

THE BAD AND THE UGLY

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ATTITUDES TOWARDS INVECTIVE POETRY (*Hijāʿ*) IN CLASSICAL ARABIC LITERATURE

BY

GEERT JAN VAN GELDER

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Abbreviations	ix
I. Introduction	
1. <i>Hijāʿ</i> : one genre or several?	1
2. Origins	4
3. Collection and reception	7
II. The Coming of Islam: Before and After	
1. Two kinds of ethos	13
2. Mohammed and the Koran	20
3. Secular and religious authorities	24
4. Poets on <i>hijāʿ</i>	35
III. Philologists and Anthologists	
1. Early scholars	41
2. al-Jāhiz	44
3. Early anthologists	47
IV. Early Monographs on Poetics	
1. Between stylistics and ethics	60
2. Qudāma Ibn Jaʿfar	62
3. Classifications	75
V. Inconsistencies East and West	
1. Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī and later anthologists	78
2. Ibn Rashīq	85
3. Spain	90
VI. Philosophers	
1. From Aristotle to Averroes	96
2. Ḥāzim al-Qartājannī	101
VII. Late Contributions	
1. Compendia of traditional poetics	111
2. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī	114
3. <i>Balāghiyyūn</i> and <i>badiʿiyyūn</i>	116
4. Strophic and vernacular poetry	125
5. Islamic law and ethics	128
VIII. The Eclipse of <i>hijāʿ</i>	134
Works Consulted	139
Index of Names	150
Index of Subjects	154

PREFACE

That poetry which deals with bad or ugly things is not necessarily itself bad or ugly may seem a truism. Nevertheless, numerous literary critics and theorists have found it difficult, or indeed undesirable, to make a rigorous distinction between the quality of a poem and that of its subject matter.

If the subject taints the poetry, then the poetry in its turn may taint its criticism. At one more remove, then, even this monograph, which studies this criticism, may receive the odium of the puritans. I am looking forward to any invective this study should provoke. However, my object has not been to provoke, nor to defend a general thesis on invective poetry, but merely to present the ideas of the Arabic writers of the past; a presentation that is basically chronological, although a strictly chronological sequence is often interrupted for the sake of a more systematical approach. The result is, inevitably, a compromise.

In the translations I decided to render the register of the original with some fidelity; thus I do not translate, e.g., *ayr* as *membrum virile*. Occasionally I have preferred transliteration to translation.

The system of transliteration employed should be obvious to the specialists.

I have to thank all those who have encouraged and helped me, among them in particular Dr. F. Leemhuis and Dr. H. L. J. Vanstiphout, Groningen, Dr. W. F. G. J. Stoetzer and Dr. A. Schippers, Leiden, and Professor S. A. Bonebakker, Los Angeles. I am greatly indebted to the Trustees of the Stichting De Goeje for their willingness to include this work in the monograph series of the Stichting, as well as for the several useful suggestions for improvement offered by the editorial board of the Stichting. As always, my English was improved by Sheila van Gelder-Ottway.

Haren, February 1988

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BEO</i>	<i>Bulletin des Etudes Orientales</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>CHAL</i> , i	<i>The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature</i> , vol. i, <i>Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period</i> , ed. by A. F. L. Beeston et al., Cambridge, 1983
<i>EI</i> ¹	<i>Die Enzyklopädie des Islam</i> , 4 Bde. und Supplement, Leiden, 1913-36
<i>EP</i> ²	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , New Edition, Leiden, 1954-
<i>GAL</i> I, II	Carl Brockelmann, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> , zweite den Supplementbänden angepasste Aufl., Leiden, 1943, 1949
<i>GAL</i> S I, II, III	id., <i>Supplementbände</i> , Leiden, 1937-42
<i>GAS</i>	Fuat Sezgin, <i>Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums</i> , Leiden, 1967-
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAL</i>	<i>Journal of Arabic Literature</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>RAAD</i>	<i>Revue de l'Académie Arabe de Damas (Majallat Majma' al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya bi-Dimashq)</i>
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Islamiques</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli Studi Orientali</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. *Hijā'*: one genre or several?

Among the traditional major modes or 'aims' (*aghrād*) of classical Arabic poetry *hijā'*¹ is the most varied in tone and form. The other modes, such as *fakhr*, 'self-praise', *madīḥ*, 'panegyric, encomium', *rithā'*, 'elegy, lament', *nasīb* or *ghazal*, 'love poetry', are far from uniform, of course, throughout the centuries and between the countless poets; yet a considerable homogeneity, a general resemblance in register, diction and tone, cannot be denied. Poems of praise, like Tolstoy's happy families, are all alike; there is only one way of being right: by conforming to the conventional ideal, but there are many ways of being wrong.² To say that *hijā'* differs from other modes dominated by the conventions of Arabic literature since by its nature it ignores or defies conventions, is only part of the truth; for conventions are by no means absent in *hijā'* itself.

The variegated character of *hijā'* is as much a matter of nomenclature. One term, *hijā'*, commonly translated as 'satire', is hardly sufficient to cover a wide range, from the lofty, moralistic and serious to the coarse, amoral, immoral, obscene and flippant; from fun and wit to insipidity and dullness; from objectivity and distance to anger and emotion; from subtlety and obliqueness to bluntness and blatancy. Obviously, 'satire' is an inadequate translation in many cases: 'invective', 'lampoon', 'abuse' and related words are often more exact.³

As to its form *hijā'* is no less diverse than the other modes.⁴ It may form part of a larger whole, for instance with *fakhr*, *madīḥ* and even *nasīb*, combined in a polythematic *qaṣīda*. Independently, it ranges from the shortest epigrams to long poems, by Arabic standards (the poem called *al-Mudhahhaba* by al-Kumayt Ibn Zayd (d. 126/743 or 127) of reputedly 300 lines is exceptional;⁵ a reply by Di'bil (d. 244/859 or 246) is said to have

¹ Related, less frequent, forms are *hajw*, *muhājāḥ*, *tahājī*, *tahjā'*, *uhjuwwa*, *uhjiyya* (more often its plural: *ahājī*).

² Aristotle, *The Ethics*, translated by J. A. K. Thomson, Harmondsworth, 1955, p. 66.

³ See e.g. Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', p. 85, Pellat, art. 'Hidjā' in *EF*, McDonald, 'Orally Transmitted Poetry', p. 22.

⁴ This it has in common with western 'satire', cf. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 110, 188-90. Following Fowler's terminology I prefer to speak of *hijā'* and the other *aghrād* as 'modes' rather than 'genres'.

⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 68-70, *Aghānī*, xvii, 18.

been twice as long).⁶ But almost without exception *hijāʿ* refers to poetry. This is another reason why 'satire' is an unsatisfactory translation; *hijāʿ* excludes the various forms of satirical prose, whether short sketches or lengthy 'epistles'. Al-Jāhiz, Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, Ibn Shuhayd, al-Tawhīdī and Abū ʿl-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, to name but a few, would be prominent in a study of Arabic satire, but not of *hijāʿ*. Another disadvantage of the word 'satire' lies in the several undesirable associations with literary concepts from the Classical and European world, such as the formal verse satire tradition of Horace and Juvenal. For these reasons I have left the word *hijāʿ* untranslated, and rendered the verbs *hajā*, *hājā*, etc. as 'to make *hijāʿ*' throughout this study, in spite of its clumsiness and repetitiveness. Only very occasionally have I used the verb 'to satirize'.

One may well ask if there is any point in studying such a heterogeneous (and large) body of verse comprehensively, merely because in traditional Arabic criticism it is comprised under one denominator. To be sure, such a study is not envisaged in this book. But since what we know of Arabic *hijāʿ* is largely determined by what the ancient critics and anthologists decided to preserve for posterity, we should at least pay attention to their concept of *hijāʿ* and their evaluation of the poems and verses they called *hijāʿ*. In spite of its heterogeneous nature, the concept of *hijāʿ* as a separate mode, *gharaḍ*, existed from the earliest times. The term itself and cognate verbal forms are present in poems, even in pre-Islamic times, to a greater extent than the terms belonging to other modes: the words *nasīb*, *madiḥ*, *fakhr*, *rithāʿ*, etc. rarely occur in poems. The explanation must be that in *hijāʿ*, more than in any other mode, the poet is concerned with the effect of his poem; the description of the effect is an essential part of *hijāʿ* itself, or of those poems in which the opponent is threatened with *hijāʿ*.

From the very beginning of Islam there have been puritans who were opposed to any poetry. Others, rather more numerous as far as we can judge, only approved of serious and edifying subjects in poetry. Those who saw no harm in other genres, such as love-poetry and 'light verse', often drew the line with obscene or abusive verse. Considering the pressure of these prejudices (if we can call them thus)⁷, and knowing that a large proportion of the poetry that was produced must have been suppressed either by the poets themselves or the anthologists, one may be surprised by the large quantity of invective poetry that is known to us.

⁶ EI² s.v. al-Kumayt B. Zayd.

⁷ Perhaps it is a prejudice to dismiss these opinions collectively as prejudices, as Bonebakker did in the title at least of his article 'Religious Prejudice'.

Moreover, the bulk of it is not by anonymous, shady versifiers, collected by disreputable editors in broadsheets and shoddy booklets distributed in seamy-side subcultural circles. It forms part of the collected works of many of the great and esteemed poets, or is contained in the standard anthologies that are considered as monuments of Arabic literature, indispensable for the education of well-bred and respectable intellectuals.

As far as I can judge classical Arabic literature is richer in this 'genre' of lampoons and invective than most other 'polite' literatures; richer, at least, in terms of quantity; perhaps, the richest of all the major ones contemporary with it. No doubt someone will be tempted to conclude from this that 'the Arabs', or those who used Arabic, in the Middle Ages had a natural propensity for malign abuse and foul-mouthed scurrility. But it should be kept in mind that poetry does not neatly express a national or ethnic character, if such a thing exists at all. Someone looking for war-poetry in classical Japanese may well be led to believe that the Japanese were the least martial of peoples. The Arabs (I employ this term for all those who produced Arabic literature, for convenience's sake)⁸ differed from others in that they, to a large extent although often reluctantly, admitted invective and lampoon to what is commonly, and here somewhat inappropriately, called polite literature. Modern criticism in the West, with its tradition of formal satire, generally looks down on invective and lampoon, often because they are supposed to be devoid of true wit.⁹ Invective is, at best, the 'grim gruff old ancestor' of satire, and 'lurking near by is the smaller, weaker, but sometimes more dangerous mutant of Invective: ... Lampoon, a parasite which has no life of its own and can exist only through destroying its victim.'¹⁰

However, *hiyā'* is often coarse and witty at the same time, and those insults that are not witty may still strike us by their verbal artistry. One suspects that such critics as those mentioned above condemn invective and lampoon, not on aesthetic or intellectual grounds but for moral reasons. Indeed, in a discussion of satire and invective it is impossible to ignore questions of ethics and morality, even though some purists may deplore this. As we shall see, Arabic literary criticism is far from unanimous on this point.

⁸ In translations of classical Arabic passages the word 'Arabs' (*ʿArab*) often has a more restricted sense of 'those belonging to (semi-)nomadic Arabic-speaking tribes', especially referring to pre- or early Islamic times.

⁹ See for instance Pollard, *Satire*, pp. 66, 71 f.

¹⁰ Highet, *Anatomy*, pp. 151 f.

2. *Origins*

To the origins of *hijāʿ* Ignaz Goldziher devoted one of his many pioneering studies.¹¹ He showed convincingly that the word *qāfiya*, 'rhyme (word)' originally denoted 'invective (line of) verse striking the neck (*qafā*)'.¹² *Hijāʿ*, in his view, began as a form of magical warfare, a curse or imprecation, uttered by someone who maintained particularly good contacts with 'higher' or supernatural beings (a *jinnī* or *shayṭān*), in order, not merely to threat and to humiliate, but actually to harm the opponents. Its utterance was accompanied by symbolic acts such as changes in one's clothes. By the time from which most pre-Islamic poetry dates, however, the magical aspects of *hijāʿ* had all but disappeared, and Goldziher's views, based as they are on the cumulative evidence of vestiges and remnants as well as on deduction and comparison with other literatures, were challenged by Edouard (Bichr) Farès. He denied that the imprecations in *saġʿ* from Omayyad times could be adduced, as Goldziher had done, to demonstrate the original nature of *hijāʿ*. Not only did *saġʿ* (elevated speech employing rhyme but unmetrical) and *qarīd* (metrical rhymed verse) differ in form, but in tone and content they were radically dissimilar: the curse, as a typical charm, consists of formulas, fixed and stereotyped; the incantations are often obscure, employing archaic expressions. *Hijāʿ*, on the other hand, is far more elastic; clad in expressions that are simple and direct, addressed to people and not to gods. It does not consist of charms and curses, but of invective, meant to dishonour and humiliate the opponents. Ultimately, as Farès admits, *hijāʿ* and curse have the same function: to bring the enemy down, whether by true magic or by violent words whose effects can, indeed, be called 'magical'.¹³

The remarks by Farès, based on early *hijāʿ* itself, are certainly pertinent. However, many arabists have adopted Goldziher's thesis, even though it is admitted that it is somewhat too rigid;¹⁴ and modern views on primitive poetry seem to support it: the curse, a form of charm, lies behind invective, flying and satire, it is said.¹⁵ I wonder if the two

¹¹ 'Ueber die Vorgeschichte der *Higâʿ*-Poesie'.

