda Ḥasān ibn Mālik (d. 1025 or 1029).

³¹ Qais was the eponymous ancestor of an important Muḍarite tribe. His horse was named ‘Ailān. Qais was called an-Nās and his brother Khandaf was known as al-Yās. Here the “sun and moon” are Qais and Khandaf (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. xix; Ibn Shuhaid, *Risāla*, p. 135 n. 2).

How can I meet assaulting misfortunes when in Kalb my sword and steadiness have been notched?

How can I be guided through darkening misfortunes when my eyes have been deprived of the light of certain stars?

The illustrious generations of yore have passed away; all but a scant remainder like the new moon in the pitch black, dark-shirted night."

From it come these lines:

"I aimed my poem at the various regions, for it is a rare wonder of mine; the product of a throbbing heart inside a chest choked with emotion,

In order to disclose to men my hidden meanings; to offer an excuse in the external guise of blame.

I am a sword whom the hand of no striker tires; a sharp one when I encounter the hand of another sharp one.

I frequented freeborn men, yet certain men betrayed me, and I was helped by the effort of no great man.

Kings caused me to lose my way in starting out and in returning, for I lost my way in one of their enclosures and abodes."

Thereupon he said: "If you must necessarily be a poet, when your soul moves you to compose poetry, do not strain your native genius, and when you have completed your poem, rest for at least three days. After that polish your poem and remember the words of the poet:

'Fear of Ibn 'Affān has constrained me to go over my poem, so I have corrected it for a whole year plus one spring.³²

There was in my soul much to add to it, so I believed that I should "hear and obey."

For you are a good poet despite the badness of your age." Then I kissed him on the head and he sank into the well.

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF AL-BUHTURĪ

Then Zuhair said to me: "Whom do you wish to meet next?" I replied: "The familiar spirit of Abū Nuwās."³³ He answered: "He has been in the monastery of Dair

³² The poet is Suwaid ibn Kurā^c who lived during the Umayyad period. He satirized a group of tribesmen who got Sa'id ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān to defend them. Threatened with imprisonment, the poet fled and was ultimately pardoned (*ibid.*, p. 136 n. 3). The complete ode is in Ibn Qutaiba, *Introduction au livre de la poésie et des poètes*, ed. M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris, 1947), p. 16, in a passage where Ibn Qutaiba distinguishes between the artificial poet who polishes his poetry (*al-mutakallaf*) and the naturally gifted poet (*al-maqbūr*). Ibn Shuhaid is therefore alluding to the artificiality of Abū Tammām's poetic method.

³³ Abū Nuwās (d. ca. A.D. 810) was a famous Modern poet who flourished at the court of Hārūn ar-Rashīd (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-296).

Hanna³⁴ for several months, and wine has gained control of him, while Dair Hanna lies in that mountain.” He pointed it out to me, and lo, between it and us there were many leagues, so we raced on for an hour and passed a great palace on our way, before which lay an arena wherein some knights were jousting with one another. So I said: “To whom does that palace belong, O Zuhair?” He answered: “To Tauq ibn Mālik, but Abū ṭ-Tab^c, the familiar spirit of al-Buhturi,³⁵ is in that arena. Would you therefore like to see him?” I replied: “A thousand times yes. He is one of my masters, yet I had overlooked him.” So he called out: “O Abū ṭ-Tab^c!” A noble youth bearing a lance in his hand advanced toward us on a white-spotted horse. Zuhair said to him: “It is you we desire.” He answered: “Nay, your friend is too proud to meet me, for fear it should demean him.” I replied: “Abū ṭ-Tab^c, be gentle, ‘men are not to be measured by the bushel.’³⁶ Recite some of your poetry to me.” So he recited:

“It harms not the riders that their mounts have halted. . . .”³⁷

Until he finished it. Then he said: “If you have composed any poem, produce it.” So I recited to him:

“This is the abode of Zainab and of ar-Rabāb. . . .”³⁸

Until I came to my words in it:

“We raced on until night hastened away and dawn, the sunderer of ties, arrived.

Thus it seemed as if the stars in the night were an army that became concealed inside a thicket,

And as if the dawn were a fowler whose hand had closed over the foot of a raven.

Many a young hero traveled through the dark when the night had arrayed and let down its long tent ropes.

It was as if the stars, when these guided them, shone before their eyes out of courtesy.

They refreshed the middle of every desert during the first part of a night whose Gemini were my riding companions.

³⁴ Dair Hanna was a monastery outside al-Kūfa. It was often visited by Abū Nuwās because of its readily obtainable wine, and it is frequently mentioned in his Bacchic songs.

³⁵ al-Buhturi (d. A.D. 897) was a famous Modern poet and younger contemporary of Abū Tammām (*ibid.*, pp. 130, 316, 324).

³⁶ A proverbial expression meaning that not all men are the same or think alike.

³⁷ This line may be found in al-Buhturi, *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥasan Kāmil as-Śairafī (Cairo, n.d.), I, 83.

³⁸ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 34–36.

Remembrance of me came to those who set out at nightfall, whereupon they became perplexed at my words on the subject of an astonishing affair:

An ambition high up in the sky, trailing one of glory's skirts and a luck lying prostrate on the ground.

If the world were of noble origin, it would not be a prey for dogs to kill;

Nor a carcass that stinks so that insects, namely the sons of its time, fly to it."

From it I recited:

From the choice part of Shuhaid, then from the choice part of Ashja^c;
from the cream of the crop,

Come the orators of mankind whenever a misfortune occurs, as well as pure-blooded Arabs astride Arab steeds."

Until I finished the poem. As a result it seemed as if a portion of the night had covered Abū Ṭ-Ṭab^b's face, and he wheeled back to his arena without bidding us farewell. For this reason Zuhair cried out to him: "Do you qualify him?" He answered: "I qualify him, may no visitor of yours or of your friend Abū 'Āmir's ever be blessed!"

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF ABŪ NUWĀS

Then Zuhair struck the black horse with his whip and it bore us on its way so that we traveled on until we reached the base of the mountain of Dair Hanna, where the ringing of bells pierced my ears so that I cried out: "This is one of Abū Nuwās's dwelling places, by the Lord of the exalted Ka'ba!" We went on, passing monasteries, churches, and taverns, until we reached a great monastery whose perfumes were redolent and whose fragrances were sweet. Zuhair stopped at its gate and cried out: "Greetings to the inhabitants of Dair Hanna!" Then I asked Zuhair: "Have we come to the place of the 'little monk cells'?"³⁹ He replied: "Yes." Soon the monks approached us girded in their zones, grasping their staffs, white as to their eyebrows and beards, such that when they glanced at a man he felt ashamed, abundantly praising God, and bearing upon them the guidance of the Messiah. Then they said: "Welcome to you as a guest, O Zuhair, and also to your companion Abū 'Āmir! What is your desire?" He replied: "Husain of the wine jars." They answered: "He has been drinking wine for ten days, and we do not think either of you will benefit from meeting him." He said: "Despite that we would still like to see him." So we dismounted and they took us to a room whose wine jars were lying in rows and whose young male gazelles were busily scurrying about, while in its central area there was

³⁹ An epithet much used by Abū Nuwās to denote Dair Hanna.

an old man with a long face and mustache lying upon a heap of flowers and propped against a wineskin with a drinking cup in his hand, while around him some boys like fawns were reaching up to an oxeye shrub.⁴⁰ Thereupon Zuhair exclaimed to him: “God prolong your life, Abū l-Iḥsān!” Whereupon he replied with an unintelligible answer owing to the wine’s mastery over him. Then Zuhair said to me: “Smite the ear of his intoxication with one of your wine songs, for perhaps he will wake up at part of it.” So I cried out reciting part of a long poem of mine:

“In many a tavern’s monastery have I passed round the wine of youth that has been mixed with the purest of wines,⁴¹

In the company of noble youths who leaned against wineskins, humbling themselves out of respect for its prior.

He returned to me time after time with his glance and his hand, so that he caused my head to bend down from swallowing the wine in his large cup.

The bell rang during their prayers, so I opened my eye at the echo of its sound.

Every yellow-robed monk brings us wine, like a fawn made to blush by his protector’s glance.”⁴²

Abū l-Iḥsān cried out from the depths of his intoxication: “Are you an Ashja‘ī?” I replied: “That I am!” Then he called for pure water, drank from it and washed his face, sobering up and apologizing to me for his state. Fear of him began to overwhelm me and I began to honor him for his rank in knowledge and poetry. He then said to me: “Recite, or would you prefer that I recite to you first?” So I answered: “The latter alternative would make me feel more at home with you, although after you, no good poet has excelled in writing.” So he recited:

“O Dair Ḥanna, namely the place of the little monk cells, others may sober up from you, yet I never do.⁴³

It is frequented by every monk whose hair is anointed with oils, upon whom lies a shabby haircloth robe.

They go for water with vessels, only to ladle it from rainpools with their palms.”

⁴⁰ The oxeye shrub (*carāra*) is a plant producing a fruit from which juice is extracted, presumably to make a kind of alcoholic beverage (Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* [3d ed.; Leiden and Paris, 1967], II, 108).

⁴¹ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 81–82.

⁴² Mozarabic monks in al-Andalus did in fact wear yellow robes, as may be seen in the manuscript illuminations to Beatus of Liébana’s *Commentaries on the Apocalypse* (M. Oronoz and J. M. Moreno Galván, *Beato de Fernando I y Doña Sancha*, Colección gráficos españoles, Vol. I [Madrid and Barcelona, 1969]).

⁴³ Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majid al-Ghazālī (Beirut, n.d.), p. 297.

By God, I almost jumped out of my skin for joy! Then he recited:

"You alluded to a matter, namely departure, that grieved us. . . ."⁴⁴

He also recited:

"To whom belong the traces of encampment that increase the fragrance of the breeze and the beauty of the ruins, despite the length of time they have lain empty?"⁴⁵

Decay has withdrawn from them until it seems as if they have donned, in emptiness, a robe of joy."

He continued to recite the poem until he had finished it, after which he said to me: "Recite." So I answered: "Surely you have not left any subject to recite?" He replied: "You must do it. Walk the smooth path with me rather than climbing rugged highlands."⁴⁶ So I recited to him:

"Is it the dawn that has been seen, or a flash of lightning, or the brightness of the beloved who revealed his forearms?"⁴⁷

He awoke from his sleep blinking his eyes, dragging his sleeve, trailing his robe.

He wipes drowsiness from the eyes of a fawn who every day hunts down a lion.

I said: 'O my loved one, grant me a kiss that will cure the pangs of your uncle's thirst.'

He bent down, shrugging his shoulder and saying: 'No!' Then he allowed me to kiss him.

Whenever he spoke to me, I kissed him, for as soon as he says one thing he retracts his statement.

He retreated almost toothless by reason of my kissing him and sucking his mouth.

He said to me in sport: 'Catch a bird for me,' and you would see me forever running over rugged ground.