¹² On the function of the human head in matters of honour and shame, see Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', in Peristiani (ed.), *Honour and Shame*, p. 25; and compare that most contemptible character that appears in many anecdotes in Arabic, the *saḥfān*, 'he whose face (more literally, neck) is slapped often'. See also below, p. 106. As for the sense-development of *qāfiya* one may compare two old European terms for 'poet': 'scop' and 'skald', related to 'scoff' and 'scold', respectively.

¹³ Farès, *L'honneur*, pp. 214-18, *EP*, *Ergänzungsband*, s.v. *Hidjāʿ*.

¹⁴ Pellat, art. '*Hidjāʿ*' in *EP*. Werner Diem (art. 'Spottgedichte' in *Lexikon der Islamischen Welt*) follows Farès rather than Goldziher.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Welsh, *Roots of Lyric*, pp. 133-61, Kernan, *The Cankered Muse*, p. 16, Elliott, *The Power of Satire*, pp. 15-18.

monogenistic views cannot be reconciled by supposing that both strains, the magical and the non-magical, may have been present in *hijā'* almost from the beginning. It is difficult to speculate on the origins of poetry, not merely because of a lack of sources, but because it is difficult to imagine a society without songs and poetry. One of the earliest references to Arabic poetry is the remark by St Nilus on the songs sung at the wells.¹⁶ These may have been magical incantations, of course. But if there is any truth in the traditional Arab view that metrically disciplined discourse, *rajaz* for instance, was brought about through *hudā* (or *hidā'*), camel-driving songs—and there are examples of other work-songs, lullabies, etc.¹⁷—then it is easy to imagine mocking, jeering, insulting or parodying songs being made without any magic function apart from the 'magic' of language, metre and rhyme. 'Charm' and 'song' are two originally independent roots of the 'melopoeia' of lyric.¹⁸

Some of the professional incantators and charmers must have appropriated the technique of song for their own purposes; at some stage the functions of the *shā'ir*, 'poet' specializing in metrical rhymed speech, and the *kāhin*, 'diviner', must have diverged, the latter still using his obscure *saj'*. From the existence of intermediate, transitional forms between *saj'* and *rajaz* one cannot conclude that there was a straightforward chronological transition and that *saj'* is the older of the two: it merely points to the widening of the domain of metrically disciplined speech. As the etymology of the word *shā'ir* implies the 'poet' originally dealt with the supernatural like the *kāhin*. By the time from which the earliest known poetry dates the supernatural inspiration of the *shā'ir* is hardly more than a convenient myth, to be compared to the role of the Muses in European poetry. Even when it was believed that poetry was supernaturally inspired, this does not mean that its effects were believed to be magical. One may reasonably suppose that non-magical forms of verse existed all alongside the magical types until the latter virtually died out.

¹⁶ Von Grunebaum, *Kritik und Dichtkunst*, p. 17, *GAL S I*, p. 18.

¹⁷ See Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, v, 128 f., Qurashī, *Jamhara*, pp. 34 f., Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 314 f., Firūzābādī, *Qāmūs* s.v. DY(Y), Hartmann, *Metrum und Rhythmus*, pp. 12-16, Goldziher, 'Ueber die Vorgeschichte', p. 95 n. 2, Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, v. index, Bloch, *Vers und Sprache*, pp. 14 f., Blachère, *Histoire*, pp. 369 f., Ullmann, *Untersuchungen*, p. 23, *EP*, art. 'ghinā', etc. On lullabies, see Goldziher, 'Altarabische Wiegen- und Schlummerlieder', *WZKM*, 2 (1888) 164-67 (also in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, ii, 322-25) and Wiebke Walther, 'Altarabische Kindertanzreime', in *Studia Orientalia in memoriam C. Brockelmann*, Halle, 1968, pp. 217-33. Brockelmann (*GAL S I*, pp. 17-19) rejects the rather one-sided theory of Karl Bücher (*Arbeit und Rhythmus*, Leipzig, 1896) in favour of the equally one-sided views of K. Th. Preuss (*Die geistige Kultur der Naturvölker*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1914).

¹⁸ Welsh, *Roots of Lyric*, pp. 133 ff.

Hijāʿ is a form of aggression. It is meant to be heard, or read, by the addressee even when he is spoken about instead of spoken to. The victim has a choice between ignoring it or reacting to it. This reaction may be conciliatory: an apology, the redress of an injustice or a fault. But since the main function of *hijāʿ* is to humiliate the reaction very often takes the form of a reprisal, whether verbal—which may result in a series of *hijāʿ* poems—or physical. The choices to be made are to some extent determined by the circumstances and by conventions; often, however, they seem, at least to us, completely unpredictable. In the animal world aggression between members of the same species is often restrained and formal, ‘with gloved fist and blunted foils. Threat and bluff take the form of deadly earnest’.¹⁹ Verbal aggression is a restrained form of aggression; *hijāʿ* is even more formal and restricted than ordinary abuse and threats, by dint of the stricture of its metre and rhyme. It would be naïve, however, to suppose that *hijāʿ* is therefore a means to channel aggression and to prevent bloodshed. Even in the animal world it is not rare for formalized aggression to take a turn for the worse;²⁰ and the history of *hijāʿ* shows numerous instances where physical violence is sparked off rather than curbed, and where reason and moderation are swept aside by rhyme and metre. Like the flytings known from other cultures, *hijāʿ* often serves as a preliminary to violence rather than a substitute. The formal characteristics of *hijāʿ*, as compared with abuse in ordinary prose, instead of attenuating its effects only serve to strengthen its rhetorical intensity and to increase its chances of survival. For although every *hijāʿ*-poem is an occasional poem, it is meant to be remembered:

I warrant to him with whom I contend that my words shall be so striking
that the night-traveller shall sing them as he fares along, and the
caravans be urged forward by them on their road;
Well remembered are they, cast forth with multitudes to bear them about:
their sound is gone forth in full sunshine into every land;
They are repeated again and again, and only increase in brilliancy, when
the diligent lips of men test my verse by repetition.
And he whom I attack with a couplet, it sticks to him and is conspicuous
like a mole on his face—and there is nothing that can wash out a mole!²¹

Each *hijāʿ*-poem is embedded in its little bit of history. Its genesis is provoked by words or actions preceding it, and it survives for a shorter

¹⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, London etc., 1978, p. 72, referring to Konrad Lorenz, *Das sogenannte Böse: zur Naturgeschichte der Aggression*, München, 1974 (English version: *On Aggression*, London, 1966).

²⁰ Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: the abridged edition*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, p. 121, against Lorenz and others.

²¹ From a poem by Muzarrid (middle of 7th century), *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 17, vss. 58-61, translation by Lyall. Note the reference to camel-driving songs.

or a longer time, usually engendering new words or actions. But this aftermath is of two kinds, at least in the case of all *hijāʾ* known to us. By the time the victim has passed away, together with his nearest kin as well as the poet himself, the verses may still be 'repeated again and again' by the diligent lips, and pens, of historians, philologists and lovers of poetry—people that Muzarrid did not have in mind.

The two forms of after-life overlap to a certain extent: party-strife was one of the motives for collecting or quoting *hijāʾ*²²; yet the distinction between the early, predominantly 'functional' stage and the ensuing 'literary' stage is an important one; a distinction not always clearly understood by the numerous participants on the discussion of *hijāʾ*. — In using this distinction I do not want to imply, of course, that literature is not functional: by 'literary' I mean the dominance of the 'poetic' function over the emotive, conative and referential functions in the well-known Jakobsonian schema.

3. Collection and reception

Much *hijāʾ* was collected, no doubt, not especially on account of its being invective, but because during a period in early Islamic times there raged a collection-mania resulting in the fixation of tribal and personal *dīwāns*. But in this early period more selective collections were compiled too. Not surprisingly, 'functional' motives prevail over 'literary' ones. *Ikhtiyār al-raǧul qitʿa min ʿaqlih*, in selecting one gives 'a piece of one's mind', as the saying goes.

ʿUmar, the second caliph, may have been the first to instigate a written collection of *hijāʾ*²³; paradoxically, since his moral strictness and aversion to lampoons are well-attested.²² He is reported to have said:

I had forbidden you to mention anything of what happened between Muslims and polytheists, in order to ward off mutual grudges and the spreading of infamy amongs you. However, since they are obstinate, write it down and preserve it.

Then they collected it and wrote it down (*dawwanū*) as the story goes.²³ It is confirmed by a certain Khallād Ibn Muḥammad, probably one of

²² Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', pp. 81 f., 86, and see below, pp. 24-7.

²³ *Aghānī*, iv, 141. The chain of transmitters may not be wholly sound, cf. the editors' note p. 140. See also GAS, ii, 15 and 37. Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', p. 82, interprets *fa-ammā idh abaw fa-ktubūhu wa-ḥtafīzū bih* as a conditional sentence and paraphrases: 'if people refuse to follow his advice, they should rather write down this poetry to save it from oblivion (without reciting it in public)'. But *idh* usually refers to the past; the subject of *abaw* (3rd person) cannot be the same as those to whom the imperatives are addressed; and *iḥtafāza bi-*, I think, does not necessarily imply 'keeping it to oneself', without making it public.

the transmitters of the story, who attests that he has seen the collection, which was copied anew whenever the text was about to decay.²⁴ The story may be suspect,²⁵ but it is not wholly implausible, and the existence of an early collection of poems by the Anṣār from Medina is mentioned elsewhere.²⁶

Whatever its truth, it is in any case unlikely that early collections of *hijā*²⁷ consisted exclusively of poetry. In order to function properly, a *hijā*²⁸-poem ought to be known together with the story of which it forms part. The point of the story and the poetry belonging to it is the knowledge of the vices and shortcomings of a particular group of people. Early collections of such poetry are usually not called *kitāb al-hijā*²⁹ but, for instance, *kitāb al-mathālib*.

The first person to compose a book on *mathālib* ('occasions for blame') was Ziyād Ibn Abīh. He did this when he and his ancestry were slandered,²⁸ handed it to his sons and said, 'Make use of this against the 'Arab, then they will stop'.²⁹

Ziyād (d. 53/673), the adopted son of Mu'āwiya, was a formidable statesman born with a handicap, as his patronymic ('the son of his father') implies. His motive in compiling this work was not philological; but about the same period a more disinterested and scholarly type of collector appears too. So close is the relationship between tribal politics and knowledge of tribal history and genealogies that it is difficult to speak of disinterested scholarship. 'Aqīl Ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. ca. 50/670), brother of the fourth caliph, 'Alī, had a wide knowledge of poetry, genealogy and especially of the *mathālib* of his tribe, Quraysh, which he never failed to relate. 'People fell out with him and spread it about that he was stupid'³⁰—perhaps an indication that his study of *mathālib* was not

²⁴ *Aghānī*, loc. cit.

²⁵ See Blachère, *Histoire*, p. 309.

²⁶ *GAS*, i, 367, ii, 23, 27, referring to *Aghānī*, vi, 87.

²⁷ There are at least thirteen books with this title, see *GAS*, ix, index; they deal with orthography, another meaning of the word *hijā*²⁸. The connection with the other sense is not wholly clear, but it seems probable that it is of the same nature as the link between '(magic) spell' and 'spelling' in English. On the etymology of *hijā*²⁹, see Goldziher, 'Ueber die Vorgeschichte', p. 27 and *EP* s.v. 'hidjā' (in addition to what is mentioned there, I wonder if there may also be a connection with interjections such as *hajā*, *haj haj!* used to drive dogs away (Wright, *Grammar*, i, 295)). Bräu ('Die alte Einteilung', p. 13) mistook the *kutub al-hijā*³⁰ for collections of *hijā*³¹-poetry; he happened to be right in just one case: *Kitāb al-hijā*³² by al-Mufajja' mentioned in Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, p. 83) is in fact not a book, but a chapter (*hadd*) of his thematically arranged book on poetry, *Turjumān al-shi'r*, cf. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, xvii, 194.

²⁸ Read *tu'ina* for *zufira*.

²⁹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 89, cf. Ibn Qutayba, 'Arab, p. 346, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vi, 364.

³⁰ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, ii, 324.

invariably in the interest of his group. At the same time he was one of those sought as an arbiter in cases of verbal contests (*munāfarāt*).³¹

It is not at all strange that historians and genealogists should be attracted to the study of human vices and failings rather than virtues. Dagħfal Ibn Ḥanẓala (d. 65/685), a famous genealogist, 'was most knowledgeable as regards the genealogies of the Arabs, from their fathers' and mothers' sides, and their *mathālib*; most diligently examining and studying their shortcomings and occasions for blame'.³² Rulers who had to maintain the precarious equilibrium between the rival tribal factions could benefit from such knowledge. Hishām (d. 125/743), the tenth Umayyad caliph, ordered al-Naḍr Ibn Shumayl and Khālid Ibn Salama to write a book 'on the bad points and the good points of the Arabs (*mathālib al-ʿarab wa-manāqibihā*)'.³³

These were the beginnings. They were followed by a host of monographs on *mathālib*, or on poetical contests (*munāfarāt*, *munāqadāt*, *mushāghhabāt*, *munāqalāt*, *musājalāt*, *mushāghharāt*, *mukhāyalāt*, *mufākharāt* and *tahājī* are some of the terms employed) usually combining invective with self-praise; compilations dating from the second half of the 8th century onwards.³⁴ Prominent among the compilers were Hishām Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819), al-Haytham Ibn ʿAdī (d. ca. 206/821), Abū ʿUbayda (d. 210/825) and al-Madāʾinī (d. ca. 235/850), each of whom produced several treatises of this type. Not unexpectedly, their prying into such delicate matters as genealogies and reputations was resented and they were frequently criticized. Ibn al-Kalbī was considered, by some, to be an unreliable authority;³⁵ al-Haytham Ibn ʿAdī 'is blamed for an improper curiosity'³⁶ and is often called a liar;³⁷ Abū ʿUbayda 'was most eager to know about the causes for abusing people (*mashātim al-nās*) and fond of the *mathālib al-ʿarab*'³⁸ and is generally accused of anti-Arab sympathies. 'I would rather not mention his own parentage', adds Ibn Qutayba, referring no doubt to his possible Jewish origin.