When I asked him one day to keep his promise, he replied to me postponing it: 'Remind me tomorrow.'

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

⁴⁶ In contrast with the deliberately archaic style of the Umayyad poets and with the flowery speech of Abū Tammām and al-Buhtūrī, that of Abū Nuwās became noted for simplicity of language as well as for smoothness.

⁴⁷ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 49–53.

His sides have sipped the wine of youth, and beauty gave him to drink until he became obstreperous.

And when, in a garden, I spent the night with him, a slender youth repairing to a slender branch,

He raised in the dark a tall neck, shaking the tress on his earlobe free from the tears of the dew.

He is a fawn, nay, a soft young woman with rounded thighs who has turbaned the dawn of her face in the black night of her hair.

She cried out: ‘Ah!’ when I bit her breast. Then she deliberately bit my cheek.

Thus it is I who am wounded by her bite, may God never cure me from it!”

When I had finished he said: “How excellent you are! Would that your talent were your own!” Then he added: “Recite something from your elegies to me.” So I recited to him a part of my lines about a small daughter:

“O you who are reckoned among the wise, do not melt from grief at the death of an absent one.”⁴⁸

Until I came to my words:

“When lions protect their coverts, the felling of gazelles does not harm the den.

It is strange, O son of glory’s moons, that the full moon should fear the loss of Suhā.”

When I came to an end, he said to me: “Recite to me a better and more eloquent elegy than this one of yours.” So I recited to him a part of my elegy over Ibn Dhakwān.⁴⁹ Then he said: “Recite for me your poem written in prison after the style of al-Jahdār.”⁵⁰ So I recited to him:

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Ibn Dhakwān (953–1022) was an illustrious qadi of Córdoba appointed to preach in the Great Mosque by al-Manṣūr in the year 1002. Apart from minor interruptions he held tenure until his death. At that moment, when Ibn Shuhaid was thirty, a pompous funeral was held in al-‘Abbās cemetery, at which all of Córdoba’s notables were present, including the caliph Yahya. There Ibn Shuhaid recited an elegy to mourn his friend’s death (*ibid.*, pp. 23–25). For an account of the relationship between the qadi and the poet, see Dickie, *op. cit.*, pp. 270–271. A biography of Ibn Dhakwān is included in Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Tārīkh ʽulamā’ al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1890–1892), II, 85.

⁵⁰ al-Jahdār was a member of the tribe of the Banū Jashm ibn Bakr. He became a highwayman in Yemen and was captured and imprisoned by al-Hajjāj, the Umayyad governor. He wrote a famous poem in prison in which he begged al-Hajjāj’s forgiveness. In reply al-Hajjāj asked him to choose between dying by the sword or being thrown to the lions. Al-Jahdār cleverly replied that he would prefer to be given a sword and thrown to the lions with it. This was done; he slew a hungry lion prepared for him and so astonished al-Hajjāj with his courage that the latter made him one of his boon companions (Ibn Shuhaid, *Risāla*, p. 148 n. 2).

"A close one, to him who is controlled by abasement, is far away. . ."⁵¹

Until in it I came to my words:

"For if remembrance of me endures because of my wanton behavior,
it is because I am a wretch made happy by poetry.

Surely I am not the first among lovers to whose wit eyes and cheeks
have succumbed?

Who will inform the noble youths that after parting from them I
am dwelling in the abode of tyrants, rejected?

Yet am I not a man in fetters who has become a slave, but rather
fetters lie in the Imām's wrathful glance."⁵²

At this he wept over the poem for a long while. Then he declared: "Recite one of your scandalous occasional pieces to me, for a long time has passed since I have met your like." So I recited to him:

"I remember a woman looking out from under the fold of her veil,
whom a caller summoned to God and to good."⁵³

She advanced with her child seeking a place in which to be joined
to piety and devotion.

Thus she walked proudly like a gazelle fondling its young, expressing
concern for a gazelle in the height of youth.

She came to us walking with a stately gait, yet she alighted in a
valley full of lions.

She grew frightened from concern for her little one, so I called out:
'You there, do not be afraid!'

Immediately she turned away, and the musk from her hem left upon
the ground a trail like the back of a serpent."

⁵¹ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 41–44.

⁵² The poet was imprisoned under the reign of 'Ali ibn Hammūd (r. 1016–1017). The Hammūdids were suspected of Shi'ite inclinations, hence the term Imām is used here (Dickie, *op. cit.*, pp. 263–266).

⁵³ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 94–96. According to Ibn Khaqān the poet used to sit with his friends at the portal of the Great Mosque of Córdoba next to the minaret. He adds: "Behold there was a daughter of one of the notables of Córdoba accompanied by slave girls who veiled and concealed her. And she sought a place for private converse with her Lord, desiring a spot where she might beseech pardon for her sins. She was veiled to prevent her being observed and was alert against that possibility while before her went a child of hers. So when her eye fell upon Abū 'Āmir she turned away hurriedly and went off in distress, fearing lest he be inspired by her and divulge her name. So when he saw her he improvised these lines of poetry wherein he dishonored her and made her notorious" (*Maṭmah al-Anfus* [Constantinople, 1884], pp. 18–19).

When he heard this line, he rose up, dancing to its rhythm and repeating it, after which he came to his senses and declared: "This, by God, is something with which not even we have been inspired." Then he asked me to approach, so I drew near to him and he kissed me on the forehead saying: "Go, for you are well qualified." Then we turned away from him and clambered down the mountain.

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF ABŪ Ḥ-TAIYIB

Zuhair said to me: "Whom do you wish to see next?" I replied to him: "The seal of them all, the familiar spirit of Abū Ḥ-Taiyib."⁵⁴ So he answered: "Prepare to meet him by girding your chest, perfuming your breath, and scattering before him the stars of your poetry," and he directed the black horse's reins toward a certain path. The horse raced on with us astride while Zuhair examined the tracks of a horse which we observed in that place. Then I said to him: "Why are you studying those tracks?" He answered: "These tracks belong to the horse of Ḥārith ibn al-Mughallis, the familiar spirit of Abū Ḥ-Taiyib who is a master of the hunt." Thus he continued to follow them until we were led to a knight riding on a white horse, slender as a reed on a sand dune, bearing in his hand a lance which he had leaned against his neck, while on his head there was a red turban⁵⁵ from which a yellow fringe dangled loosely. Zuhair greeted him, and he politely returned the greeting, glancing with a haughty eye filled with pride and arrogance.⁵⁶ Then Zuhair acquainted him with my purpose, presenting my request to him. He answered: "I have heard that he plagiarizes." I declared: "Only out of dire necessity, otherwise my native genius would not be very penetrating, nor would my blade's edge be sharp." He replied: "Then recite to me," and I deemed him too haughty for me to request that he recite first, so I recited my ode to him which begins:

"Is it a lightning bolt that shone, or the flash of a sharp white sword?"⁵⁷

Until I came to my words in it:

"In the sky the lightning flashed repeatedly until I thought it was pointing to the stars on the hills with its fingers;

Hills such that the cloud's hands wove yellow tunics above white undergarments, to dress them.

⁵⁴ Abū Ḥ-Taiyib Aḥmad ibn Ḥusain al-Mutanabbi (915–965) is considered by most critics to be the greatest medieval poet of the Arabic language (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 304–313).

⁵⁵ Turbans were considered the "crowns of the Arabs." Here it stands for al-Mutanabbi's Arab descent from the tribe of Kinda. The color red was a sign of royalty often used in al-Mutanabbi's poetry to imply nobility of lineage:

Who are these wild calves in the garb of Bedouins wearing ornaments of red gold, riding on reddish camels, and dressed in red robes?

(al-Mutanabbi, *Diwān: With Commentary by Abi l-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī an-Naisabūri*, ed. F. Dieterici [Berlin, 1861], p. 633).

⁵⁶ An allusion to the proverbial arrogance of al-Mutanabbi.

⁵⁷ Ibn Shuhaid, *Diwān*, pp. 128–132.

In them, I spent the night awake watching the stars, as well as certain stars that arose for the shepherds but that do not set.⁵⁸

In the hills every flower opened wide its mouth for every cloud's milk-filled udder.

The squadrons of rainclouds passed by one by one as if they were armies of negroes with gilt-edged swords.

The sky became swollen with the blaze of its meteors like the swell of a sea that has been crowned with clouds piled one above the other.

In the sky you would think that the bright stars are lilies along the shore of a river flowing toward the Milky Way.

In its Gemini's setting you observe the gradual descent of a throne sinking because its base is unsteady.

You would think that its Aldebaran is a falcon that alights in the nest of the Pleiades like the red crops of birds,⁵⁹

And that in it, the full moon of darkness is a rainpool around which lie stars like the faces of doves going to water.

It is as if the darkness were my anxiety, and my tears were its stars, falling out of concern for the fate of the abject.

The sky's stars have set, all but a few of them, taking with them what every clever man achieves,

And at dawn I have found myself among descendants such that if I observe them, I perceive that ignorance is a virtue,

While in this creation no modern man is good unless he is supported by the goodness of the ancients.

I see asses in a large group riding astride horses, hence I weep with my eye for the humiliation of those horses.

Many prose writers, when told to write elegantly, are such that the title pages of treatises weep over their delay.

Many a jurist whose heart does not observe God thinks that religion is a matter of memorizing legal questions.

Many a wielder of the spear, rather than cutting with it, has carried it like a maiden in the tribe bearing her spindles.

They have all been granted gifts before me, while I have been left abandoned before them, searching for gifts in the gardens of vain delusions.

⁵⁸ The "certain stars" are the flowers on the hillsides.

⁵⁹ Aldebaran is a reddish star; hence it is likened to the crops of birds.

Yet I have none other than an Ashja'ī ambition, as well as a soul
that refuses to let me seek vices,

And a knowledge such that if I bear the good luck of Jupiter, then
it offers me the bad luck of Mars.

When the sea of eloquence rose high in my mind, and some of the
brooks of my writings drowned out the rays of the sun,

I submitted to the best of mankind every noble panegyric that
remains not obscure, as the grazing of the fameless,

While I almost attained my goal by remaining silent, so excellent was
my poetry, even though my enviers have wronged the career of every
poet.”

When I had finished, he said: “Recite something better than that to me.” So I
recited my ode:

“Here you have their abode, therefore halt before its dwel-
lings. . .”⁶⁰

And when I had come to an end, he said to Zuhair: “If the length of his life is
prolonged he will no doubt eject pearls from his mouth, and I am sure he will die
in possession of a native genius like a live ember and an ambition that will place
his sole on top of the full moon.” At this I exclaimed: “Why did you not place it
instead on the bald spot of the Eagle?”⁶¹ Thereupon he laughed at me and replied:
“Go, for I declare you qualified on account of this clever witticism.” So I kissed
him on the head and we departed.

⁶⁰ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 169–173.

⁶¹ A triple pun is implied: (1) The bald spot of the eagle, (2) the top of the constellation Aquila,
(3) the poet al-Mutanabbi, known as “the eagle of the poets.” By claiming that he will some day
place his foot on al-Mutanabbi’s head Ibn Shuhaid is saying that he will outdo the greatest of the
Arab poets.

PART TWO: THE FAMILIAR SPIRITS OF THE PROSE WRITERS

THE FAMILIAR SPIRITS OF AL-JĀHĪZ AND ‘ABD AL-HAMĪD

Zuhair asked me: “Whom do you wish to meet next?” I replied: “Lead me to the prose orators, for I have achieved my purpose insofar as poets are concerned.” We then rode on for a while, traveling toward the sunrise, and encountered a knight who spoke privately with Zuhair and then left us, while Zuhair addressed me as follows: “The orators among the genii are gathered together for you in the meadow of Duhmān which lies at a distance of two leagues from us, so that you have been spared the trouble of interviewing them individually.” I answered: “For what purpose are they gathered?” He replied: “To decide between two eloquent manners of discourse concerning which the heroes of the genii have expressed divergent opinions.”

When we reached the meadow, a great assembly was present, which had brought together every spokesman. Then Zuhair cried out: “Greetings to the knights of eloquence.” They returned the greeting and signaled for us to dismount. Then they cleared the way until we found ourselves in the middle of the circle formed by their council, while all of them were gazing at a bald elder with a protruding right eye wearing a tall, peaked white cap¹ on his head. I secretly asked Zuhair: “Who is that?” He replied: “‘Utba ibn Arqam, the familiar spirit of al-Jāhīz,² whose surname is Abū ‘Uyaina.” I answered: “May my father be his ransom! I seek none other than him and the familiar spirit of ‘Abd al-Hamid.”³ He said: “The second is that elder sitting at his side,” and he acquainted him with my eagerness to meet him as well as what I had said about him. Then the elder requested me to approach and began to converse with me, while the members of the council became silent. He said: “You would be an orator and an outstanding composer of prose discourse were it not that

¹ The *galansuwa* was a tall peaked cap much worn in Abbasid times. Here it stands for the great Abbasid prose writer al-Jāhīz (“the goggle eyed”) so nicknamed because of his protruding eyes.

² ‘Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāhīz of Basra (d. 869) was a celebrated Mu’tazilite, freethinker, and master of the prose style (A. R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* [Cambridge, 1907], pp. 346–347). Copious extracts from his voluminous works on many different topics are in Charles Pellat, *The Life and Works of Jāhīz*, trans. D. M. Hawke, The Islamic World Series, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

³ ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya (d. 750) was the first known prose writer in Arabic. He flourished at the end of the Umayyad period and was a secretary to Marwān II, the last Umayyad caliph in the East. Three extant epistles of his constitute the earliest known documents of Arabic prose literature (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 267; Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature* [2d ed.; Oxford, 1963], p. 51).

you are seduced by rhymed prose, for your discourse is in fact poetry, not prose.”⁴

I said to myself: “He has judged you with his peculiar judgment and confronted you with his assonant rhymes.” Then I said to him: “I do not compose—God give you strength—out of ignorance of the low status of rhymed prose, or of the superiority of elaborating contrasting ideas in a balanced compound, or of assonant prose. Rather, I have been deprived of the knights of eloquence in my country and have been affected by the ignorance of my contemporaries. I can hardly urge them to rhyme the vowels of two words together, while if I were to bed speech down among them on the *tūliq* plant⁵ and to utter for them the vowels of a servant boy,⁶ it would increase my stature among them while it would also enter more deeply into their minds.”

He answered: “Are matters judged from such viewpoints, from the insolent pride of such inkstands, and from the false perfection of such Persian mantles?”⁷ I answered: “Yes indeed. They are the bark of a tree wherein lies no fruit or fragrance.”⁸ He replied: “You have spoken the truth; I see that you have uttered assonant prose

⁴ The Arabic text of Abū ‘Uyaina’s reply is couched in the elegant style of al-Jāḥīz, in which the clauses end with words having the same rhythmic pattern but no consonant rhyme. This form of assonant prose is known as *mumāthala* (e.g., *khaṭib-mujid*; *naẓm-nathr*), and is different from *saj^c* in which the consonants also rhyme.

⁵ The *tūliq* is a species of plant (*Micrelia tolac*), or else it can be a kind of fig tree (*Ficus vaste*) (M. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe français* [Paris, 1846], II, 102). The precise nature of this reference is not clear.

⁶ This word is not clear. The Arabic text reads *mshwlm* (*mashūlīm*?), but the word is not found in Arabic dictionaries and appears to be either a post-classical or non-Arabic formation. *Shaulam* ‘tare, darnel weed’ does not seem to fit the context. With greater insight, Bustānī, the editor of the *Risāla*, suggests that it is the *mashwal* (pl. *mashwlin*) recorded by Reinhart Dozy (*Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* [3d ed.; Leiden and Paris, 1967], I, 806). Dozy found this word in the early sixteenth-century dictionary of Pedro de Alcalá based on the colloquial Arabic of Granada (*Vocabulista arávigo en letra castellana* [Granada, 1505]). Although Alcalá translated it as *mancebo* ‘young man,’ neither he, Dozy, nor Bustānī recognized in it the Castilian and Galician-Portuguese word *mozuelo* ‘boy, youth’ (diminutive of *mozo* ‘boy’), first recorded in Romance texts in A.D. 1182. A Romance cognate is *mocho* ‘hornless, without sharp points,’ and Joan Corominas mentions two Valencian writers from the twelfth century called Ibn Maujwal ‘the son of the earless one’ as well as a Toledan Dumíngu al-Mūju (Domingo the earless) (*Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana* [Berne, 1954], III, 393) first documented in 1170. Dozy also records *mauj* ‘hibou à oreilles d’âne’ (*op. cit.*, II, 623), a diminutive of which was applied to persons in Mozarabic. Corominas further points out that if *mozo* were derived from Latin *mūstēus*, the result in Mozarabic should have been *mosho*, which he says has never been documented (Corominas, *op. cit.*, p. 464). It appears therefore that the Castilian *mocho* was in Mozarabic transcribed as *mauj(u)* with *jīm*, whereas the Castilian *mozo* in Mozarabic took the form of *mosho* with *shīn*. If this is kept in mind we can now understand the form *mshwlm* to be *mushwalū* (*mozuelo*), since a final *waw* may easily be confused with *mīm*, or else *mushwaluh* (confusion of *hā* with *mīm*). We have, therefore, an earlier Mozarabic form of *mozuelo* than that documented by Corominas. *Mozo* and *mozuelo* properly mean ‘a young boy whose hair has been closely cropped’ (cf. the cognate *mocho* ‘hornless, without points’). This refers to the medieval custom of cropping closely the heads of young boys, and it is likely that in this context Ibn Shuhaid is referring to a young servant boy of inferior social status, quite naturally a Mozarab. He seems to suggest that if he were to vocalize foreign words such as those used by Christian servant boys, rather than classical Arabic words of the kind used by the learned, he would be more appreciated by his contemporaries, whose language was an outlandish non-Arabic gibberish (cf. below).

⁷ The *tailasān* was a hooded mantle worn by Persians. Here it alludes to the non-Arabs as a whole and refers to their inferior knowledge of Arabic. The expression *yā ibn at-tailasān* ‘O son of the *tailasān*’ was used to revile Persians or foreigners in general (Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* [London, 1863–1893], V, 1867).

⁸ Ibn Shuhaid’s reply is couched in assonant prose after the style of al-Jāḥīz (e.g., *shajar-‘abaq*).

after my style." I answered: "Just as you have heard." He said: "How is their speech among themselves?" I replied: Sibawaih⁹ has nothing to do with it, nor does al-Farāhidī¹⁰ have any means of reaching it, nor has eloquence left its mark upon it. It is merely a barbarous non-Arabic babble with which they convey meanings after the fashion of the Magians and the Nabateans.¹¹ At this he exclaimed: "To God will we return! The Arabs and their language have perished! Bombard them with the rhymed prose of the soothsayers for perhaps this will benefit you among them and make you famous. Despite what you have said, I see that you tread heavily upon them and follow their lead against your will."

Then the elder who sat next to him, whom I knew to be the familiar spirit of 'Abd al-Ḥamid, and whose opinion I was anxiously awaiting, said: "Do not be deceived, Abū 'Uyaina, by the assonant prose he has affected, for his true talent lies in rhymed prose, and what he has made you listen to is an unnatural affectation. Were the run of his discourse to be extended, and were his horses to race in the arena of eloquence, his base hackney would come second in the race, and his claw would be blunted. I think he is himself one of those barbarous babblers he mentioned, otherwise, why does chaste speech not gush forth and doesn't¹² pure Arabic not shine?"

At this I said to myself: "This is the mark of 'Abd al-Ḥamid and the ungrammatical thread of his style, by the Lord of the Ka'ba!" So I said to him: "You are too hasty, Abū Hubaira!" For Zuhair had informed me of his surname. "Your bow is made of the hard wood of the *nab*^c tree,¹³ while the sap of your arrow is poison, whether you shoot at an ass or at a man; whether you seek a clash of arms or eloquence. By your father, eloquence is hard indeed, while with regard to it you go about dressed in a striped Bedouin cloak made of wool,¹⁴ from which the buttocks of your meanings are exposed, just as the she-goat exposes her buttocks by lifting her tail. The weather is now warm, not chilly, and eloquence now comes from Iraq, not from Syria.¹⁵ I see the blood of jerboas upon your hands and detect the tail fat of lizards upon your jaws."¹⁶ He smiled at me and said: "Is this your way, you shady little character

⁹ Sibawaih (d. ca. 793) was a philologist from Basra who wrote a celebrated grammar entitled "The Book of Sibawaih" (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 343; Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 53).

¹⁰ Khalil ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhidī (d. 791) was the mentor of Sibawaih in Basra. He invented the Arabic system of meters and wrote the first Arabic lexicon, entitled *Kitāb al-‘Ain* (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 343; Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 53).

¹¹ That is to say, after the manner of non-Arab peoples who possess an inferior command of grammar and correct usage.

¹² The familiar spirit of 'Abd al-Ḥamid commits the grammatical faux pas of confusing the negative *lā* 'not' with the interrogative *mā* 'why.' In consecutive phrases introduced by a negative, the second must always be headed by *lā*, but in the structure of this sentence, the demon has mistakenly replaced an interrogative *mā* with a negative *lā*, thus betraying the stylistic clumsiness of early Arabic prose writers.

¹³ The *Chadara tenax*, a tree producing a hard wood from which bows are made.

¹⁴ Ibn Shuhaid pokes fun at 'Abd al-Ḥamid for wearing the coarse garments of the unsophisticated Bedouin, typical of the earlier Umayyad period, which he contrasts unfavorably with the polished and urbane style of the Abbasid writer al-Jāḥiz.

¹⁵ 'Abd al-Ḥamid flourished at the court of Marwān II in Damascus, whereas al-Jāḥiz was an Iraqi.