None of these old books on *mathālib* have been preserved intact; but, together with other collections of early poetry, they were used extensively by authors of anthologies, biographies and works of literary criticism. In the course of centuries a large corpus of invective poetry was built up in

³¹ Loc. cit., note, *ET* s.v. ʿAḳīl B. Abī Ṭālib.

³² Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 955.

³³ Bakrī, *Simt*, p. 808, cf. *GAS*, i, 262.

³⁴ See *GAS*, ii, 60-63.

³⁵ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, xix, 287.

³⁶ *ET* s.v. al-Haytham B. ʿAdī.

³⁷ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, xix, 304, Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, i, 56, 335, iii, 367, together with Ibn al-Kalbī.

³⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *ʿArab*, p. 346.

spite of the prejudices against the genre, and with it a quantity of criticism, overt or implied. In studying the history of this criticism one cannot confine oneself to the literary works or treatises on poetics and stylistics. Obviously of great importance is the reception, in its broadest sense, of *hijāʿ*; and that means culling one's material from works of history, biography, religion and philosophy (in particular religious or philosophical ethics), law and its application, lexicography—in short, most of 'Arabic literature', except the sciences. While it is clearly impossible to do this thoroughly, I have at least tried not to neglect important non-literary sources.

'Reception' is a convenient word standing here for every kind of reaction or opinion, whether overt or implicit, on *hijāʿ*-poetry, on individual poems as well as the genres embodying *hijāʿ*; opinions uttered or implied by those not directly involved themselves, be they secular or religious authorities or literary critics. It includes the mere quotation of poems in anthologies, or their expurgation (rejection is a form of 'bad' reception). By extension, the term stands for opinions on the concept of *hijāʿ* expressed by some literary theoreticians and others who are guided by their own aesthetic or moral ideals, while ignoring certain aspects of existing *hijāʿ*-poetry; for ignoring, too, is a reception of sorts. Evidently one should not exclude the prime recipients: the victims of *hijāʿ*, being at the receiving end. However, a thorough study of this aspect, interesting though it would be, would mean that one would get entangled in the history of the *naqāʿid* and the numerous other altercations and embroilments in the lives of the poets. The immediate effects of *hijāʿ* have been described in many studies. To repeat this is not the aim of this study, the main purpose of which is to investigate the more distant and abstracted reception described before. Yet the reactions of victims will often be taken into account, as will be the opinions of the poets themselves, who voice their ideas on *hijāʿ* frequently in and outside their *hijāʿ*.³⁹

Critical opinions and reaction on *hijāʿ* are determined to some extent by one's interpretation of the term *hijāʿ*. It is an old word which has been variously understood. A number of critics take it in its broadest sense, as the opposite of *madh*, 'praise'; thus it includes mild criticism, reproach and various other edifying modes. In this study I shall concentrate on a

³⁹ It is likely that many of the anecdotes adduced in the following are partly or wholly unauthentic: they may have been fabricated on the basis of an existing piece of poetry; and even the poetry itself might be spurious. In order not to appear too gullible I have inserted the odd 'it is reported' or such reservation. Where I have omitted this, not wanting to be tedious, it should not be concluded that I believe the reports to be incontrovertibly true.

narrower interpretation of *hijāʿ* as invective, a type whereby one intends to humiliate, ridicule and insult rather than reform. Other types will be considered whenever a theoretician or critic is discussed who adheres to the broader interpretation; whereas true invective will be considered even when it is not explicitly designated as *hijāʿ* or a related noun or verbal form.

The distinction is not as clear-cut as it seems; not only because there are borderline cases and some poems contain a mixture of both types, but especially because what is insulting is culturally determined: it may differ from society to society, from class to class, and even from person to person. It is an insult to accuse a Muslim of eating pork, but if the addressee is a Christian he may not find it insulting even if it is meant to be. Homosexuality is an extremely common topic of *hijāʿ* since Abbasid times; but in some contexts being the active partner is a reason for boastful poetry. Frequently people are hurt, or pretend to be hurt, more by edifying reproach than by scurrilous epigrams. Obscenities and insults are very often exchanged between friends by way of jesting. There are several instances of a person being delighted with being attacked by a famous poet, since it means that he is someone.

The reception of classical *hijāʿ* still goes on. Since the introduction of printing, the growth of literacy, the development of schools and universities, and the proliferation of critical studies of poetry by Arabs and arabists, classical *hijāʿ* has entered a new phase. Here I shall only incidentally refer to modern public or scholarly opinions and prejudices. Understandably, it is virtually impossible to remain wholly detached when writing on the subject of *hijāʿ*; we cannot blame those students of *hijāʿ* who dislike part of what they study. Regrettably, this often leads to the ignoring or suppression of important material. The editions published by Dār Ṣādir in Beirut, for instance, are interesting for the history of the reception of *hijāʿ*, but they cannot be used for the study of *hijāʿ* itself because of the frequent unacknowledged purgations of lines deemed unsuitable for the public: immoral, indecent, improper.

These three words are crucial, but difficult to define. 'There are gradations in conduct; there is morality,—decency,—propriety', said Samuel Johnson, speaking on the subject of how a bishop should behave.⁴⁰ One could try to distinguish their domains: in English, morality is concerned with what is good or bad, 'decency' with what is honourable or shameful, 'propriety' with what is acceptable or unacceptable in a given situation. But they overlap to such an extent as to become indistinguishable at times. 'Decent' may refer to matters of morality as well as decorum;

⁴⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Oxford, 1979, p. 1123.

ethics and etiquette merge. The problems of Arabic usage in this respect are no less intricate, especially since in a culture dominated more by 'shame' than by 'guilt' the categories tend to coincide. As for *hijā'*, attitudes of approval and disapproval are complicated by the presence of yet another criterion: the aesthetic or 'poetic' value. In principle it operates wholly irrespectively of the other criteria, as some critics take pains to state explicitly. In practice, however, pragmatics, ethics and aesthetics are inextricably linked and mutually dependent.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COMING OF ISLAM: BEFORE AND AFTER

1. *Two kinds of ethos*

Not surprisingly, *hijāʿ* is one of the main targets of what may be called 'religious prejudice' against poetry and poets, as is shown by Bonebakker in his short but fundamental study.¹ But the term 'religious prejudice' is perhaps somewhat misleading. Although in Islamic times almost any opinion, especially those touching on the subject of ethics and behaviour, could and should be supported by arguments derived from principles and traditions recognized as essential to the religion of Islam, this does not make the opinion, or prejudice, a religious one for us.

But Islam did bring something new that influenced opinions on *hijāʿ*. Islam was an attempt, not wholly successful, to replace the traditional anthropocentric ethos based on honour and shame with a new ethos that was theocentric and based on guilt, just as had happened when Christian ideals were superimposed on, for instance, the old Germanic ideals.² The terms 'shame' and 'guilt' are rather ambiguous and may be misleading. To us, shame often implies a feeling of guilt and remorse, which is lacking in a true 'shame culture';³ perhaps 'dishonour' would be a better term. 'Guilt', in the religious sense, implies remorse and self-reproach, but to new converts it could at first only mean 'liability to punishment'.⁴ The old ethos did not die; not in Christianity, where a hybrid ethos of some sort prevailed,⁵ and even less so in Arabo-Islamic culture, which is described as still basically a 'shame culture'.

Arabic poetry, being dominated by panegyric, dispraise and description rather than by storytelling, moralizing and preaching, has always been the chief instrument of distributing honour and dishonour and was

¹ 'Religious Prejudice', esp. pp. 80-82, 84-89, 93.

² See George Fenwick Jones, *Honor in German Literature*. Jones suggests (p. 2) that 'the Teutons were in many ways closer to the Kwakiutl Indians than to their own present-day descendants', referring to Ruth Benedict's well-known *Patterns of Culture* (e.g. 'The object of all Kwakiutl enterprise was to show oneself superior to one's rivals. It found expression in uncensored self-glorification and ridicule of all comers', *Patterns of Culture*, p. 175, cf. pp. 177, 198). There are many similarities between the ethos of Kwakiutl, Teutons and pre-Islamic bedouins.

³ Jones, *Honor*, p. 32.

⁴ Jones, *Honor*, pp. 38 f.

⁵ Jones, *Honor*, p. 38 and *passim*.

not essentially altered in this respect by the coming of Islam. Sin and shame might be equated at times, whether unconsciously by the pious or consciously by the dissembling, yet in Islamic times they differed considerably. 'Avenging an insult was sinful but honorable, whereas forgiving an insult was godly but shameful', as Jones said speaking of medieval Europe;⁶ although meekness was not so strongly emphasized in Islam as it was in Christianity, the same discrepancy can be found in Islam.

It is clear that a culture wholly dominated by 'guilt' does not exist: in classifying cultures there is always the risk of undue and misleading simplification. A 'guilt culture' cannot exist without 'shame', and, *vice versa*, a pure 'shame culture' is an abstraction, too. If Islam advocated a 'new' ethos this does not mean that it was completely unknown among the pre-Islamic Arabs. Whether or not under the influence of Christian ideas, concepts of guilt, sin, meekness and the virtue of forgiving can be found, be it sporadically. The motives of those who objected to *hijā'*, or regretted their own *hijā'*, or refrained from answering or punishing *hijā'* by others, are often not clear. They may have been based on feelings of 'guilt' and related affects, in which case they might be called with some justification 'religious' motives; but the same opinions could often equally well be interpreted as based on 'shame', both before and after the coming of Islam.

Among the many lost works of al-Madā'inī was a treatise entitled *On Those Who Regretted their Madīh and Those Who Regretted their Hijā'*,⁷ which surely included pre-Islamic poets. The verb in the title, *nadima*, could be translated as 'repented of', but this is perhaps too much laden with 'guilt'; it is not synonymous with, for instance, *tāba*. Interestingly, al-Marzubānī (d. 384/993) distinguished between pre-Islamic and Islamic motives in the last chapter of his *al-Mufīd* (also lost), which was devoted to 'Those who refrained from making poetry in the Jāhiliyya on grounds of pride, and in Islam on grounds of religion; who refrained from panegyric out of disdain, and from *hijā'* out of high-mindedness'.⁸ Apparently the author was of the opinion that Islam made all the difference; however, I believe that before and during Islamic times many existing prejudices against poetry, and *hijā'* in particular, derive from identical motives, most of them inspired by feeling of pride, disdain, dignity, decency—in short, the motives of a shame culture. After the coming of Islam the surviving prejudices were dubbed religious since everything fitting in with Islam was appropriated as Islamic.

⁶ Jones, *Honor*, p. 118.

⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 104.

⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 132.

In a story concerning the poet ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zibā‘rā, to whom was attributed an epigram⁹ on the leading clan of Quraysh in Mecca, not long before the coming of Islam, Ibn Sallām tells us that ‘among the things disliked by Quraysh, and punished by them, was making *hijā‘* between them’.¹⁰ One should perhaps not conclude, on the basis of this passage, that the poets of Mecca ‘did not indulge in the composition of satires against one another and poetry was not a destabilizing influence in that city’ or that ‘such a genre as *hijā‘* ... was far from popular in Mecca’.¹¹ Rather, the story shows that in leading circles *hijā‘* was condemned as endangering solidarity, just as it would be by leading groups in any society, whether sedentary or nomadic, because of its destabilizing effect. If little *hijā‘*, and, for that matter, comparatively little poetry in general was produced in Mecca and other towns such as al-Ṭā‘if, then this was because the town population was not as martial as the bedouins and less frequently involved in conflicts and fighting: for ‘poetry thrives by wars between tribes’, as Ibn Sallām explains.¹² Medina, torn between rival factions, produced more poetry than other towns.

The prescribed punishment, according to Ibn Sallām, was cutting off the tongue of the culprit (Ibn al-Zibā‘rā escaped this fate, even though his own clan did not protect him), a punishment combining institutionalized revenge with deterrence, and harsh enough to show that something other than disinterested ethical feelings was involved. In pre-Islamic times there was little opportunity to view *hijā‘* from a distance. It is not so easy to prove that non-religious ethical feelings, subsumed under the principle of *‘ird* (‘honour’, ‘reputation’), had a restraining influence on *hijā‘* in pre-Islamic times. Later Muslim critics can be expected to have interpreted such attitudes in religious terms, associating chastity and moderation in speech with religiousness. Ibn Sallām says that ‘there were some poets who were godly, in their Ignorance (*yata‘allah fi jāhiliyyatih*), who were chaste in their poetry, not ostentatious with indecencies or derision (*walā yatahakkam*) in *hijā‘*’.¹³ Of the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā it is said¹⁴ that he had made *hijā‘* on a clan after someone had complained to him about them (‘At the time the Arabs were much afraid of poets’, the transmitter adds). Afterwards, Zuhayr is reputed to have said: ‘Never did I go out on a dark night without fear-

⁹ Translated in *CHAL*, i, 75.

¹⁰ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 197.

¹¹ Irfan Shahid, ‘Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis’, pp. 7 f.

¹² Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 217; cf. the version by ‘Alī Ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī in al-Marzūqī’s commentary on the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, quoted in Kosegarten, *The Hudsailian Poems*, i, v-vi.

¹³ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 34, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 179.

¹⁴ *Aghānī*, x, 310.

ing that God would punish me for my *hijā*³ on people whom I have wronged'. It sounds suspiciously similar to the death-bed words ascribed to the Islamic poet al-Kumayt Ibn Zayd (d. 126/743 or 127/744):

My son, I wish I had not made *hijā*³ on the women of Banū Kalb... By God, never did I go out at night without being afraid that I would be hit by the stars of the sky, because of it.¹⁵

Zuhayr's poem in question¹⁶ contains the passage beginning with the oft-quoted line:

I do not know (and it seems to me that I shall know) whether the Āl Ḥiṣn are men or women.

Critics admire this passage, says Ibn Rashīq, because it is both scathing and chaste.¹⁷ Zuhayr had a reputation of being, with al-A^csha, Ṭarafa and al-Nābigha, among the most powerful poets of pre-Islamic *hijā*³,¹⁸ as well as being the poet most aloof from 'folly' (*sukhf*, often a near-synonym of *fuḥsh*, 'obscenity').¹⁹ Ibn al-Mu^ctazz mentions this opinion²⁰ and asks: what then should we say of these lines by Zuhayr (said after being robbed of some camels together with their camel-herd):

But for his *ʿasb*²¹ you would return him. The worst of borrowings is a borrowed prick.²²

When your womenfolk run over to him, it grows erect like a rope twisted tight.²³

—This is *sukhf*, says Ibn al-Mu^ctazz. Apparently, it worked; according to one version of the story, camels and camel-herd were returned after this invective poem. In another version they are returned after an earlier poem which merely threatens with *hijā*³;²⁴ such threats may be as effective as invective itself or even more so.

Another substitute for *hijā*³ is *fakhr*, tribal boast, without reviling. Rabī^ca Ibn Maqrūm said, in Lyall's translation,

¹⁵ *Aghānī*, xvii, 40.

¹⁶ Ahlwardt, *The Divans*, pp. 75-78.

¹⁷ Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 171.

¹⁸ Jāhīz, *Bayān*, iv, 83, quoting Abū ʿUbayda; the Prophet is reported to have said, upon seeing him in his old age, 'God protect me against his *shayṭān*!' (*Aghānī*, x, 291).

¹⁹ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 53, *Aghānī*, x, 315.

²⁰ Quoted in Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 59 f.

²¹ Various explained as the mating, or the semen, of a stallion; El Taiyib (*CHAL*, i, 79) translates 'phallus'.

²² *Ayr*; in other versions: *ʿasb*.

²³ The second line has been added from other sources (see Ahlwardt, *The Divans*, p. 83, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 351, *Aghānī*, x, 308, Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, v, 456-58, etc.).

²⁴ *Aghānī*, x, 307-309.

It is not to cast shame upon Tamīm that I count up
 the great deeds of my people, or to blame them at all,
 But I am calling to mind only the benefits we conferred on them,
 both those of late date and those of long ago.²⁵

In other poems, however, he boasts of his effective *hijā*.²⁶ ‘Abda Ibn al-Ṭabīb (who died a Muslim after 20/641) is said ‘to have looked down on *hijā*’, considering it unworthy, and considering abstention from it virtuous and honourable.’²⁷ But Khālīd Ibn Ṣafwān, who assures us of this (he died a century after ‘Abda), is defending the poet from the accusation that he was unable to make good *hijā*; in the ‘testament to his sons’²⁸ it appears that, like Rabī‘a Ibn Maqrūm, ‘Abda boasts of the contests of satire held with opponents, although he condemns hatred among one’s one group.²⁹

As a general rule, pre-Islamic ethics demands the tit-for-tat principle; insults must be answered with *hijā* or worse. Some do in fact prefer deeds to words:

Say to Zuhayr: even though you insult our leaders, we do not insult him
 who exposes himself to insults.
 But we reject wrongs and take up our cutting swords
 that cut with two sharp edges.
 Our hands are brutal (*tajhal*), our views gentle (or: ‘discerning’, *yahlum*);
 we insult by deeds, not by talking.³⁰

Yet some can afford to ignore insults altogether, without impairing their honour. This is part of the virtue called *hilm* (real *hilm*, not that of Ma‘bad Ibn ‘Alqama), which is reserved for prominent and generally respected leaders only. Ignoring insults can be very insulting in itself, for it implies superiority,³¹ a motif that is very common in *hijā* (the disingenuous type of ‘I will not make *hijā* on you, since you are too insignificant’).³² But true *hilm* of a magnanimous person does not exploit this motif as a form of insult. Al-Marrār Ibn Sa‘d (d. towards the end

²⁵ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 38 vss. 38-39.

²⁶ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 39 vss. 11-13; cf. no. 113 vs. 5.

²⁷ *Aghānī*, xxi, 26; cf. Yāqūt, *Muṣjam al-udabā*, xi, 27.

²⁸ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 27.

²⁹ vss. 4, 20 ff.

³⁰ By Ma‘bad Ibn ‘Alqama, see *Ḥamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 310 f., Bakrī, *Tanbīh*, p. 45, Nahshalī, *Mumtī*, p. 215 (where the name of the poet appears as Mu‘īdh Ibn ‘Alqama). The second line is attributed to Iyās Ibn Qatāda in Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn*, i, 286, ii, 178. Cf. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, i, 224.

³¹ ‘A superior can ignore the affront of an inferior, since his honour is not committed by it (...) A man is answerable in his honour only to his social equals’ (J. Pitt-Rivers, ‘Honour and Social Status’, in Peristiany (ed.), *Honour and Shame*, p. 31).

³² See also below, p. 61.

of the Omayyad period), a poet of a somewhat difficult character,³³ nevertheless said,

If you want to rule a tribe one day,
then rule with *hilm* and not with rashness and abuse.³⁴

Although its most famous representatives, al-Aḥnaf Ibn Qays and Muʿāwiya, lived in the early Islamic period, *hilm* was a pre-Islamic virtue that lived on and was incorporated in Islamic ethics. The pre-Islamic poet al-Muthaqqib said, in Lyall's translation,

Thou shalt not see me in an assembly greedily devouring the flesh of men
like a ravening beast of prey...

Many the evil speech to which my ear has been deaf; and yet there is in
me no hardness of hearing;

And I bear it patiently, for fear lest the fool should think that I am really
as he said.

And in sooth some turning away of the face and ignoring of the evilspeaker
is the safest thing, even though he be a wrong-doer.³⁵

It is confusing indeed to those who expect to find in early poetry a clear-cut and consistent body of ethics: 'How strange are these Arabs', said a tenth-century vizier, 'Now they call for *hilm*, patience and suppressing one's anger, now they exhort one another to appeal for justice and to take vengeance.'³⁶ Ṣakhr Ibn ʿAmr, al-Khansā's brother, when urged to make *hijā'* on the murderers of his brother, said,

She says, Why don't you make *hijā'* on Hāshim's horsemen?

— And why should I make *hijā'* on them, why then?

I cannot revile them now that they have struck me in what was dear to me;
because uttering foul speech (*khanā*) is not one of my characteristics.

'There is something more important between them and me than reviling (*qadha'*)', he is reported to have said (or: 'something more offensive (*aqdha'*) than *hijā'*'), adding, 'Were it not that I refrain from *hijā'* on them only in order to protect myself from foul speech, I would do it'.³⁷

Not all *hijā'* is 'foul speech'. According to Ibn Rashīq, al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī disliked the *hijā'* that his tribe had made on their opponent ʿĀmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl: 'You have made obscenities (*afḥashtum*), but this

³³ *Aghānī*, x, 318, 322.

³⁴ *Ḥamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 499, *al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, ii, 29, *Ḥamdūnī*, *Tadhkira*, ii, 121.

³⁵ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 77, vss. 6, 8-10. 'To eat the flesh of men' is a figurative expression for defaming them in their absence: as we say 'to backbite' (Lyall's note). See also no. 40 vs. 73, no. 117 vs. 2 and compare Koran, xlix, 12.

³⁶ Tawḥīdī, *Imtāʿ*, iii, 98.

³⁷ There are several versions; cf. Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, pp. 108, 744, *Aghānī*, xv, 99, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 165, Nahshalī, *Mumtāʿ*, p. 219, *Ḥamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 489 etc.

man is a nobleman to whom such things should not be said.' Then he begins his own poem:

‘Āmir has spoken rudely (*jahlan*): the riding animal of
rude ignorance is insult (or: ‘youth’).³⁸

Instead of abusing ‘Āmir, al-Nābigha admonishes him:

Be like your father, or like Abū Barā’:³⁹
true judgement and rightness may yet reach you.
May your gentle discernment (*hilm*) not be swept away by floods⁴⁰ of
haughtiness without outlet,
For you will have *hilm* or you will stop, when you are
grey-haired, or when the crow has become grey (i.e. never).⁴¹

Although this sounds like ‘*itāb*, reproach, rather than *hijā’*, its effect on ‘Āmir was all the stronger for it: ‘No one has made *hijā’* on me until al-Nābigha did! My people have made me a leader, al-Nābigha made me an ignorant stupid brute and mocked me.’⁴² No coarse *hijā’* by al-Nābigha is known; one such line, on al-Nu‘mān Ibn al-Mundhir (‘A king who plays with his mother and his servants; with weak joints; whose prick is like a mascara-stick’)⁴³ was, it seems, made in his name by one of his rivals. If al-Nābigha’s remarks are authentic, he condemned obscenity only when addressing important people. ‘Amr Ibn Kulthūm had no such scruples when he made *hijā’* on the same king and his mother,⁴⁴ but on his death-bed he is said to have told his sons:

I have never reviled anyone unless I had been reviled for a similar thing;
if justly, then justly; if falsely, then falsely. Whoever insults is insulted. So
refrain from abuse; that is safer (*aslām*) for you.⁴⁵

Consistency should not be expected from poets, who, as the Koran says of them, ‘say what they do not do’, and *vice versa*. Suwayd Ibn Abī Kāhil proudly describes how he defeated his adversary in a contest of *hijā’* (‘At

³⁸ *fa-inna maṭiyyata ‘l-jahli ‘l-sibābū*: all other sources, including the *Dīwān*, have *-shabābū*, ‘youth’, which is to be preferred. See e.g. Abū Nuwās (*Dīwān*, ed. Ghazālī, p. 42): *kāna ‘l-shabābū maṭiyyata ‘l-jahli*. For *maṭiyyata* one often finds *maẓinnata* (cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, p. 5, Ibn Qutayba, *Shi‘r*, pp. 820 f.).

³⁹ Perhaps ‘Āmir Ibn Mālik ‘‘Mulā‘ib al-asinna’’ is meant.

⁴⁰ Reading *tāmiyyāt*, as in the *Dīwān*; Ibn Rashīq has *tā‘ishāt* ‘frivolities’.

⁴¹ On this idiom, see e.g. Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, iii, 427.

⁴² Ibn Rashīq, *‘Umda*, ii, 171 f.; Ahlwardt, *The Divans*, pp. 5, 209. On the last line, see Murtaḍā, *Ghurur*, i, 55, ‘Askarī, *Šinā‘atayn*, p. 370, Ibn Abī ‘l-Iṣba‘, *Tahrīr*, p. 607, Ibn Hījja, *Khizāna*, p. 143, Mehren, *Rhetorik*, p. 128.

⁴³ *Aghānī*, xi, 13, Ibn Qutayba, *Shi‘r*, p. 165, Ahlwardt, *Divans*, p. 197. Of the several meanings of *mirwad* (including ‘bit’ held in a horse’s mouth, ‘axle’ and ‘tent-peg’) the one chosen seems to be the most likely here.

⁴⁴ *Aghānī*, xi, 58 f.

⁴⁵ *Aghānī*, xi, 59.

last he turned and fled, unable to guard his buttocks from my blows') even without having called forth his familiar spirit; 'disdaining him that pours forth shameful speech (*qadha*) in the sight of men'.⁴⁶ But 'shameful speech' by Suwayd can be found in other poems.⁴⁷ 'Abd Qays Ibn Khufāf, a pre-Islamic poet, admonishes his son:

Let alone biting speech whether to friends or to others, lest they look upon thee as one of the vile-natured, to be shunned by men;

but five lines further on in the same poem he says,

When there reach thee from the enemy biting words, give him the like in return, and say not—'I did it not!'⁴⁸

2. Mohammed and the Koran

Most of these anecdotes, if authentic, date from before the coming of Islam. They show that *hijā*² and foul speech were condemned by at least some, under certain circumstances. Many more similar opinions can be found in early Islamic times, and considering that a very large proportion of early Islamic poetry was not at all or only superficially influenced by the ethical demands of the new religion, one can be certain that in many cases *hijā*² was condemned still on the basis of the old ethics. However, among poets and those who cared about poetry those who disapproved of *hijā*² were a minority, both before and after the coming of Islam. The genres in which *hijā*² plays a part seem not to have suffered too much from religious strictures. If battles and skirmishes between tribal groups became less common, and with them the *hijā*² produced before, during and after such events, the poets found new outlets for their invective abilities.