¹⁶ The anti-Arab movement of the Shu'ubiyya made fun of the Arabs because of the coarse food the latter had eaten during their earlier days in the desert, and criticized them for the rough garments they had worn. The non-Arabs in contrast were depicted as being "diverted by wearing brocade and fine silk cloth from wearing a coarse garment suitable for both summer and winter weather

who follows the method of every man and adopts his cry?" I replied: "The wolf is shady, whereas the goat, as you know, is a proverbial fool."

Then Abū 'Uyaina cried out to him: "Do not meddle with him for it will be hard indeed for you to rid yourself of him." At this I added: "Praise be to God who created humans in the bellies of camels!"¹⁷ Abū 'Uyaina said: "This insult would suffice him if only he were intelligent enough to understand it."

THE TREATISE ON SWEETS

They both cheered me up and asked me to read them something from my treatises, so I read my treatise describing cold, fire, and firewood, of which they approved, as well as part of my treatise on sweets, in which I say:

"I went forth among a group of friends and a party of companions among whom was a gluttonous jurist to whom I had not been introduced; a creditor of his belly whom I had not observed before. He saw some sweets, whereupon greed aroused him and desire perturbed him so that he squirmed in his clothes and caused his drivel to flow until he halted before the heaps of food and mingled with the crowd. He gazed upon the *fālūdhaj*¹⁸ and said: 'I would give my father for this pastry! See how like a gem it looks; it is the secretion of bees cut into angular shapes, while the pith of grain has been combined with it so that it has become sweeter than the saliva of lovers.'

"Next he saw the *khabīṣ*¹⁹ and declared: 'I would give my father for this dear yet cheap sweet! This is the frost of Paradise which the latter has churned and brought forth in the form of the butter of bliss. It is offended by a glance and melts at a word. Then it turned white.' They told him: 'With the whites of fresh eggs.' He answered: 'Fresh from fresh! How sweet would private company with the beloved be, were it not for the presence of the spy!'

"He then looked at the *qubaiṭā*²⁰ and exclaimed: 'I would give my father for that ingot of bright silver that does not thwart one's bite! Was it cooked with fire or with light? To me it looks like pieces of crystal. Was it kneaded with almonds or with walnuts? To

made up of the collected wool of six ewes . . . their drink was wine, and their food roasted meat, not the mouthful of colocynth seeds in the deserts or the eggs of lizards taken from their nests. Not one of them filled himself with the disreputable tail-fat of lizards" (James T. Monroe, *The Shū'ubiyya in al-Andalus: The Risāla of Ibn García and Five Refutations*, University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 13 [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969], pp. 25–26). The fact that an Arab such as Ibn Shuhaid espoused anti-Arab arguments indicates that in al-Andalus the Shū'ubiyya was basically an expression not of ethnic but rather of urban solidarity against the rustic life of the countryside with its tribal social structure.

¹⁷ Ibn Shuhaid, with subtle indirection, calls 'Abd al-Hamid's mother a camel.

¹⁸ A sweet made of starch, water, and honey. There are several recipes for the Andalusian version of *fālūdhaj* in the anonymous *Kitāb at-Tabikh fī l-Maghrib wa l-Andalus fi 'aṣr al-Muwahhidīn*, ed. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Madrid, 1965), and the Spanish translation by the same writer entitled *Traducción española de un manuscrito anónimo del siglo XIII sobre la cocina hispano-magribí* (Madrid, 1966).

¹⁹ *Khabīṣ* is a sweet made of dates, cream, and starch (*ibid.*).

²⁰ *Qubaiṭā* is a pastry made of sugar, almonds, and pistachio nuts (Dozy, *op. cit.*, II, 302).

me it looks exactly like banana bread.' He walked over to them while their vendor adjusted his brass weights and hung his scales from the top of his head saying: 'One *ratl*²¹ for two dirhems!' He bit into them with his fangs exclaiming: ''Doomsday, what is Doomsday?''²² Give me more! Woe to man because of his mouth!'

“Then he saw the *zalābiyya*²³ and said: ‘Woe to its whore of a mother! Was it woven from my intestines or made from the membrane of my heart? I find that it is firmly lodged in my soul and that the bond of its love is tied fast to my heart. Therefore, how did its cook’s hand reach inside me to cut it from my inner stomach? By the Almighty Pardoner, I shall most surely seek it in revenge!’ He walked toward it and the tongue of the scales vibrated so that he began to cry out: ‘A snake, a snake!’

“Next the pastry dates²⁴ appeared before him, still undigested by the bowels, so he exclaimed: ‘What is the matter? What have you got to do with the harvesting of Mary’s palm tree?’²⁵ You are none other than sorcerers and your punishment will be none other than the sword and the fire.’ He longed to take some of them so he leaned his staff against his chest and squatted on the ground shedding tears to show his humbleness. There was no one among us who could refrain from laughing, but then my breast was moved to pity him, for I knew that God would not lose track of my sympathy for him, since almsgiving is seemly in men of wealth while every tender-hearted man will have his reward. Therefore I ordered the slave boy to buy several *ratls* of the various assorted sweets that had evoked his outburst, including the several kinds that had reduced him to humbleness. When he had brought them we went to a pleasant, private place such as the one described by al-Muhallabi:²⁶

‘An inn whose privacy is pleasant to one desiring devotion, while in it there is a veil to cover the licentious when they behave scandalously.’

“The slave boy poured the sweets out, taking care to see that they fell gently, into heaps like sections of tree trunks, and then the jurist

²¹ In al-Andalus the weight of the *ratl* varied according to the merchandise weighed. Normally it was equivalent to 16 ounces, while one ounce weighed 31.48 grams. Thus one *ratl* was equal to 504 grams (E. Lévi-Provençal, *España musulmana hasta la caída del califato de Córdoba* [711–1031 de J.C.]: *Instituciones y vida social e intelectual*, trans. E. García Gómez, in *Historia de España*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Vol. V [Madrid, 1957], p. 137).

²² From Koran 101:1–2.

²³ A sweet pancake made with almonds and honey (Dozy, *op. cit.*, I, 598; Huici Miranda, *Traducción*, p. 245).

²⁴ In Arabic: *tamar an-nashā* which I have been unable to identify.

²⁵ An allusion to Koran 19, The Sūra of Maryam.

²⁶ Abū Muḥammad al-Muḥallabī was a poet and vizier of the Buwaihid sovereign Muizz ad-Daula who conquered Baghdad in 945.

began to cut and to swallow; to stretch his mouth and to pitch in, while his eyes gleamed like two live coals, protruding from his face like two testicles, while I said to him: ‘Take it easy, Abū So-and-So! Gluttony destroys intelligence!’ When he had gobbled up every heap and made an end to them all, when he had joined their Khawarnaq to their Sadir,²⁷ he belched, and a unique wind blew from him, whereupon we became sure of the “painful punishment.”²⁸ It scattered us hither and thither, sending us scurrying right and left, for we detected the polecat in him, while the sight of him made the proverb come true: ‘The one let out an odor and scattered camels, while the other broke wind and dispersed humans,’ nor did we meet again. And that is that.”

They both approved and laughed over it, saying: “Your rhymed prose has a place in the heart and a position in the soul for you have lent it your talent, the sweetness of your language, and the wit of your style in order to suppress its defects and to remove the cloud that darkens it. Yet we have been informed that you are not appreciated by the sons of your human species and that they do not tire of attacking and opposing you. Who then is most severe in condemning you?” I answered: “Two neighbors who live close by and a third who was overcome by misfortunes so that he climbed on the back of absence and thereafter has flung down the staff of his journey in Saragossa.” They replied: “Are you referring to Abū Muḥammad,²⁹ Abū l-Qāsim³⁰ and Abū Bakr?”³¹ I answered: “Yes.” They then asked: “What extreme did you reach with them in the matter?” I replied: “As for Abū Muḥammad, he unsheathed his tongue against me before al-Musta^cin,³² while a group of my enviers whom he managed to beguile supported him. I was informed of the matter and recited a poem to him part of which goes:

²⁷ Khawarnaq and Sadir were two ancient castles in al-Hira belonging to an-Nu'mān al-Akbar (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41).

²⁸ A formula frequently used in the Koran.

²⁹ Abū Muḥammad has not been identified. Bustānī thought that he was the poet’s close friend Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥazm, but this is unlikely since the poet praises his friend further on. From the context it is at least clear that he was an influential personage at the court of Sulaimān al-Musta^cin.

³⁰ He is Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Iflīlī (963–1049), a noted grammarian and philologist of Córdoba (biography in Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Kitāb aṣ-ṣila* [Madrid, 1883], I, 93), whom the poet had earlier admired, and with whom he had formerly been on better terms.

³¹ Both Bustānī and Dickie think he may be Abū Bakr Ishkīmyāt, to whom the poet addressed a *Risāla* in defense of his poetry which the latter had criticized. It is far more likely, however, that he is Abū Bakr Yaḥya ibn Ḥazm to whom this *Risāla* is addressed (cf. Introduction, n. 1, on p. 51 above) because in the next paragraph Ibn Shuhaid has Abū Bakr say: “He has a familiar spirit who helps him.” These are the very same words the addressee of the *Risāla* is alleged to have uttered in the opening introductory paragraph of this *Risāla* (“I swear that he has a genie who helps him and a devil who aids him.”). It is not at all likely that he is Abū Bakr ibn Mā’ as-Samā’, the famous *muwashshaha* poet, as Bustānī and Dickie seem to suggest (James Dickie, “Ibn Shuhaid: A Biographical and Critical Study,” *Andalus*, XXIX [1964], 265. It is also possible that Abū Bakr Yaḥya ibn Ḥazm and Abū Bakr Ishkīmyāt are the same person.

³² Sulaimān al-Musta^cin reigned twice and it was during his second reign (1013–1016) that Ibn Shuhaid seems to have lost favor with the Umayyad sovereign (*ibid.*, p. 262).

"I have been informed of certain groups whose breasts are filled with anger against me, although my breast is empty of it insofar as they are concerned.

They listened to my words, and I caused them to hear something the like of which they were unable to compose; they plunged into the secret of my meaning but my subject baffled them.

Hence one group claimed: 'This is not his poetry,' while another affirmed: 'We swear by God that we do not know.'

Are they not aware that I aspire to knowledge and that I am one who outstrips his source in his course?

Not everyone who leads horses can govern them, nor is every racer of horses called a racer.

Let whosoever wishes speak out, for I am present and nothing dispels doubts more clearly than speaking."

As for Abū Bakr, he fell short of the mark and restricted himself to affirming: "He has a familiar spirit who helps him." On the other hand, Abū l-Qāsim al-Iflīlī has a firm place in my soul, and his love is lodged in my heart, despite the fact that he bears me a grudge, although he is related to me."