Those poets who are said to have refrained from making *hijā*² are greatly outnumbered by those called *hajjā*² 'making much *hijā*²', *khabūth al-lisān*, 'with an ugly tongue', etc. It is only in Islamic times that we find many poets specializing in foul-mouthed *hijā*², or great poets who owe to it a substantial part of their reputation, such as Jarīr and his two great contemporaries al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal in the Omayyad period, or Bashshār and Ibn al-Rūmī in Abbasid times. This is understandable:

⁴⁶ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 40, vss. 98, 105, Lyall's translation.

⁴⁷ *Aghānī*, xiii, 105, 107.

⁴⁸ *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 116, vss. 6 and 10, as translated by Lyall. In another poem he associates *hijā*² with youthful folly ('I have become sober... No more am I ready in the strife of reviling...'), yet he boasts of his former physical and verbal prowess ('I wielded, to counter the chances of Fortune, an honour unblemished, a far-flashing sword, / And the stroke of a keen tongue as sharp as a spear-point', *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 117, vss. 1-2, 4-5, Lyall's translation).

whereas the pre-Islamic poet usually was the spokesman of his tribe who conformed to its norms and values, the Islamic community had several channels for the interpretation and expression of its ideology. Religious scholars, teachers and preachers concerned themselves with ethics and beliefs. Poetry could be useful in internal politics, it is true, but religious ideology played a part there only inasmuch as these politics were inseparable from religious aspects. Where Islam as a religion and poetry go hand in hand, no great *hijāʾ*⁴⁹ can be expected (that is why al-Aṣmaʿī said that 'poetry goes soft when it is introduced to the Good')⁴⁹, and only rarely great poetry at all, at least in early Islamic times.⁵⁰

The case of Ḥassān Ibn Thābit and those other poets who satirized Mohammad's opponents with his support, provided a strong argument against possible religious objections to *hijāʾ*. The well-known qualified condemnation of the poets in the Koran⁵¹ is connected with these events. Whatever its subsequent interpretations,⁵² the passage does not condemn poetry as such, not even *hijāʾ*, but only poets opposing Islam and the Prophet. At the occupation of Mecca in 8/630 Mohammed ordered the killing of three singing girls 'who used to sing satirical songs' about him'.⁵³ There is some confusion as to their names (Sāra, Fartanā, or Quraynā, or Arnaba, or Arnab, and Qarība, or Qurayba) and as to who was killed or pardoned; but two were indeed killed, it seems.

They were not the only ones; on other occasions Mohammed only had to say 'Who will deal with this rascal for me?', or 'Who will rid me of Marwān's daughter?', invitations that meant the end of Abū 'Afak and 'Aṣmā' Bint Marwān.⁵⁴ Similarly, Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf was killed for his *hijāʾ*.⁵⁵ When satirized by Quraysh, and unwilling or not yet powerful

⁴⁹ He was comparing the poetry of Ḥassān Ibn Thābit before and after his conversion; see Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 305, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 85, 90, Murtaḍā, *Ghurar*, i, 269; cf. Thaʿālibī, *Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ* (Cairo, 1326) p. 80, (Beirut, 1966) p. 102, on the bad effect of exchanging Ḥassān's *shayṭān* for the angel Gabriel; and see below pp. 42 f.

⁵⁰ The Khārījite poets have been mentioned as exceptions (see for instance Gabrieli, 'Religious Poetry in Early Islam' and 'La poésie religieuse de l'ancien islam'); but their poems, though inspired by politico-religious sentiments, mainly consist of traditional *fakhr* and *rithāʾ*.

⁵¹ *Sūra* xxvi, 224-27.

⁵² See Shahid, 'A Contribution', the same 'Another Contribution', Blachère, 'La poésie dans la conscience de la première génération musulmane' Gabrieli, 'La poésie religieuse de l'ancien islam', Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, pp. 33-35.

⁵³ Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, ii, 411, Guillaume's translation p. 551, Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, ii, 825, 860, Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, ii, 136, 141, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, iii 59 f. There may have been only two: Sāra and another, whose name was misspelt or misheard in various ways (could *hamza* and *qāf* be confused?).

⁵⁴ Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, ii, 635-37, Guillaume's translation pp. 675 f., Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, i, 172-75.

⁵⁵ Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, ii, 51-58, Guillaume's translation pp. 365-69, Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, i, 184-89, *Aghānī*, xxii, 132 f., Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 238, Qurashī, *Jamhara*, p. 32, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ii, 487-91.

enough to resort to such violent means, Mohammed had asked several poets to stand up for him and pay in the same coin. 'Abd Allāh Ibn Rawāḥa then attacked Quraysh for their unbelief, *kufṛ*, which did not worry them unduly.⁵⁶ Ka'b Ibn Mālik and Ḥassān, however, employed the old style of *hijā'* and were more successful. Ḥassān was even blessed by the Prophet: 'Gabriel (or, in other versions, the Holy Spirit, *Rūḥ al-quḍus*) may assist you', as if Ḥassān's familiar spirit should need support or even be replaced.⁵⁷ Mohammed advised Ḥassān to consult Abū Bakr on the weak spots of the opponents. Since they were of Mohammed's own tribe, and given the nature of *hijā'*, the Prophet was understandably apprehensive of the results; but Ḥassān reassured him, saying, 'I shall pick you up from among them as a hair is picked up from the dough'.⁵⁸ If Ḥassān could therefore not freely expatiate on the blemishes of the tribe as a whole, he made up for this by a more personal approach, in which he did not shun obscenities. His poetry may have become weak after his conversion, as al-Aṣma'ī said, but there is nothing religious or virtuous in such lines as on Banū 'l-Mughīra:

You handed her (sc. your mother) over; she spent the night, unclean,⁵⁹
with semen on her thighs like wax.⁶⁰

Or on Hind Bint 'Utba:

God curse, together with her spouse,
that Hind of Hinds, with long clitoris.⁶¹

'Tell Hawāzin, high and low of them, that I will revile them only for what in them is', thus he begins a poem, in conformity with a famous maxim ascribed to the caliph 'Umar,⁶²

Their bones decay when they are buried in the earth,
but their infamies will not perish.

⁵⁶ *Aghānī*, iv, 138, xvi, 230; cf. Ibn Sallām *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 180.

⁵⁷ For the several versions see the collections of *Ḥadīth* such as al-Bukhārī (*Kit. al-adab, bāb hijā' al-mushrikīn*, *Kit. al-salāt, bāb al-shi'r fī 'l-masjid*); *Aghānī*, iv, 137-47, xvi, 230, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 277 f., Qurashī, *Jamhara*, p. 30, Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, iii, 979, Ḥassān Ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, pp. 117 f., Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, i, 31, Muẓaffar, *Naḍra*, pp. 353-55, etc.

⁵⁸ In addition to the sources mentioned in the previous note, see Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, ii, 806. The image is vivid if not wholly appropriate, since it turns the Prophet into an impurity to be removed. For a more aptly employed instance of the same image see e.g. Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib*, p. 53: '... *yakhruj min farwatih 'āriyan min al-ḥilm wa-'l-kazm bādiya 'l-saw'a bi-'l-badhā' wa-'l-jahl kamā yakhruj al-sha'ar min al-'ajīn*'.

⁵⁹ Reading *ghayra ṭāhiratin* for *ghayra ṣāhiratin*.

⁶⁰ Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, pp. 176 f.

⁶¹ *Aghānī*, xv, 198 f. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ii, 525.

⁶² See below, p. 64.

Their teeth, because of their foul food, are like the nails
of a female circumciser whose knives are too blunt.⁶³

If the Prophet disapproved of such poetry, he must have felt it inopportune to say so, although he himself was not foul-tongued. There are several *aḥādīth* ascribed to him against abuse and slander: 'A muslim is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe';⁶⁴ 'To revile a muslim is a sin (*fusūq*)';⁶⁵

The Apostle of God said, 'Cursing one's parents is one of the gravest sins'. —'How could one curse one's parents?!'—'Someone may insult someone else's father, then the other may insult his father and his mother.'⁶⁶

Other *aḥādīth* affirm that he did not curse, swear or use obscene language.⁶⁷ Whether these reports are reliable it is impossible to determine; to represent Mohammed as indulging in abuse would not be in keeping with his dignity as a prophet and a statesman.

The Koran itself, which fulminates against the various kinds of unbelievers, contains little that resembles the usual *hijā'*. The nearest to it is *sūra* cxi, against Abū Lahab and his wife, which reads as a curse. Umm Jamīl, Abū Lahab's wife, took it to be *hijā'* and set out with a stone pestle in order to bash in Mohammed's mouth.⁶⁸ Curses and imprecations are untypical of later *hijā'*; significantly, when later authors desired to find 'censure' (*dhamm*) in the holy Book, they pointed at descriptive passages, notably a passage from *sūra* lxviii (vss. 10-13):

And obey thou not every mean swearer,
backbiter, going about with slander,
hinderer of good, guilty aggressor,
coarse-grained, moreover ignoble...⁶⁹

It is, perhaps, no coincidence that the passage is a condemnation of foul language, although the first to adduce this passage as a justification of his *hijā'*, Abū 'l-ʿAynā' (d. 282 or 283/896), excelled in invective in poetry and prose.⁷⁰

⁶³ *Dīwān*, p. 256, Khālidiyyān, *Ashbāh*, ii, 202.

⁶⁴ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'al-imān', *bāb* 4.

⁶⁵ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'al-adab', *bāb* 44.

⁶⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'al-adab', *bāb* 4.

⁶⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'al-adab', *bāb* 38, 44.

⁶⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, i, 355 f., Guillaume's translation p. 161.

⁶⁹ Arberry's translation. See Shābustī, *Diyyārāt*, pp. 88 f., 'Askarī, *Ṣinā'atayn*, p. 445, 'Askarī, *Dīwān al-ma'ānī*, i, 156, Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 322, Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib*, pp. 47 f., Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 249, Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 239, Muzaḥḥar, *Nadra*, p. 373, Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabā'*, xviii, 288, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, iv, 346, Rundī, *Wāfi*, fol. 42a.

⁷⁰ See for instance Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib*, pp. 39-42.

Few people ever applied the term *hijāʾ* to part of the Koran, like Abū Lahab's wife did. Those who did are usually described as ignorant. The words of an unnamed bedouin are said to be 'curious' when he tells that in his ritual prayer he recites 'the Mother of the Koran, the pedigree of the Lord, and the *hijāʾ* on Abū Lahab', referring, presumably, to *sūras* i, cxii and cxi;⁷¹ a story that sounds like a variant of the words of a bedouin who needed only two parts of the Koran: 'the praise of the Lord and the *hijāʾ* on Abū Lahab'.⁷² Similarly, another bedouin takes *sūra* ix vs. 97 ('The Bedouin are stronger in unbelief and in hypocrisy') to be *hijāʾ*.⁷³ Only very occasionally do serious critics speak of *hijāʾ* in the Koran, as does Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣḥāq when discussing 'decency' (*nazāha*) as a stylistic quality.⁷⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, however, a theologian who died in 751/1350, when demonstrating the stylistic superiority of the Koran, is able to find in it the equivalents of poetic modes such as love-poetry (*ghazal* and *tashbīb*) and 'itāb, 'reproach'.⁷⁵ but instead of *hijāʾ* he employs the more neutral term *dhamm*, 'censure'.⁷⁶

3. Secular and religious authorities

Mohammed's association with poets such as Ḥassān made it difficult to condemn *hijāʾ* categorically; but in the case of *hijāʾ* on believers—that is, almost all *hijāʾ*—after the consolidation of the Islamic state in a large area, statesmen and moralists had a strong point against it, for it could endanger authority, whether by undermining respect for the authorities themselves, or by stirring up rivalry and violence between tribes and factions. Apart from these political motives and moralistic objections such as existed before Islam but were reinforced by it, there may have been an additional prejudice against *hijāʾ* if it is assumed that one was aware of its associations with magic in the past. However, as Bonebakker says, it is impossible to prove this with any certainty.⁷⁷

In almost any aspect of early Islamic history the imposing figure of the caliph 'Umar looms large. His attitude towards *hijāʾ* is evident from several well-known stories, which Bonebakker considers as 'fundamentally accurate'.⁷⁸ Al-Zibriqān complained to 'Umar about a poem by al-Ḥuṭay'a in which he said,

⁷¹ Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 84, Jāhiz, *Bayān*, 248.

⁷² Qālī, *Amālī*, iii, 68.

⁷³ Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 84, Ibshihī, *Mustaṭraf*, ii, 265.

⁷⁴ *Tahrīr*, p. 585, *Badīʿ al-Qurʾān*, pp. 293 f., followed by Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 329 f., Ṭāshkubrizāda, *Miftāḥ*, ii, 349, Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, p. 1435, et al.; cf. below, p. 124.

⁷⁵ *Fawāʾid*, pp. 210, 211, 203, respectively.

⁷⁶ *Fawāʾid*, pp. 192-194.

⁷⁷ 'Religious Prejudice', pp. 82, 85-87.

⁷⁸ 'Religious Prejudice', p. 81.

Never mind noble deeds! Do not go and look for them! Stay; you are someone who (merely) eats and gets dressed.

‘Umar replied that in his opinion it was no *hijā*⁷⁹ but merely a reproach⁷⁹ or even praise:⁸⁰ ‘Don’t you like eating and getting dressed?’⁸¹ But when al-Zibriqān assured him that never had he suffered worse *hijā*⁷⁹, Ḥassān Ibn Thābit was summoned as a judge. He deemed it *hijā*⁷⁹ of the worst kind (‘He has shat on him!’) and ‘Umar had al-Ḥuṭay’a put in prison.⁸² The story is similar in some respects to that of al-Najāshī, which looks like an elaboration of it. Again, ‘Umar does not see, or pretends not to see, any offence in the lines that the Banū ‘l-‘Ajlān complain about:

“When God is hostile towards base, effete people, may he then be hostile towards Banū ‘l-‘Ajlān, Ibn Muqbil’s people.”

— But he is merely praying, said ‘Umar; if he is wronged, his prayer will be answered; if he himself has wronged, it will not be answered.

— But, they said, he also said,

“A little tribe, who never betray their covenant and never wrong other people as much as a mustard-seed.”

— I wish, ‘Umar said, the same could be said of my father’s family.

— But he also said,

“Only in the evening they arrive at the watering place, when those who have drunk turn back from every pool.”

— Then it is less crowded!⁸³

— But he also said,

“Voracious dogs loathe their flesh, while they eat that of (the tribes of) Ka‘b, ‘Awf and Nahshal.”

— Because they bury their dead and do not let the bodies perish.

— But he also said,

“‘Ajlān got his name because they used to say to him, ‘Take the bowl and milk the cow, you slave, and be quick (*wa-‘jal*)’.”

— He who serves his people is the best among them, said ‘Umar.

⁷⁹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IVa, 203, *Aghānī*, ii, 186.

⁸⁰ Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, iii, 294.

⁸¹ Ibn Qutayba, *Shi‘r*, p. 328.

⁸² The story is told in many versions; in addition to the references in the previous notes, see especially Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 97 f., Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 226 f. and 322 f., Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *‘Iqd*, iii, 19 f., v. 317 f. Shorter versions are found in numerous other works.

⁸³ Khālidīyān, *Ashbāh*, i, 36: ‘Then the water is cleaner and there is more of it’.

Again, Ḥassān is consulted, who gives the same answer as before.⁸⁴ Only then does 'Umar take measures, the sources disagreeing whether by punishing or only warning al-Najāshī. It is obvious that 'Umar wilfully misinterprets the lines. His abilities as a judge of poetry may have been exaggerated in several traditions,⁸⁵ but only some dull-witted person unacquainted with *hijā'* can have failed to see their true meaning. Al-Jāhīz explains 'Umar's conduct as an aversion to expose himself to poetical attacks, combined with a desire for apparent impartiality,⁸⁶ and many later authors have adopted this explanation, which is no doubt a valid one. One could add that 'Umar, with his seemingly naïve comments, apparently wants to trivialize the poems in question, in an attempt to keep the peace as much as possible.⁸⁷ Religion plays no part whatsoever.

The same peace-keeping attitude is shown in the sequel to the story of 'Umar and al-Ḥuṭay'a. When the latter is released, 'Umar says to him,

'Beware of making *hijā'* on people!' — 'But then my family will starve! It is my source of income and my livelihood'. — 'Then beware of vilifying speech (*al-muqḍhi' min al-qawl*)'. — 'What is vilifying?' — 'That you compare people and say: So-and-so is better than so-and-so, or: the clan of so-and-so is better than so-and-so'.⁸⁸

'Umar's explanation of *muqḍhi'* is his own: the usual meaning of the verb *aqḍha'a* or *qadhdha'a* does not necessarily imply a comparison.⁸⁹ The point is clear: if *hijā'* cannot be avoided, let the poet vent his anger on his opponent but without involving a third party and stirring up rivalry. *Hijā'* is to become a matter of the poet alone, rather than the poet together with his tribe; the poet is personally punished for it, or rewarded, as al-Ḥuṭay'a's remark shows. According to one report, hardly credible, 'Umar went as far as to 'buy the honour of all Muslims' by paying al-

⁸⁴ Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, pp. 330 f., other versions Tha'lab, *Majālis*, (ii), 431 f., Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 323 f., Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 318 f., Ḥusri, *Zahr*, pp. 54 f., Nahshalī, *Mumti'*, pp. 189 f., Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, i, 52, 76, *Ḥamāsāt Ibn al-Shajārī*, pp. 131 f., Muzaḥḥar, *Nadira*, pp. 302 f., Rundī, *Wāfi*, fol. 44a-b, Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, i, 231 f., Tanasī, *Nazm*, pp. 111 f. See also below, p. 104 note 58.

⁸⁵ Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', p. 81.

⁸⁶ Jāhīz, *Bayān*, i, 239 f.

⁸⁷ The same type of anecdote is told of the caliph Mu'āwiya, see Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 319 f. (on *hijā'*), 322 f. (on *tashbīb*, considered offensive by his son Yazīd).

⁸⁸ *Aghānī*, ii, 187, Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IVa, 203; with variations Ḥātimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 391, Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 170. 'The strongest (*ashadd*) *hijā'* is by means of preferring (someone to someone else)', said by Yūnus Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 182/798), see Ḥātimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 391, Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 170, Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, vi, 298.

⁸⁹ See e.g. *Aṣma'iyyāt*, no. 15 vs. 17, no. 22 vs. 7, Ṭarafa, *Mu'allāqa* vs. 74 (Ibn al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ*, p. 206, etc.), *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 29 vs. 2, no. 39 vs. 11, no. 40 vs. 105, etc.

Ḥuṭay'a 3000 dirham, as if he had no sterner measures at his disposal.⁹⁰ It turned out to be impossible to root out *hijā'* effectively; 'Umar's attempt to do so was thwarted by the precedent of Ḥassān.

'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb forbade people to recite any flytings (*munāqaqa*) of the Anṣār and the polytheists of Quraysh: 'In it', he said, 'is abuse of the living by means of the dead, and a renewal of grudges. But God has now destroyed the Jāhiliyya by the coming of Islam'.⁹¹

Two Meccan poets, 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zibā'rā and Ḍirār Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, arrive in Medina, seeking to arrange a slanging match with Ḥassān Ibn Thābit, so that they could recite all the poems they had made against him before their conversion to Islam, since they now have little opportunity to do so:

'...for your poetry is tolerated in Islam and ours is not. Now we should like to recite to you, and you to us.' Ḥassān replied, 'Will you two begin or shall I?' — 'We shall.' — 'Do start!' Then they recited to him until he boiled with rage like a cauldron. The two Meccans got on to their mounts in order to return to Mecca.⁹²

Ḥassān complains to 'Umar, who sends for the two poets. Ḥassān is now given the opportunity to have his turn, this time not in private but in public. The two Meccans are allowed to stay or depart, whichever they prefer, and 'Umar says to those present,

I had forbidden you to mention anything of what happened between Muslims and polytheists, in order to ward off mutual grudges and the spreading of infamy amongst you. However, since they are obstinate, write it down and preserve it.⁹³

'Umar strikes us as being rather tolerant towards *hijā'*: he may threaten with tongue-cutting or flogging,⁹⁴ but no serious punishment is actually carried out. Instead, we find a resigned acceptance of the incorrigibility of human nature in this respect. It is difficult to agree with Goldziher who speaks of official persecution of poets of *hijā'* in the time of 'Umar and his successors; and to say that this took place 'aus religiösen Gründen'⁹⁵ is to stretch the meaning of 'religion' too far. The poetry of al-Ḥuṭay'a or that of Ibn al-Zibā'rā and Ḍirār was not irreligious; nor

⁹⁰ *Aghānī*, ii, 189; compare the story told in Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 95, *Aghānī*, ii, 164, Ḥamdūnī, *Tadhkira*, ii, 361, where the people of Medina collect money to avert al-Ḥuṭay'a's *hijā'*.

⁹¹ *Aghānī*, iv, 140.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Aghānī*, iv, 141; and see above, p. 7.

⁹⁴ *Aghānī*, ii, 189, xiv, 318, Jāhīz, *Bayān*, ii, 318, Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, p. 331, etc.

⁹⁵ 'Der Dīwān des Ġarwal b. Aus Al-Ḥuṭej'a', *ZDMG*, 46 (1892) pp. 17 f. (*Gesammelte Schriften*, iii, 66f.).

was it ever coarse and obscene, as far as I know, unlike Ḥassān's verse, and this may have contributed to 'Umar's relative tolerance. Al-Ḥuṭay'a, incidentally, is sometimes painted too black in this respect. Pellat mentions his poetry as a prime example of '*hidjā*' of the most sordid sort', while a 'reputation for foulness of speech' is used for the purposes of blackmail;⁹⁶ but he cannot be called a true 'lampoonist',⁹⁷ since, as Blachère says, his satire 'n'est presque jamais grossière'.⁹⁸

'Umar's successor, 'Uthmān, was also confronted with complaints: he had to deal with Ḍābi' Ibn al-Ḥārith al-Burjumī, 'a foul-mouthed man of much wickedness'.⁹⁹ On some people to whom he had refused to return a borrowed dog, he made a poem containing the following insinuation:

Do not leave your mother alone with your dog. The unruliness
of mothers is great.
When smoke rises up at the end of the night a whine
can be heard on her bed...

When 'Uthmān hears of it he says to Ḍābi', 'I have never heard a Muslim accuse a woman of having dealings with a dog except for you. If you had lived in the time of the Apostle of God, I am sure God would have sent down a Koranic verse about you! And if anyone had ever cut off the tongue of a poet for his *hijā*', I would cut off yours.' Then he imprisoned him.¹⁰⁰

Ibn 'Abbās, whose authority in worldly and religious matters was greater after his death than before, gave his judgement on *hijā*' on at least two occasions, if the reports are reliable. As governor of Basra, he says to 'Uṭayba Ibn Mirdās, known as Ibn Faswa, 'If you make *hijā*' on anyone of the Arabs I shall cut off your tongue',¹⁰¹ but that was after the importunate behaviour of Ibn Faswa, who made money out of his reputation as a much-feared poet of *hijā*' and had tried his luck with Ibn 'Abbās. The latter's anger was clothed in religious terms: 'What is the virtue (*murū'a*) of someone who disobeys the merciful, who utters falsehood and severs what God commanded to be joined?' On another occasion, asked by an *a'rābī* (who turns out to be al-Ḥuṭay'a) whether

⁹⁶ *EP*, art. '*hidjā*'.

⁹⁷ El Tayib in *CHAL*, i, 80.

⁹⁸ Blachère, *Histoire*, p. 328.

⁹⁹ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 144 f., cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, pp. 350 f., Jāhiz, *Hayawān*, i, 369 f., Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 219, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, iv, 402, Baghdādī, *Khizāna*, ix, 324-27, 'Abbāsī, *Ma'āhid*, i, 66. Elsewhere it is told that, after an appeal made by the victims of Muzarrid's *hijā*', he let the poet go free after extracting a promise that he would give up *hijā*' for good (*Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, i, 141 f., II (Translation and notes) p. 44).

¹⁰¹ *Aghānī*, xxii, 229.

hijā' is allowed as a form of reprisal for unfulfilled promises, Ibn 'Abbās answers,

Hijā' is not proper (*lā yaṣluḥ*), for you cannot avoid making *hijā'* on other persons from his clan, so that you would wrong those who did not wrong you and abuse those who did not abuse you... You know the virtue (*faḍl*) that lies in forgiving.¹⁰²

However, personal revenge by means of abuse is allowed (*lā junāḥ 'alayh*), says Ibn 'Abbās, even though forgiving is better. Apparently, what is objectionable in *hijā'* is, above all, the danger of stirring up unnecessary strife and the severing of bonds newly joined by Islam.

Instead of official persecution by those in authority we find incidental disapproval and unsystematic punishment. Mu'āwiya tells his kinsman 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ḥakam not to make love-poetry, panegyric or *hijā'* 'by which you will excite ignoble people';¹⁰³ when 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ḥakam exchanges fierce *hijā'* with 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the son of Ḥassān, Mu'āwiya orders both to be flogged, an impartial order that is obeyed after some delay.¹⁰⁴ On another occasion he wants al-Akḥṭal arrested in order to cut off his tongue, after a complaint by al-Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr on account of al-Akḥṭal's *hijā'* on the Anṣār. The poet is saved by the intercession of Mu'āwiya's son Yazīd.¹⁰⁵

The same Yazīd tells 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Ziyād not to kill the poet Ibn Mufarrigh for his *hijā'*, but to punish him and teach him a lesson (which is done in a most humiliating manner, involving a donkey, a sow, a cat and a strong laxative).¹⁰⁶ Another story tells how 'Ubayd Allāh's brother 'Abbād collected all *hijā'* on himself made by Ibn Mufarrigh and sends it to Mu'āwiya. But even though the caliph is involved himself (since he had adopted Ziyād as his brother) he does not want the poet killed. Caught by 'Abbād, Ibn Mufarrigh has to scrape off with his nails all the epigrams that he had written on the walls of the inns where he had stayed.¹⁰⁷ When the incorrigible and often foul-mouthed poet is sought by yet more people while in prison, Mu'āwiya lets him escape and forgives him, as does, in the end, 'Ubayd Allāh.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² *Aghānī*, ii, 192.

¹⁰³ Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsīn*, p. 432, cf. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 281, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v, 336. Mu'āwiya's words resemble those ascribed to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal in a late source, when he condemns *hijā'* and love poetry 'by which the hearts of young men are excited' (Muzaffar, *Naḍra*, pp. 362 f.).

¹⁰⁴ *Aghānī*, xv, 115 f.

¹⁰⁵ *Aghānī*, xvi, 45-47.