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF AL-IFLĪLĪ

At this they both exclaimed: "O Anf an-Nāqa ibn Ma'mar³³ from among the dwellers of Khaibar!"³⁴ Then a genie arose and came toward them. He was white haired, average sized, thick nosed, limped in his gait, blinked his eyes, wiggled his nose and came forward reciting:

"A people who constitute the nose, whereas other peoples are tails;
and who can compare the nose of the camel with its tail?"³⁵

They both addressed me as follows: "This is the familiar spirit of Abū l-Qāsim." Then, turning to him they added: "What do you have to say about him, O Anf an-Nāqa?" He replied: "He is a young man such that I do not know under whom he studied." At this I said to myself: "A chip off the old block! If you do not use good Arabic diction in accordance with your native talent and display some of the fruits of your study while you are among the knights of eloquence, henceforward

³³ Anf an-Nāqa literally means "the nose of the she-camel." This is a reference to Ja'far ibn Quraiṣ called Anf an-Nāqa because his father once slaughtered a camel and divided it up among his womenfolk, giving the head to Ja'far. Ja'far seized it by the nose, and upon being asked what that part was, he replied "the nose of the she-camel." This became his nickname and a source of shame to his descendants until al-Ḥuṭaiṭa panegyricized them with the line of poetry that follows below (Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-‘Arab* [Cairo, 1962], pp. 219–220).

³⁴ Khaibar is a town in Arabia, a little to the north of Medina.

³⁵ al-Ḥuṭaiṭa, *Diwān*, ed. Nu'mān Amin Taḥa [Cairo, 1956], p. 128.

no bird will be of good omen for you in its flight, and you will become a target for every random stone."

Then I seized ammunition for discourse and arrayed myself in the arms necessary for eloquence, saying: "Neither do I know under whom you studied." He answered: "How dare you say this to one such as I am?" I replied: "What was that"? He declared: "Talk with me about the book of Khalil."³⁶ I answered: "In my opinion it lies in a wastebasket." He exclaimed: "Then discuss the book of Sibawaih³⁷ with me." I replied: "In my opinion the cat has crapped on it, as well as on the commentary of Darastawaih." At this he said: "Do not worry, for I am the father of eloquence." I replied: "God forbid! You are merely like a mediocre singer who does not sing well enough to arouse emotion, nor badly enough to make the audience forget him." He said: "But teachers of literature have instructed me." I replied: "That is not their prerogative; instead instruction derives from God—may He be exalted—where He says: 'It is the Clement who taught the Koran, created man, and instructed him in eloquence.'³⁸ No poem can be explicated nor any land broken up. It is a far cry from you that musk should derive from your breath and ambergris from your ink, that your style should be sweet and your discourse fresh, that your breath should derive from your soul and your well from your heart, that you should reach out to the humble and raise him high, or to the lofty and humble him, or to the ugly and embellish it."

He replied: "Let me hear an example."

DESCRIPTION OF A FLEA

I continued: "It is a far cry from you that you should describe a flea and say:

'It is a negro slave and a domesticated wild beast, neither weak nor cowardly. It is like an indivisible portion of the night or like a grain of allspice taught by instinct, or like a drop of ink, or the black core in a camel tick's heart. It drinks in one gulp and walks in bounds; it lies hidden by day and travels forth by night. It attacks with a painful stab and considers it lawful to shed the blood of every infidel as well as every Muslim; it rushes upon skilled horsemen and drags its robes over mighty warriors; it lies concealed beneath the noblest of garments and tears away every curtain, showing no regard for any doorman. It goes to the sources of the sweet lap of luxury and reaches fresh thickets; no prince is safe from it, nor is the zeal of any defender of avail against it, although it is the lowliest of the lowly; its harm being widespread and its pact often broken. This is the nature of every flea, may the latter suffice as a means of lessening man's condition and as a proof of the Clement's power.'

'It is furthermore a far cry from you that you should describe a fox and say:

³⁶ He is the philologist Khalil ibn Ahmad (see n. 9 above).

³⁷ For Sibawaih, see n. 8 above.

³⁸ Koran 55:1-4.

DESCRIPTION OF A FOX

'It is more cunning than 'Amr³⁹ and more treacherous than the murderer of Hudhaifa ibn Badr.⁴⁰ It wages many battles against Muslims and is impelled to shed the blood of cocks, the muezzins of the dawn. Whenever it perceives a chance, it takes advantage of it, and when brave warriors pursue it, it baffles them. Despite this it is Hippocrates in the way it seasons its food, and Galen in the moderation of its diet. Pigeons and chickens form its breakfast, while pheasants and francolins form its supper.'"

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF BADI^C AZ-ZAMĀN

Among those present before me in their assembly there was a youth who glanced my way leaning upon his hand, and said: "That is fine skill in handling language, by your father!" I replied: "Why so?" He answered: "Do you not know that when a writer describes something that has never been described before, over the depicting of which language has not gained mastery, then he should be satisfied with a minor embellishment and contented with concise eloquence, since no description comparable with his has preceded, while no style can be connected with his style? Since this is a sign of Baghdādī wit, from whence did you acquire it, O youth of the West?" At this I said to Zuhair: "Who is he?" He replied: "Zubdat al-Hiqab, the familiar spirit of Badi^c az-Zamān."⁴¹ I then answered: "O Zubdat al-Hiqab, improvise for me." He replied: "Describe a slave girl." Thereupon I described one. Then he said: "You have done well!" I answered: "Let me hear your description of water." He replied: "That is something impossible to imitate." I said: "Produce it, by my life." He answered: "It is blue like the eye of a cat, pure like a crystal wand; it is selected from the sweet water of the Euphrates and used after having been left to settle overnight, so that it comes forth like the flame of a candle, with the purity of a tear."⁴²

Thereupon I continued: "Observe it, my lord, like the essence of dawn or the melting of a pure white moon, pouring from its vessel like a star falling from the sky. The well is its tavern and the mouth is its evil genie; it is like a sundered thread or a silver rod used for striking. When it is taken from you, you perish, and when your heart is pierced by it you revive."

When I finished my description, Zubdat al-Hiqab struck the earth with his foot and it opened up beneath him revealing a pit like Barahūt.⁴³ He rolled down, it

³⁹ 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ became proverbial for his cunning during the arbitration between 'Ali and Mu'āwiya at the battle of Ḳiffān (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 192).

⁴⁰ The murderer of Hudhaifa was Qais ibn Zuhair, a chieftain of 'Abs, The episode took place during the pre-Islamic tribal war of Dāhis and al-Ghabrā? (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 61).

⁴¹ Badi^c az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 1007) was the inventor of the Arabic *maqāma* genre described by Nicholson as "a romance of literary Bohemianism" (*ibid.*, p. 328). His name means 'the wonder of the age,' while Zubdat al-Hiqab 'the butter of the years' is a humorous parody.

⁴² This passage is found in Badi^c az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's "Maqāmat al-Mađīriyya" (*Maqāmāt*, ed. Muhammad 'Abduh [Beirut, 1889], p. 111).

⁴³ Barahūt is the name of a valley in Hadramaut, in which there is a well exhaling a sulphurous stench. According to popular belief, the souls of unbelievers predestined to hell await there after death (*E.I.1*, I, 653).

closed over him, his person disappeared, and all trace of him vanished. Then the two masters laughed at what he had done while Anf an-Nāqa's rage against me increased.

ANF AN-NĀQA AGAIN

He said: "Have any descriptions occurred to you in your poetry that I cannot match?" I answered him: "It is a far cry from you that you should describe a cloud on the horizon and say:

'Many a rumbling raincloud cast its breast against the Vale of Tamarisks, depositing its rain on the rugged terrain's even tracts.⁴⁴

It sped forward in the wind's halter obeying the gentle zephyr of the east which, because of it, cast a robe of silk on all but the high mountain streams.

Nor did it cease to water the ground until it had clothed the hills in carpets of green and yellow, while the valleys became a vast carpet of its weaving,

And a wind turned toward it causing its drops to fall gradually, just as a lovely woman scatters the pearls of her necklace from her slender neck.

Never have I seen pearls, scattered by the east wind, equal to them, for the flowers have spent the night picking them up,

While we spent it watching a night that failed to roll up its mantle, before the hoary head of dawn flowed whitely over its summit.

It seems to you like a negro king in the peak of his glory, who moves slowly when he walks away with a stately stride,

Overtopping the horizons with the full moon as his crown, while Gemini have hung an earring upon his ear.'

And it is a far cry from you that you should describe a wolf and say:

'When the lofty wind passed through his territory he hastened forth, snuffing to sense the east wind.⁴⁵

He recalled a garden of ewes and oxen watched over by guards who were guarded against fear

When a night-visiting desert wolf overtook them; a swift one roaming day and night when he fears a glance,

⁴⁴ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 87-89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

One lean in the hips who has clothed himself in a black cloak of darkness in order to hide, though he himself is dark.

He displays the glance of a treacherous deceiver whose fire you will observe to be kindled from the liquid of his eyes.””

The heroes of the genii exclaimed at this final line: “Bravo!” Intense grief once more overwhelmed Anf an-Nāqa while awe got the better of him, his speech became confused, and uncouth Bedouin traits began to appear in his words—may he who was present have mercy on him for their sake, and may he who witnessed the event pity him on their account.

THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT OF ABŪ ISHĀQ IBN HUMĀM

A youth who sat at his side rolled up his sleeve from his forearm and addressed me as follows: “Would it harm your native genius or lessen your intuition were you to grant Anf an-Nāqa his due and be patient with him? For despite his defects he is a jar of knowledge, a basket of understanding, and a shelter of information.” I asked Zuhair: “Who is this?” He replied: “He is Abū l-Ādāb, the familiar spirit of Abū Ishāq ibn Hūmām,⁴⁶ your neighbor. So I said: “O Abū l-Ādāb, the flower of the fragrant herb of secretaries, have mercy on your brother with the sharpness of your tongue. Would it have harmed Anf an-Nāqa, or lessened his knowledge, or notched the blade of his understanding, were he to have been patient with me despite an error I committed in a poem or prose composition of mine, rather than advertising it among his students and turning it into one of his reasons for boasting?” He replied: “The forebearance of scholars rarely lapses.” I answered: “It happened time after time.”

Then the two masters, ‘Utba ibn Arqam and Abū Hubaira, the familiar spirit of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, said to me: “Because of you we have lost our way in a desert of confusion, while our ears have been pierced by your example, for we do not know whether to call you a poet or a prose writer.” At this I replied: “It would be advisable to reach a decision and fitting to declare the truth, for you cannot avoid passing judgment.” Thereupon they both said: “Go, for you are both a poet and a prose writer.”

At this the meeting broke up while all eyes were looking at me and all necks were turned my way.

⁴⁶ See “Introductory Essay,” above, n. 87.

PART THREE: THE LITERARY CRITICS AMONG THE GENII

THE LITERARY GATHERING

Zuhair and I also attended one of the genii's gatherings where we discussed the themes poets borrowed from one another, as well as those poets who added to and improved the loan, and those who failed to do so. One of those present recited the line of al-Afwah:¹

"You can see the birds above our traces with the naked eye, confident that they will be well fed."

Another recited the lines of an-Nābigha:²

"When they raided with the army, flocks of birds led by other flocks, hovered over them.

You can see them behind the fighters glancing with eyes askance, sitting like elders wrapped in gray furs,

Leaning sideways, having become certain that his tribe, when the two armies met, would be the first to win."

Another recited the lines of Abū Nuwās:³

"The birds flock to the war he wages at sunrise, confident that they will fill themselves with the victims he slaughters."

Another recited the line of Ṣari^c al-Ghawānī:⁴

"He has accustomed the birds to certain habits of which they have become confident, for they follow him on every journey."

¹ al-Afwah al-Audi was a pre-Islamic poet (R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* [Cambridge, 1907], p. 83; Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe* [Paris, 1966], II, 282–283).

² an-Nābigha adh-Dhubyānī was a pre-Islamic poet who attended the courts of Ghassān and al-Hira (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–123). The lines quoted are found in an-Nābigha's *Dīwān*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut, 1963), p. 10.

³ Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Ahmad Ḥamad Ḩabib al-Majid al-Ghazālī (Beirut, n.d.), p. 431.

⁴ He is the Abbasid poet Muslim ibn al-Walid (see Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 261; Fuḍād Ḥanna Tarazī, *Muslim ibn al-Walid* [Beirut, 1961]).

Another recited the lines of Abū Tammām:⁵

"The banners of his flags are overshadowed in the late forenoon
by the eagles of the birds taking a first drink of blood.

They remained close to the pennants until it seemed that they formed
part of the army, save that they refrained from fighting."

Then Shamardal as-Saḥābī declared: "All of them have fallen short of an-Nābigha, for he added to the theme and indicated that the birds devoured only the enemies of the panegyrized, whereas the words of all the others are subject to various interpretations and can be taken to mean the opposite of what the poet intended, even though Abū Tammām has added to the theme. The only good poet who is free from defects is al-Mutanabbi in his line:⁶

'He has two armies: one of horses and one of birds, such that when
he attacks another army with them, none but its skulls remain.'"

A youth of comely appearance was present in the assembly, who became aroused at the words of Shamardal, whereupon he declared: "The matter is as you say, O Shamardal, and yet when birds are well fed they do not ask which group is victorious. As for the birds in the last quotation, I do not know for what reason they hovered over skulls to the exclusion of leg bones, arm bones, vertebrae, and tail bones. Instead, he who completely freed this theme from defects, added to it, improved its turn of phrase, and indicated with one expression what was indicated by the poem of an-Nābigha as well as the line of al-Mutanabbi—namely, that the slain whom the birds devoured were the enemies of the panegyrized—is Fātik ibn aş-Şaq'ab in a poem of his:⁷

'The birds of prey know that his brave warriors are beasts of prey,
when they meet proud-necked warriors.

Their mouths water in the air and they show much liveliness when a
clash of arms grows fierce among the armored knights.

They fly hungrily above him, and the edges of his sword send them
back to their nests well fed.

He has mastered the bonds of their captivity through his beneficence,
for they are his slaves to be bought and sold.

He has fed some of their chicks with flesh, so that they are submissive
to him in every battle, for kings must be obeyed.

They quarrel with one another over their wounded victims, and
their pecking finishes them off, for noble birds quarrel often with
each other.'"

⁵ Abū Tammām, *Diwān*, ed. Muhammad Ḩabdūh Azzām (Cairo, 1965), III, 82.

⁶ al-Mutanabbi, *Diwān* (Beirut, 1964), p. 259.

⁷ Fātik is a genie, and the poem he recites is of course by Ibn Shuhaid. See his *Diwān*, pp. 90–91.

The assembly became elated at his words and recognized that he was right. At this I asked Zuhair: "Who is Fātik ibn aş-Şaq'ab?" He replied: "He means himself." I then asked him: "Why did you not inform me of his condition before? I observe excellent stylistic traits in him." I then arose and sat next to Fātik in order to honor him. At this he turned toward me out of respect for my position and I said: "Shower upon our land—may God give you strength—with your rainclouds, and pour upon us from the fountains of your literary attainments." He answered: "Ask what you will." I said: "What poetic theme did another precede you in treating skillfully, so that when you wished to develop it, you found it hard for you to do so, yet were able none the less to crack it?" He replied: "The theme of al-Kindī's⁸ line:

‘I rose toward her after her family had gone to sleep, as bubbles rise in the water, one after another.’”

I said: "May God give you strength—that line is inimitable. Do you not see how 'Umar ibn Abi Rabī'a,⁹ who was one of the most talented of men, when he tried to imitate and master it was disgraced by his line:

‘I shook off sleep and approached with the gait of the snake, while the members of my body were bent crookedly from fear of the tribe?’”

He replied: "You have said the truth. He spoiled the caesura of the line,¹⁰ and whereas he wished to express the love union in a gentle manner, he only produced a member as crookedly distorted as those of his own body. This surprised me, coming as it did from him, so I continued to advance toward this theme with one foot and to retreat from it with the other until I came upon a professor who was teaching a little son of his the art of poetry and was saying to him: 'When you are attempting a theme that another has treated before you, has excelled in composing, and the glossing of which he has refined, then either forsake it entirely, or if you must imitate him, do so in a different meter than the one your peerless model used, so that your talent may grow lively and your strength may increase.' Then I remembered the words of the poet, whom I had forgotten:¹¹

⁸ al-Kindī is Imru^a al-Qais. See his *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), p. 31.

⁹ 'Umar ibn Abi Rabī'a (d. 719) was an early Islamic love poet from Mecca who introduced the frivolous love lyric (*ghazal*) into Arabic poetry (Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 237; Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature* [2d ed.; Oxford, 1963], p. 44). The line quoted below is found in 'Umar's *Dīwān*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ārabi (Beirut, 1952), p. 131.

¹⁰ The Arabic text reads as follows:

wa naffaqtu ḥanni n-nauma aqbaltu mishyata l- / ḥubābi wa rukni khifata l-qāumi azwarū.

The two words *al-ḥubābi* 'the snake' are divided by the caesura of the line. The separation of an article from its noun by the caesura is considered a defect by some Arab literary critics.

¹¹ The poet quoted is Ismā'il ibn Yasār an-Nasā'i from the Umayyad period, who was a client of the Banū Taim (see Blachère, *op. cit.*, III, 616–619).

'When the stars vied in glory in their horizon, while Gemini and Bellatrix shone,

I approached with a light step, just as the speckled snake slithering from its hiding place.'

So I realized that the professor was right and that if Ibn Abī Rabī'a had used another meter he would have avoided his defect. Therefore I recited on that same subject:

'When he was filled by his drunkenness so that he fell asleep, and the eyes of the night watch slept,

I drew nigh to him, despite his distance, as does a friend who knows what he is after,

Creeping toward him as does slumber; rising up to him as does a sigh,

And I spent the night in bliss with him, until the mouth of night's end smiled,

Kissing the whiteness of his neck and sipping from the darkness of his deep red lips.'"¹²

At this I arose and kissed Fātik on the head saying: "How excellent is your father!" Fātik ibn aş-Şaq'ab then answered me: "Have you ever rivaled any of the great poets?" I said : "Yes, the words of Abū Ṭ-Taiyib:¹³

'Shall I strip the sword of glory off my shoulder to seek glory? Shall I leave the cloud of an easy life in my scabbard to seek favor?'"

He asked me: "What did you compose to rival him?" I replied: "My poem:¹⁴

'Many a dome whose upper part the eye cannot reach is such that the gentle zephyr of the east slips upon it and falls down.

When the wind approaches its summit it falls down and cries out because of the distance of its goal.

I became enamored of it when the night's ocean had risen high and its waves had begun to break,

While next to my chest there is a white sword embellished with wavy streaks, and in my hand there is a dark, quivering lance from Khatt.

¹² This poem, playfully attributed to the genie Fātik is of course by Ibn Shuhaid (see his *Diwān*, pp. 85-86).

¹³ He is Abū Ṭ-Taiyib al-Mutanabbi (see his *Diwān*, p. 311).

¹⁴ Ibn Shuhaid, *Diwān*, pp. 56-58. This poem is repeated in Part One of the *Risāla*, p. 55 above.

These two have been my boon companions ever since I reached manhood, both raising up the young hero's fortune when it stumbles.

The one is a stream in the sheath, whereby hopes are watered, while the other is a branch in the hand, that has been plucked, yet bears fruit.””

At this he exclaimed: “By God, even though the ‘cloud’¹⁵ was very eloquent, you have made a clever and novel addition and have created elegant themes. Have you vied with the great poets in anything else?” I replied: “I have also vied with Abū t-Taiyib’s line:

‘I thirst, yet I disclose no need for water, although the sun spreads its gossamer rays over the fine she-camels.’”¹⁶

He said: “What did you compose to rival him?” I replied: “My poem:

‘I have not forgotten our former days in an-Nāwūs during which our distress was caused by its beloved and its aspiration,’¹⁷

Nor the battle heroes of the Zanāta whose spear thrusts and fighting poured out the heavy rain of the fates.¹⁸

We busied ourselves with a company of horsemen like one of death’s embers, the roasting of whose blaze was the custom of my warriors as well as theirs.

When the sun wished to devour our flesh in the course of that roasting, its rays poured avidly over the swift steeds.’”¹⁹

At this he emitted one of the horrible cries of the genii, whereupon my heart was almost torn out with fear, by God!

Close to us there was a genie looking like a hill because of his firm and compact build, who kept glancing my way to the exclusion of everyone else, and who shot two piercing arrows at me, while I kept avoiding him with my eyes and sought refuge in God from him, for he filled both my eye and my soul with dread. When I had finished he addressed me, for he had become aroused by envy, saying: “From whom did you copy your flute-playing?” I replied: “Do you think this is the first day I have ever played on the flute?” He answered: “Yes! Offer us words that graze on the heights of eloquence and bathe in the water of sweetness and excellence, words that are captivating in the extreme and well ordered, and base them on any poetic theme you wish.” I asked: “Such as what words?” He replied: “Such as the words of Abū t-Taiyib:

¹⁵ I.e., al-Mutanabbi’s line of poetry on the “cloud of an easy life” above.

¹⁶ al-Mutanabbi, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

¹⁷ an-Nāwūs literally means ‘the sepulchre,’ but here it is probably a place name.

¹⁸ The Zanāta and the Ṣanhāja were the two main tribal groupings of Berbers present in al-Andalus.

¹⁹ Ibn Shuhaid, *Diwān*, p. 22.

'We alighted from the camel saddles, walking on foot out of respect for the beloved who had departed from the spring encampment, lest we approach it riding.

We reproach the bright clouds for what they have done by effacing it, and we turn away from them in reproach whenever they appear.'²⁰

And such as his words:

'Have you ever seen anything more ambitious than my she-camel, who bore a swiftly pacing forefoot and a calloused pad?'²¹

She forsook the *rimth* shrub's fumes in her native land, seeking a people who kindle ambergris.²²

Her knees have disdained to kneel in any place they light upon, unless it is made of pungent musk.