¹⁰⁶ *Aghānī*, xviii, 263 f. Compare Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, v, 318 f., where Mu'āwiya is mentioned instead of Yazīd.

¹⁰⁷ *Aghānī*, xviii, 265-69.

¹⁰⁸ *Aghānī*, xviii, 270-72, cf. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 320 f.

Impartiality cannot always be expected from rulers. Indeed, in most cases where rulers and ruling clans take action against poets of *hijā'* it is because they are themselves involved personally. Following the example of the Prophet they too encourage poets to make *hijā'* on their opponents. Yazīd Ibn Mu'āwiya, who as we have seen did not find *hijā'* on the Anṣār a capital offence, urged Ka'b Ibn Ju'ayl to make *hijā'* on them. 'I said to him: Do you want to turn me into a polytheist?' says Ka'b, 'Would I make *hijā'* on people who helped the Apostle of God?' In his stead he recommends al-Akḥṭal for the job, a Christian, who readily complies with the request.¹⁰⁹ A generation later another caliph, Yazīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, invites poets to make *hijā'* on the defeated rebel Yazīd Ibn al-Muhallab. Al-Farazdaq declines on the grounds that he had made panegyric poems on the Banū 'l-Muhallab and does not wish to be seen contradicting himself. Kuthayyir is unwilling to expose himself to attacks by other poets in retaliation; but al-Aḥwaṣ has no such scruples.¹¹⁰

As for the great triad of Omayyad poets: al-Akḥṭal, al-Farazdaq and Jarīr, their relations with governors and caliphs are well known. Their works, especially that of Jarīr, contain a large quantity of *hijā'* of the most sordid kind, yet of undeniable poetic excellence. If the authorities had taken seriously the Koranic injunction concerning *qadhf* (false accusation of fornication, etc.), the prescribed eighty lashes would have been dealt out countless times on these three poets alone. However, as a rule poetry was simply not important enough, even though state politics are present in much of it. Slanging matches always involve an element of play; but in the Omayyad period these contests have become less serious and more entertaining than in pre-Islamic times. One gets the impression that the audience delights in those mutual vilifications recited in public, and that the poets are aware of this and do their utmost to gratify their public, not rarely by means of humour.¹¹¹ The flyting has developed into an important art form and thus loses some of its social and political importance. But poets and rulers made the most of it. Al-Akḥṭal in particular associated himself with the Omayyad cause, praising the rulers and attacking their opponents, thus securing powerful protection. Jarīr and al-Farazdaq made sure that they had their patrons too. They could insult one another and each other's clans as long as a certain decorum was observed: when Jarīr asked permission to make *hijā'* on al-Akḥṭal, the

¹⁰⁹ *Aghānī*, xv, 119, xvi, 37 f., Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, pp. 649 f., Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 321.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 542, *Aghānī*, iv, 255 f.

¹¹¹ Badawī, 'From Primary to Secondary Qaṣidas', p. 9, Jāyusi in *CHAL*, i, 409 ff.

caliph 'Abd al-Malik answered, 'In my presence that is not allowed',¹¹² suggesting that they should have a go at each other outside.¹¹³

Whether this anecdote is true or not, it is typical of the caliph's attitude. Many stories describe him as a connoisseur of poetry. In one of these he is heard to discuss 'the best line of *hijā'*'.¹¹⁴ His son Sulaymān and the pious 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz discuss the merits of Jarīr and al-Akhṭal;¹¹⁵ Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik asks others about Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal, 'those who tear to pieces each other's honour, rip apart each other's veils, and stir up evil between their clans...: which is the best poet?'¹¹⁶ The stern governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj, scolds Jarīr: 'Enemy of God, why do you abuse and wrong people?', but he accepts Jarīr's lengthy self-justification, which begins: 'By God, I do not wrong them, but they wrong me, so I revenge myself.'¹¹⁷

Only rarely are poets officially punished for *hijā'*. Jarīr and his opponent 'Umar Ibn Laja' were both flogged and exposed in public at the order of al-Walīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik 'who had a pious nature (*yata'allah fi nafsih*)' and said, 'Must you two slander (*taqdhifān*) chaste women?!'¹¹⁸ Many rulers, however, behaved as did al-Ma'mūn who said, when asked to punish Dī'bil (d. c. 246/860), 'You are right, the other is wrong. You are free to say whatever you wish; say then whatever may give him the lie. It is not my habit to have someone killed, even if his sin be grave; should I then do it in the case of a poet?'.¹¹⁹ Al-Ma'mūn himself had in fact been a victim of Dī'bil's *hijā'*,¹²⁰ so he was unusually tolerant. For, in general, it was a different matter when those in power were directly involved as victims. Personal revenge, whether taken by those highly placed or lowly, always formed a far greater hazard to the *hijā'* poets than official persecution. The poet acts at his peril, and the peril may be serious. Cases of murder, molestation, mutilation and humiliation are rife, yet are not extravagantly frequent when one sees how many poets are called *hajjā'*, *khabīth al-lisān*, *badhī'* ('foul-mouthed'), *kathīr al-sharr* ('of much wickedness'), *shirrīr* ('very vicious') by biographers, anthologists and critics.

¹¹² *Aghānī*, viii, 63.

¹¹³ Cf. a different version of the same anecdote in *Aghānī*, viii, 73.

¹¹⁴ For instance, Ḥātimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 345 f., 347, 348, 'Askarī, *Maṣūn*, p. 21.

¹¹⁵ *Aghānī*, viii, 306.

¹¹⁶ *Aghānī*, viii, 81. Opinions on these poets, by Omayyad caliphs and princes and others, have been studied by Abbott, *Studies*, iii, passim, esp. pp. 132 ff.

¹¹⁷ *Aghānī*, viii, 15-28, cf. xxiv, 210 f.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 368 f., *Aghānī*, viii, 71 f. According to another version it was not al-Walīd but 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Aghānī*, viii, 82. See also *Aghānī*, ix, 307-309: al-Walīd forbids Jarīr to make *hijā'* on 'Adī Ibn al-Riqā', the court poet.

¹¹⁹ *Aghānī*, xx, 173.

¹²⁰ *Aghānī*, xx, 131, 140 f., 180 f., Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, viii, 660.

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Jabbulī surely was wrong when he said to Fātik, the murderer of al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), 'Poets have made *hijā*² on kings in pre-Islamic times and on caliphs in Islamic times, but we do not hear of any poet having been killed because of his *hijā*'.¹²¹ But all in all, if one may generalize about the reception of classical *hijā*², one cannot but be struck by the tolerance shown by most victims and by society as a whole, accustomed as we are to legal strictures on libel and slander (in the case of false accusations and insinuations) or insulting discrimination (referring, tauntingly, to someone's being a Jew, Negro, homosexual, invalid, etc.).

This tolerance is, partly at least, due to the idea of the buffoon's impunity, which has a long history. The poet has become a 'ritual clown', as Hamori calls him;¹²² although Hamori refers to love poetry and wine poetry, it applies as much to *hijā*², which is, in a sense, a ritualized game. The rules imply that the insults are not taken to be true statements: they should not be contradicted but answered by other insults.¹²³ If an angry victim breaks the rules then his opponent has won (even though he may lose his life in the bargain). Those in a position of power can afford to be tolerant. Al-Ma'mūn, urged to punish someone who had derided his religious policy, answered: 'If he had been a theologian I would have punished him. But he is a poet, so I shall not bother him.'¹²⁴

In many societies legislation on libel and slander had a sensible effect in the curbing of the poets. Roman poets had to be careful with personal attacks, as Horace said,

... For if a party compose
foul verses to another's hurt, a hearing and a trial
ensue.¹²⁵

Scurrilous abuse, once a yearly licence of rural origins (the 'wild Fescennine verses'), was at first enjoyed, 'until the joking began / to get vicious':

¹²¹ Badī'ī, *Ṣubḥ*, p. 173.

¹²² Hamori, *On the Art*, ch. 2.

¹²³ Illuminating is William Labov, 'Rules for Ritual Insults', ch. 8 of his *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 297-353; cf. p. 332: 'Since ritual insults are not intended as factual statements, they are not to be denied'. The 'fundamental opposition between ritual insults and personal insults' (p. 335) may be clear-cut in street duels (on which see also Alan Dundes, Jerry W. Leach and Bora Özkök, 'The Strategy of Turkish Boys' Verbal Dueling Rhymes', in *Directions in Sociolinguistics: the Ethnography of Communication*, ed. by John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes, New York, etc., 1972, pp. 130-60), in a more sophisticated genre like *hijā*² the distinction is often blurred.

¹²⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, x, 279.

¹²⁵ Horace, *Satires*, II, 1, 81-83, translation by Rudd.

... At last a law was enacted
involving penalties; no one, it said, should be traduced
in scurrilous verse.¹²⁶

Islamic legislation on defamation, on the other hand, was less developed, which is perhaps to be expected in a society in which honour and shame are felt more strongly than the concepts of moral guilt and legal obligation: there is not much point in being declared in the right while losing one's honour. In the end, the reason for tolerance towards *hijā'* is the conviction that stern measures are seldom effective and often have an adverse result. Buying the poets off was more effective; numerous poets have thus enriched themselves: al-Ḥuṭay'a and Ibn Faswa have been mentioned;¹²⁷ one could add al-Ḥakam Ibn 'Abdal,¹²⁸ Abū 'l-Shamaqmaq,¹²⁹ Abū Dulāma,¹³⁰ 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd al-Ḥazīn,¹³¹ al-Farazdaq,¹³² Ibn Bassām al-'Abartā'¹³³ and no doubt many others.

Among the characteristics of invective such as practised by the great Omayyad poets¹³⁴ is a complete indifference towards truth. Whether lying in poetry is merely permitted, or even to be recommended ('the best poetry is that which lies most'), or, on the contrary, reprehensible ('poetry is like ordinary speech: what is good or bad in one is likewise good or bad in the other')¹³⁵ is a basic question that has received much attention from the critics,¹³⁶ who concentrated mainly on hyperbole in panegyrics. As for invective, some of the accusations are so grossly and grotesquely exaggerated, especially the obscenities, that nobody among the public is likely to take them seriously. One might think that this would undermine belief in any accusations that do in fact contain elements of truth; but the object of invective is to humiliate the victim and to convince the public, not of the truth of the accusations, but of the humiliating potential of the poem. Once the public is convinced of that, the victim is humiliated, at least as long as he does not retaliate (this also implies that a public is necessary: if *hijā'* is not public, it loses its force). Since everyone recognizes the grosser accusations as obviously untrue one would show one's ignorance of the rules of the game if one were to

¹²⁶ Horace, *Epistles*, II, 1, 148 f., 152-54, translation by Rudd.

¹²⁷ Above, pp. 26 f., 28.

¹²⁸ Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, ii, 74 f., Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, vi, 485, *Aghānī*, ii, 404, etc.

¹²⁹ *Aghānī*, iii, 194 f., 207, x, 79, xix, 276 f., Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, i, 57.

¹³⁰ *Aghānī*, x, 260 f.

¹³¹ *Aghānī*, xv, 323, 332.

¹³² *Aghānī*, xxi, 401 f.

¹³³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, xiv, 145.

¹³⁴ Well summarized by Jayyusi, in *CHAL*, i, 409-13.

¹³⁵ See below, p. 129.

¹³⁶ See especially Bürgel, "'Die beste Dichtung'".

accuse the poet of *qadhf*, even though, strictly speaking, it is a 'false accusation of fornication' (and this includes calling someone a bastard). 'Religion is not concerned with poetry (*al-dīn bi-maʿzil ʿan al-shiʿr*)', as ʿAlī Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001), himself a judge, said in a discussion of the heretical opinions found in al-Mutanabbī's poetry,¹³⁷ a remarkable statement about a religion that is commonly said to pervade the daily life of its adherents, extending to their every activity or opinion. Al-Jurjānī did not stand alone. Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728), 'very pious and also very eccentric' but scrupulous about anything that might be unlawful,¹³⁸ was asked, when on the point of performing the ritual prayer, whether reciting poetry would make ritual ablution necessary. He replied by quoting, not just any innocent line, but

What, al-Farazdaq's wife has become disobedient? Why, if she liked the lance of his arse she would keep quiet.

Then he began his prayer.¹³⁹ Among the many other instances of undoubtedly pious people reciting *hijāʾ* one may mention ʿAbd Allāh, the son of the caliph ʿUmar, whose 'high moral qualities' and 'nobility of soul' were generally acclaimed,¹⁴⁰ and who said, in reply to *hijāʾ* on some friends of his,

...Each of you¹⁴¹ has an ulcerating posterior: catamites!¹⁴²
Your mother bears only girls and has little milk, whereas other
mothers have plenty of milk and bear sons;
...¹⁴³ as if his prick in the palm of his hand is a scroll.¹⁴⁴

The anecdote about Ibn Sīrīn resembles those collected by al-Jāhīz and others, on prominent and respectable people saying or reciting obscenities,¹⁴⁵ adduced to show that indecent words must not be confused with indecent acts. Speech, however, is an act too; of all speech acts, *hijāʾ*

¹³⁷ See below, p. 81.

¹³⁸ *EP*² s.v. 'Ibn Sīrīn'.