Thus she has reached you with bleeding soles, as if her legs were shod in red carnelian.'

And such as his words:

'Upon every lean-bellied horse beneath a lean-bellied rider who seems as if he were watered with blood and fed with flesh.

The horses beneath them have the appearance of the riders upon them, for each stallion is armor-clad and muffled.

Yet this is not because they are stingy in giving up their souls when facing lances, but rather, the repelling of harm with harm is more effective.''²³

He astonished me, by God, with that whereby he smote my ears, so I said to him: "What a fine water that would be if it had come from your own abundance, and had the fountains of your own rain cloud shed it!" Then I came forward boldly and recited:

"Many a night of anxieties that loosely draped its veils, blotting out the waymarks with its curtains,

Like the sea beating its surface against itself, the surface of whose crossing is hard for those who cross it,

Did I spend at length, by reason of my firm resolve, in the company of a sturdy camel in whose saddle bottom I gave firm support to my anxiety,

²⁰ al-Mutanabbi, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

²² The *rimth* is a shrub resembling a dwarf tamarisk. It is used for firewood (Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* [London, 1863–1893], III, 1152).

²³ al-Mutanabbi, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

While upon me there was an ample coat of mail of goodly patience; one that faces death yet becomes blunted long before its patient wearer,

And in my hand there was a sharp steel sword, wielded by my mind; one that has been seen to confer with me with the hard nature of its blade.

Alone did I spend such nights, so that when the darkness of their wings sent terror against me, I tramped on in their gloom,

Until ^cAbd al-^cAziz appeared before my eye as my hope, and I tore darkness away from the light of him.”²⁴

And I recited to him:

“May God watch over a land by whose climate you were well watered, and a group whose decline you never suspected.

The viper of misfortunes stung them and they were struck without respite by its compound poison, therefore be its antidote,

And open the locks closed fast against them, with the firm resolve of a sharp sword which, if it sought to lead the Pleiades, would surely lead them on.

As if they were his own, when he draws them like a sword, Gemini display the untying of their Belt of Orion.”²⁵

I also recited to him:

“Do not weep over the stream of nights because they have deprived you of the draught of one who drinks from a copious source,

For the least of what you will get from them is the sword of death unsheathed from the hoary hair behind your head,

As well as the passing of your life with the passage of every hour; the perishing of your good times in the best of times.

Hence if you weep, weep bitterly over your life for it hums swift-winged, passing like a star.”²⁶

I also recited to him:

“I have seen no one like me among my contemporaries; no penetration like mine among my assistants.

²⁴ ^cAbd al-^cAziz was al-Mu'taman ibn ^cAbd ar-Rahmān Sanchuelo ibn Abī ^cAmir al-Manṣūr, who gained power over Valencia for a short period during the breakdown of Cordovan authority (James Dickie, “Ibn Shuhayd: A Biographical and Critical Study,” *Andalus*, XXIX [1964], 256–257). The complete poem is included in Ibn Shuhaid, *Diwān*, pp. 77–80.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Were there a tent edge in the air for me to aim at, I would make for it astride an eagle with supple wings.

She prepared to weep over me, having observed my misfortune in the wake of a mortal crime,

So I told her: ‘Grieve not over one who risks his life, for you will never succeed without taking risks.’

She longed for the fruits of wealth from me, for she is close to every wealthy graybeard

Who remains awake like a profligate in the brightness of the day, and sleeps like an infidel in the darkness of the night.

Gently go, that you may observe what the veil of this scattering cloud reveals,

For before my firm resolve there lies a lofty peak related to Chosroes, of the courageous Ḥazm family, whose origin lies in Salmān.²⁷

When we rest our traditions upon it, our sources reveal bright origins,

While you, Ibn Ḥazm, when we were choked by stumbling fortunes, raised up their stumbling.

He did not trail the robes of wealth toward his house, like a handsome one arousing admiration who rides bareback astride crimes.

Instead, when he desired a life of ease, he wheeled crime’s horses away from a waterhole of perdition, swift as a glance,

On account of such crimes, a Shafi‘ite sectarian of noble origin unsheathed an Indian blade, namely allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures,²⁸

Against a Mu‘tazilite far removed from the Guidance, far ranging, seeking death through his views,²⁹

²⁷ Kisrā (Chosroes) came to be the generic name of the Sassanian emperors of Persia according to Arabic sources. Salmān al-Fārisī ('the Persian') was a follower of Muhammad and is said to have taught the Prophet how to dig a trench for the defense of Medina (Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* [7th ed.; London, 1961], pp. 106, 117). The line alludes to Ibn Ḥazm, the poet's close friend, who claimed Persian ancestry although it was public knowledge in Córdoba that his true forefathers were native Andalusian *mawālī* of humble origin who had converted to Islam (Miguel Asín Palacios, *Abenházam de Córdoba y su "Historia crítica de las ideas religiosas,"* [Madrid, 1927], I, 17–24).

²⁸ This is a key passage for dating the composition of the *Risāla* because Ibn Ḥazm adopted the Shafi‘ite rite (which permits allegorical interpretation of the Koran) during the Āmirid dictatorship, and appears to have converted to the Zāhirite rite (which does not allow allegorical interpretation) at some time before 1027 (see Asín Palacios, *op. cit.*, I, 130, 136).

²⁹ Ibn Ḥazm in his *Fījal* repeatedly attacks the Mu‘tazilites, in particular, the Andalusian Masarrite ‘Abd Allāh ar-Ru‘aini about whom he says: “He was one of those who were dedicated to asceticism and devotion, living apart from the world for reasons of austerity. I was a contemporary of his, although I never met him in person. Later, he invented certain abominable doctrines, and the remaining Masarrites, save for those who followed him, parted from him and excommunicated him for being an infidel” (Asín Palacios, *op. cit.*, V, 91). Perhaps he is the one alluded to in this line.

Who in each assault claims with his Indian blade the backs of full-grown horses from the tops of pulpits.”³⁰

I likewise recited to him:

“My soul said to me, when I was alone with it, complaining to it of my love, when I was deprived of favors:

‘Until when will you accept harm lying down, seeking to rest in the abodes of oppression and of gloom?

Should you decide to depart, you will find in night travel a cure from your passion or a cure from want.’

Then it continued to stir me with the excellence of its words, so I replied: ‘I shrink from the Banū l-Hakam,³¹

Who wrap their glory in the sun’s cloak and shoe the sole of their foot with the Pleiades.

So much have I suffered from love that if the hour of my death drew near I would find no suffering in the taste of death,

While my honor has driven me from one I am grieved by: woe to me from love! Woe to me from honor!

I have been betrayed by certain men who were long grateful for my friendship; who praised the obligations I kept.

Were I to approach Suhail after a two-day journey to drink on the third night, then would they gnash their teeth in regret over me.³²

There they sought only the brightness of my hand, and rushed only to the glory of my foot,

So that you would see me in the closest of their princely retinues, riding as a camel-driver on an-Na^cāma,³³

A plump one among the wheezing horses that I lead to the waters of Naiṭa, where they sink their bridles,³⁴

In front of a handsome one arousing admiration, from a tribe whom you will find more mindful of glory’s due than the nations of the past.”³⁵

³⁰ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 70–72. From pre-Islamic times Indian blades were proverbial in Arabic poetry for their excellence.

³¹ The Banū l-Hakam are the Umayyads, in particular Sulaimān al-Musta^cīn during whose reign the poet fell out of favor.

³² Suhail is the star of Canopus. Here it symbolizes the Umayyads who were a Syrian dynasty, since Canopus is in the North.

³³ an-Na^cāma was a famous pre-Islamic steed (Ibn al-Kalbi, *Kitāb Ansāb al-khail*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha [Cairo, 1946]).

³⁴ Naita or Niṭa has not been identified, although it appears to be a river.

³⁵ Ibn Shuhaid, *Dīwān*, pp. 148–149.

At this he opened upon me two eyes like two mirrors and then asked me: "Who composed this poem?"

'The full moon rose above us so we deemed it a rational being,
We met together and saw that it was both far away and close.'"

I replied: "My father."³⁶ He asked: "Then who composed this poem?"

'O you who, in seeking the meaning of my words, saw that you were yourself the object of those meanings:

I complained to you of time's vicissitudes for you could not avoid being a help against time.

My ability falls short of my ambition, thus would that I were equal to him who has aroused me.

It is no wonder that a freeborn man in straits seeks out the depository of favors.'"

I said: "My brother."³⁷ He asked: "Then who composed this poem?"

'There is avoidance although the beloved is nigh; there is distance although the visiting place is close.

Those abodes have not ceased being beloved to us since we met a lover in them.

And if in passion they visited us with love, they would approach a friend or busy a spy,

While he who sickens me would not have treated me harshly, had not hardships prevented him from being my physician.'"

I replied: "My paternal uncle."³⁸ He asked: "Who then composed this poem?"

'We did not approach you out of any apparent need for you, nor from a heart filled with desire for you,

But rather, from the excellence of our forebearing qualities we visited an ass who met our beneficence with disobedience.'"

I answered: "My grandfather."³⁹ He asked: "Who then composed this poem?"

³⁶ The poet's father was Abū Marwān 'Abd al-Malik (935–1003). He flourished under the dictatorship of al-Manṣūr, who appointed him governor of Valencia and Tūdmīr (Dickie, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–252).

³⁷ Little is known about this brother other than that he was a poet (*ibid.*, p. 250 n. 3).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 250 n. 5.

³⁹ His name was Ahmad (*ibid.*, p. 243).

‘Woe to me over a very proud, bright-eyed beauty who knows well what a forgetter tries to forget.

He advanced among a group of slender maidens, behaving like fawns, white as to their upper chests, red of mouths.

He commands and forbids among them, nor do they disobey him as a commander or forbiddler,

Until, when his command granted me access, I abandoned him from fear of God.’’

I replied: ‘‘My great-grandfather.’’⁴⁰ He asked: ‘‘Then who composed this poem?

‘‘Woe to writing on account of a foolish professor who encounters men’s eyes with a soft-brained head,

And with a stinking smell, should you ever approach him, as if a rat had died in his nostrils.’’

I answered: ‘‘I did.’’ He declared: ‘‘And one within whose grasp lies the soul of Fir'aun—may I never fall within your power! I see that you are well versed in eloquence.’’ Then he decreased in size and dwindled away until black beetles could have trampled on him without straining their feet.

I was astonished at his performance, and asked Zuhair: ‘‘Who is this genie?’’ He answered: ‘‘Seek refuge in God from him; he broke wind in the eye of a certain man and it shot forth from the nape of his neck. This is Fir'aun ibn al-Jaun.’’ At this I exclaimed: ‘‘I seek refuge in God Almighty from Hellfire and from Satan the accursed!’’ Then Zuhair smiled and told me: ‘‘He is the familiar spirit of one of your great men.’’ At this I understood his allusion.

⁴⁰ He was ^cAbd al-Malik ibn ^cUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Shuhaid ibn ^cIsā ibn Shuhaid ibn al-Waḍdāḥ al-Ashja'i (*ibid*).

PART FOUR: THE ANIMALS AMONG THE GENII

THE ASSES' DIALECT¹

One day I was also walking with Zuhair through the land of the genii, in pursuit of useful knowledge and in search of the assemblies of literati, when we chanced upon a luxuriant plain with a smiling pool of water where a herd of the genii's asses and mules had gathered. They had been smitten by a form of madness for their hooves clattered, they snorted from their nostrils, they broke wind constantly, and their braying and wheezing rose high. When they perceived us they ran up to us in panic exclaiming: "He has come to you on foot!"

I became amused at this, while Zuhair smiled, for he knew their purpose, and informed me: "Be prepared to pass judgment." When they reached us they began greeting me and addressing me by my surname, so I said: "What do you want, O herd of asses?—May your enclosure enjoy protection, and may your pasture prove fertile!" They answered: "There are two poems by an ass and a mule from among our love poets concerning which we disagree. Therefore we would be happy to accept your judgment over them." I replied: "Let me hear them." Then a grayish mule wearing its packsaddle and headcloth, who had not taken part in the ill-mannered haste and foolish movements of the herd, advanced toward me and declared: "One of the two poems is by a mule of ours and goes as follows:

'Upon every lover there lies a sign of his love: a sickness and emaciation caused by passion's fire.

Such love does not cease to be a troublesome disease; when it afflicts a mule it does not cease.

By my soul, the glances of whose eyes are bewitching and whose cheek is long and sleek,

I have been exhausted by the burden of her love, with which I have been loaded, although I am a mule meek to bear burdens,

Nor have I obtained any favor from her, save that when she pisses,
I piss wherever she pisses.'²

¹ This whole section has veiled allusions to Ibn Shuhaid's contemporaries. None of them have been identified.

² This poem, which is not included in Ibn Shuhaid's *Dīwān*, is a parody of the languishing sentiment expressed in the 'Udhrite lyrics cultivated by early Islamic poets like Jamil and 'Urwa ibn Ḥizām. In such poems the lover often declares that the only favor he has obtained from his beloved is the right to step on or kiss the ground where she has walked.

The other poem is by the ass Dukain:³

'I have been afflicted by this love ever since I have loveth [sic], and my desires were slow, yet am I not slow now.'⁴

I have loved my beloved for twenty years, one whose love rambles and does mischief in my heart.

I have no means of escape from love's sorrow, nor any helper against a deep sickness.

Her heart has been turned against me by the slander reported by a disreputable hot-testicled ass.

Nor have I obtained any favor from her, save that when she craps, I crap wherever she craps.'"

Zuhair laughed, while I controlled myself and asked the recitress: "What does *loveth* mean?" She replied: "It means 'loved' in the dialect of asses." I then said: "By God, 'crap' is foul smelling, hence *Anf an-Nāqa* would be better suited to judge the poem!" She replied: "I understand your allusion." She indicated to the herd that Dukain had been defeated and at this they turned away satisfied and contented.

The mule then asked me: "Do you not recognize me, Abū 'Āmir?" I replied: "I would if only there were some mark on you!" At this she removed her bridle, and lo, she was Abū 'Isā's⁵ mule with the spot on her cheek, so we wept together for a long while and began to recall our old days. She asked: "What has time left of you?" I replied: "What you see." She said: "'Amr has outgrown the neck ring!⁶ What have the dear ones done after my departure? Are they still true to the oath of friendship?" I replied: "The lads have grown up, the youths have aged, true friends have turned against each other, while among your brothers there are some who have attained public office and have risen as high as the ministry." She drew a deep sigh and said: "May God sprinkle them with the early spring showers even if they have withdrawn from the oath of friendship and forsaken the days of affection. For

³ Ibn al-Abbār mentions a certain "Dukain ibn Rabi'a ibn Zufar ibn Dukain ibn al-Hārith ibn Marwān ibn Asad ibn Kināna al-Muḥāribī, the teacher of literature from the inhabitants of Córdoba who taught al-Hakam ibn Hishām [r. 796–822], and who was a learned scholar" (*Kitāb Takmila li-Kitāb as-Sīla* [Madrid, 1887], I, 65). It is possible that one of his descendants is alluded to. The poem is not included in Ibn Shuhaid's *Diwān*. Both it and the preceding parody are of particular interest in studying the origin and development of the Andalusian *muwashshahāt*, for like the latter they indicate that by the early eleventh century the conventions of courtly love poetry had come to be considered unsatisfactory for the expression of sincere emotion. As a result, the end of these poems, just like the uncourtly *kharjāt* or 'envoys' that end the *muwashshahāt*, function as a comical "punch line" that ironizes the solemn content of the main body of the poem.

⁴ The Arabic text reads *hawithu* instead of the correct *hawitu* 'I have loved.' The substitution of *thā'* for *tā'* is humorously presented as a peculiarity of the asses' dialect, although the ultimate implication is that the poet is so bad that he has to modify a word ending in order to force a rhyme.

⁵ Not identified.

⁶ "A proverb applied to him who occupies himself with a thing that is beneath his ability" (Edward William Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* [London, 1863–1893], V, 1894). Here, however, the proverb is obviously used to indicate that times have changed.

the sake of literature, I conjure you to convey my greetings to them." I answered: "I will do what you command and even more."

THE LITERARY GOOSE

In the pond near us there was a white goose with a dark-blue eye mixed with red, with a body like an ostrich, who seemed as though she had been sprinkled with camphor or had donned a tunic of raw white silk. I have never seen a head livelier than hers in movement, or a back better than hers in shedding water. She bent the forepart of her neck, blinked her eye, and arched the back of her head, so that you could observe that beauty was derived from her and that comeliness of form was borrowed from her. She cried out to the mule: "You have passed judgment on love, yet you have given assent to your judge without satisfaction."

At this I asked Zuhair: "What is her status?" He replied: "She is the familiar spirit of one of your professors, and she is called al-Āqila and surnamed Umm Khafif.⁷ She is gifted with much literary education so prepare to meet her." I declared: "O lovely goose, broad and long, is it proper, by the beauty of your eyes, the proportion of your shoulders, the evenness of your wings, the length of your slender neck, and the smallness of your head, for you to receive a guest with such words and to meet an unexpected stranger with such speech, when I am deeply fond of geese, and in my fondness for them I have patiently withheld the biting attack of every discourse, when I have tried to bring them back to their native land and caused them to be loved by every nobleman, so that lords have adopted them in our country and our elegant people spend money on them, so that they are preferred to songbirds and to eloquent starlings, while the pleasure to be derived from doves has been forgotten along with the fighting of cocks⁸ and the butting of rams?"

She was filled with self-admiration at my words and became haughty in her pride, while she was overcome by an extreme nimbleness in the water so that at one moment she was swimming and the next she was flying, diving hither and emerging thither, with her wings arched out and her tail erect, and she became aroused by a joyful emotion, for this is a well-known thing geese do when they are happy and in good spirits. After this she quieted down, raised her neck, expanded her breast, set her wings in motion like oars, and advanced, moving like the bow of a ship and said: "O deluded deluder, how is it that you base your judgment on the consequences without having firmly established the principles? In what do you excel?" I replied: "In improvising poetry and extemporizing prose discourse according to the rule of being original and following fixed guidelines." She answered: "This is not what I have asked you." I replied: "Nor will I give you any other answer." She declared: "The rule of answers is that they should be confined to the source of the question" I merely meant to ask you about your excellence in grammar and in the use of obscure words, both of which are the basis of discourse and the substance of eloquence." I replied: "There is no other answer in my opinion than the one you have just heard."

⁷ The name literally means 'Intelligent, Mother of Light One.' Possibly light-headedness is implied.

⁸ A unique and valuable reference to the existence of cockfights in early eleventh-century al-Andalus. The cockfight may still be seen in some Hispanic countries to this very day.

She exclaimed: "I swear that this answer of yours is not included in the science of dialectic." I replied: "Do you demand dialectic from us, when we have tied fast its bucket and have been defended against its onslaught, while that part of dialectic with which I have attacked you is the sharpest of its arrows and the keenest of its lances, since it derives from God's teaching—Almighty and Exalted is He—in our opinion, from the dialectic included in the unambiguous verses of His Revelation?" She declared: "I swear that God did not teach you dialectic in His Scripture." I replied: "That statement of yours is forgiven, Umm Khafif, for it is not incumbent upon geese to retain a Koranic education. God said—Almighty and Exalted is He—in the unambiguous verses of His Scripture, through the words of His prophet Abraham—upon whom be peace: ‘‘My Lord is He who gives life and death.’’ [A nonbeliever] replied: ‘‘I give life and death.’’⁹ Thus the nonbeliever found an answer to those words as well as arguments to contradict their necessary application, yet the Prophet—may God bless and save him—when clear and decisive truth appeared before him, used it to attack the nonbeliever, forsaking his own earlier arguments and saying: ‘‘God causes the sun to rise from the east; do you then cause it to rise from the west?’’ And the nonbeliever was reduced to silence.¹⁰ Yet I myself excel only in improvising poetry and extemporizing prose discourse according to the rule of being original and following fixed guidelines.”

At this both her sides shook, the water flowed from her eyes, and she sought to take flight. But then she was overwhelmed by my friendliness and goodly reply, as geese tend to be overwhelmed, so that she stretched forth her neck and head toward us, and walked gently over to where we were, uttering continuous soft noises as geese do when they become sociable, cheerful, and submissive, over and above the fact that I am fond of geese and find their movements and foolish behavior graceful.

Then I talked to her and coaxed her with my cries, showing friendliness toward her until she associated with us and we tied fast her bucket and became secure from her onslaught, whereupon I declared: “O Umm Khafif, by Him who made your sustenance the water and stuffed your head with air, which is superior: education or intelligence?” She replied: “Intelligence of course.” I answered: “Do you know any creature more stupid than the goose, sparing mention of the proverbial bustard?” She said: “No.” I added: “Then seek intelligence from experience, since you have no way of deriving it from nature, and if you should capture a portion of intelligence and bring back a share of it, at that moment examine and discuss education.”¹¹

At this she turned away and we departed.

⁹ The quotation is from Koran 2:258. The whole passage goes as follows: “Have you not turned your vision to one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because God had granted him power? Abraham said: ‘My Lord is He who gives life and death.’ He replied: ‘I give life and death.’ Said Abraham: ‘But it is God that causes the sun to rise from the east; do you then cause it to rise from the west.’ Thus he was confounded who rejected faith. Nor does God give guidance to a people who are unjust.”

¹⁰ Cf. n. 9.

¹¹ Ibn Shuhaid is maintaining that natural, God-given intelligence is superior to knowledge acquired through study.

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