¹³⁹ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 284, *Aghānī*, xxi, 305, Marzubānī, *Nūr al-Qabas*, p. 50 (where Yūnus Ibn Ḥabīb asks the question), Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, i, 318 (where it is merely stated that Ibn Sīrīn recited the line, which is attributed to Jaʿfar Ibn al-Zubayr in other sources, see *Aghānī*, xxi, 294, iii, 364, ix, 329 f., Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 282). There are different interpretations of the words *rumḥa* (or *ramḥa*) 'stihī', see *Aghānī*, iii, 364 note 3, Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 282 note 5. It may be pointed out here that *ist* does not invariably refer to the rear side of the human body; see also pp. 45, 66.

¹⁴⁰ *EP*² s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. ʿUmar.

¹⁴¹ Reading *kullukum* for *kulluhum*.

¹⁴² *mithfār*, explained in the dictionaries as *al-rajul al-maʿbūn*.

¹⁴³ The first hemistich is corrupt.

¹⁴⁴ Jāhīz, *Burṣān*, p. 93.

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. Jāhīz, *Hayawān*, iii, 40-43, Jāhīz, *Rasāʾil*, ii, 92-95, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, i, introd. pp. *lām-mim*.

comes perhaps closest to a physical act. Moral objections to making, quoting, or even studying *hijāʾ* can be heard from secular and religious authorities as well as poets and critics. The reasons for their disapproval are not always stated clearly. It may go back to prejudices against poetry in general, but in the case of the poets and the critics the objections must be more specific, either directed against obscenities in speech,¹⁴⁶ or based on moral scruples against insulting or hurting others, or on the idea that poetry ought to be 'constructive' rather than 'destructive'.

4. *Poets on hijāʾ*

Among such poets was al-ʿAjjāj (d. c. 91/710). Although he was one of the greatest poets in *rajaz*—a metre well suited for invective—he 'never cultivated the satire'.¹⁴⁷ When someone said to him that, apparently, he was not good at *hijāʾ*, he replied: 'We have *aḥlām* (pl. of *ḥilm*) that keep us from wrongdoing... Have you ever seen a builder who is not (equally) good at destroying?',¹⁴⁸ implying not only that *hijāʾ* is easier than panegyric ('Destroying goes quicker than building' said Ruʿba Ibn al-ʿAjjāj echoing his father),¹⁴⁹ but also that it is inferior and less noble, and that he is unwilling rather than unable to make it. Yet, destroying may be stronger and more effective than building: 'Al-Farazdaq builds and Jarīr destroys', said ʿAbd al-Malik's son Maslama, '*wa-laysa yaqūm maʿ al-kharāb shayʾ*'.¹⁵⁰ Nabia Abbott translates the last words as 'and nothing

¹⁴⁶ On the subject of obscenity in Arabic literature and Islamic society, see the several articles in Lutfi Al-Sayyid-Marsot (ed.), *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, especially those by Rosenthal, Bürgel and Bellamy; and see *ET*², art. 'djins', by Pellat.

¹⁴⁷ *ET*² s.v. 'al-ʿAdjdjādj' (Ch. Pellat); see also Blachère, *Histoire*, p. 525. It is reported that a poetic contest (*tanāfur*) took place between him and Abū Nukhayla (d. 147/764), who made *hijāʾ* on al-ʿAjjāj (Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 602); that the latter reciprocated the *hijāʾ* is likely but does not strictly follow from the verb *tanāfara*. But al-ʿAjjāj did make *hijāʾ* on Rabīʿa previous to his strange duel with Abu ʿl-Najm al-ʿIjlī, who easily defeated him (*Aghānī*, x, 152 f.) His *fakhr* often employs a forceful invective idiom (see e.g. Ullmann, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 31-36). His reputation as a weak *hijāʾ* poet may be due to the fact that he did not make any unmixed *hijāʾ* poems, but probably even more to the following anecdote about him. In one of his poems he says, 'I have not made the censors talk / and say they saw me uttering foul speech (*khanā*)', ʿAjjāj, *Dīwān (Sammlungen alter arabischer Dichter, II)*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, pp. 94, 591, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, ii, 185, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 112. According to a longer version in Qālī, *Amālī*, ii, 47 and Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 689, it was caliph ʿAbd al-Malik who asked the question. A different wording has Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, i, 207.

¹⁴⁹ Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, i, 207; cf. Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 310, ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 106, Ibn ʿEzra, *Muḥāḍara*, p. 106 (see below, p. 94). Like his father, Ruʿba condemns invective in a poem: 'I am a man who does not revile people, / neither near relatives nor strangers', Ruʿba, *Dīwān (Sammlungen alter arabischer Dichter, III)*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 186.

arises from ruins' and concludes that Maslama preferred al-Farazdaq.¹⁵¹ It is possible, however, that the words may be interpreted as 'and nothing can withstand destruction', amounting to an acknowledgment of the effective superiority of *hijā'* rather than of the moral superiority of panegyric.

The association of *hijā'* with destruction is obvious and was perhaps supported by true or supposed etymology: the root *HJY* or *HJW* refers to a house being destroyed, according to the lexicographers. Al-ʿAskarī fancifully concludes that therefore, originally, *hajw* came only *after* panegyric, since destruction must come after building.¹⁵²

Nuṣayb (d. c. 112/730), poet of panegyric, elegiac and love poetry, was asked by Maslama, 'Aren't you good at making *hijā'*?' He answered, 'Do you think that I cannot say "May God not protect you" instead of "May God protect you"?'¹⁵³ implying that *hijā'* is simply a negative panegyric, and equally easy for him. He was 'chaste'¹⁵⁴ and reputedly said, 'I have never said a verse that a bashful girl would be ashamed to recite in the sheltered protection of her father'.¹⁵⁵ He was not easily provoked: when taunted for his 'beast-coloured skin' (he was half-negro) he remarked that the poet had merely spoken the truth.¹⁵⁶

I refrain from making *hijā'* for two reasons: If I were to make *hijā'* on a noble-minded person, I would violate his honour, or if I were to make *hijā'* on a base person in order to obtain his favours, then I myself would be more deserving of *hijā'*, since I would be tempted to ask from such a person.¹⁵⁷

Maslama's question almost sounds like a reproach, an invitation to make *hijā'*. A poet who did not was not complete. Dhū 'l-Rumma's greatness as a poet was impaired because he was not good at panegyric or *hijā'* according to al-Aṣma'ī and others.¹⁵⁸ Poets who specialized in short epigrams were asked why they did not make longer poems: 'Aqīl Ibn 'Ullafa (d. 100/718) replied that 'a collar is long enough if it fits round the neck',¹⁵⁹ and Abū 'l-Muhawwish (a contemporary of the

¹⁵¹ Abbot, *Studies*, iii, 139.

¹⁵² ʿAskarī, *Furūq*, p. 38.

¹⁵³ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 207, different versions in Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 545, *Aghānī*, i, 355 f., Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 112.

¹⁵⁴ *Aghānī*, i, 324.

¹⁵⁵ *Aghānī*, i, 364; compare below, p. 43.

¹⁵⁶ *Aghānī*, i, 352; cf. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 299.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 545, cf. Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 323, Qālī, *Amālī*, iii, 220, *Aghānī*, i, 344, 356, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 112, Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 242.

¹⁵⁸ *Aghānī*, xviii, 31, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, pp. 94, 534, Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 467, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 270, 273 f., 279.

¹⁵⁹ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 207, Jāhiz, *Hayawān*, iii, 99, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 76, Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, ii, 184, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, ii, 269, v, 296, ʿAskarī, *Ṣināʿatayn*, p. 179, Ḥuṣṣī, *Zahr*, p. 694, Murtaḍā, *Ghurur*, i, 372, Tawḥīdī, *Imtāʿ*, iii, 59, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 187, ii, 128, Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 52, *Aghānī*, xxi, 358.

Prophet) answered that single verses were quoted more widely.¹⁶⁰ He was right; but *hijāʿ* would never have been so popular among the general public and the philologists if Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and others had not produced a large number of long invective poems. At their first performance and no doubt often afterwards, these poems were savoured whole; soon, however, outstanding lines and short passages were singled out and quoted on countless occasions. This happened not only in later times but during the life of the poets themselves; they do not seem to have minded this fragmentation of their poems. Al-Akhṭal complained that his line—the best *hijāʿ* known to him—

People who, when the approaching guests make their dogs bark,¹⁶¹ say to their mother: 'Piss on the fire!'

was transmitted only by connoisseurs of poetry, whereas the line by his rival Jarīr:

The Taghlibite, saying 'Ahem!' while expecting hospitality (or, as most people interpret it, 'when his hospitality is expected'), scratches his arse and quotes proverbs,

was recited by 'every water carrier or slave girl'.¹⁶² Both lines are often quoted by anthologists and critics, especially al-Akhṭal's line, which is praised for the ingenious way in which many scathing implications are packed tightly in one line: miserliness (they do not want to receive any visitors), no respect for their mothers, filthiness, dirty language, very small fires (since they can be extinguished by a urinating old woman), etc.¹⁶³ It is, moreover, a funny line by its almost credible exaggeration (al-Jāhiz found it necessary to remark: 'Of course this does not really happen: he makes them look contemptible and small-minded').¹⁶⁴ Yet it is possible to see why Jarīr's verse was more effective: the image it evokes is more vivid and realistic, and it is decidedly funnier. After this line, it was said, they would never dare to scratch themselves, not even if vipers were to sink their teeth in their behinds.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 207, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 76, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 187, etc. See also the lines by Muḥammad Ibn Ḥāzim al-Bāhilī, *Aghānī*, xiv, 98 f.

¹⁶¹ By barking like dogs themselves, in order to discover a camp in the neighbourhood.

¹⁶² *Aghānī*, viii, 318, cf. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 273, 301, vi, 187, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 224, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, i, 283, Ḥātimī, *Hilya*, i, 346, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 181, ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid*, i, 94, Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 322, *Naqāʿid Jarīr wa-l-Akhṭal*, p. 89, etc.

¹⁶³ Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 734, *Naqāʿid Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*, p. 1052, Ḥātimī, *Hilya*, i, 349, ʿAskarī, *Shināʿatayn*, p. 441, ʿAskarī, *Diwān al-maʿānī*, i, 175, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 175, ʿAlawī, *Ṭirāz*, ii, 226 ff., Ibn al-Athīr, *Jawhar*, p. 346, Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, iii, 276.

¹⁶⁴ Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, i, 384.

¹⁶⁵ A remark by Jarīr, according to Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 273, Ḥātimī, *Hilya*, i, 346, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 209; cf. ʿAskarī, *Diwān al-maʿānī*, i, 171; or by an anonymous Taghlibite according to Jāhiz, *Bayān*, iv, 82 f., with more examples of similar inhibiting effects of *hijāʿ*.

The role of the urban illiterate class is difficult to assess; Arabic criticism tends to ignore it. If Jarīr was successful with both extremes of the scale of literacy: philologists and water carriers, this can be explained by the fact that he alternated between two styles, especially in his *hijā*: 'He sometimes used a Jāhili order of syntax and idiom, and at other times a contemporaneous urbanized idiom',¹⁶⁶ which is not to say that the critics disliked the latter style. Short epigrams or merely a few words could break someone's reputation if they were taken up by the populace—especially young children (*ṣibyān*) that can be called 'street-arabs' with some justification. Children, no longer checked by curses that were as effective as Elisha's (see the story in I Kings 2: 23-24), were a powerful element. Al-ʿAjjāj insists on their presence during his slanging-match with Abū Nukhayla: 'Leave them; they will decide who wins and will pass it on (*yughallibūn wa-yuballighūn*).'¹⁶⁷ Abū Tammām teaches them some lines on Khālid Ibn Yazīd, who becomes mentally deranged when they keep shouting at him 'Stupid Khālid! (*yā Khālidu 'l-bārid*)'.¹⁶⁸ Bashshār Ibn Burd pays Abū 'l-Shamaqmaq to prevent him from teaching children two coarse lines.¹⁶⁹ Marwān Ibn Abī Ḥafṣa pays Abū 'l-Shamaqmaq for the same purpose;¹⁷⁰ the latter, asking money from Abū Nuwās, is served instead with an epigram taken up by children.¹⁷¹ Diʿbil pays a thousand dirham (five would have been more than sufficient, according to his friends) to silence a poet of doggerels who had made two obscene lines on him—in vain, for 'they became widely known and the rabble, the lower classes and slaves loudly declaimed them'.¹⁷² Children forced an administrator in al-Rayy to give up his post by repeating the words from an epigram on an unfortunate incident: 'the fault came from a fart (*mina 'l-ḍartī jāʿa 'l-ghalaṭ*)'.¹⁷³ A surgeon called Nuṣayr throws stones at children who quote a poem by al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk.¹⁷⁴ Abū Saʿd al-Makhzūmī complains that 'schoolboys, people in the street and the populace' have been taught an epigram on him

¹⁶⁶ Jayyusi, in *CHAL*, i, 406. In the pre-Islamic period the difference between the poetic register and everyday speech was probably less pronounced: the poetic idiom itself was 'popular'; cf. Muzarrid's claim that his slave-girls will sing his deriding verses (*Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 15 vs. 14).

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 602.

¹⁶⁸ *Aghānī*, xx, 280, Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, xiii, 279, Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, xi, 49 f.; the poem is not found in the *Dīwān*.

¹⁶⁹ Two different versions, *Aghānī*, iii, 194 and 195; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, x, 139.

¹⁷⁰ *Aghānī*, x, 79.

¹⁷¹ Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, i, 57, ʿAbbāsī, *Maʿāhid*, i, 33; but cf. Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 125 f.

¹⁷² Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 265 f., cf. Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 55.

¹⁷³ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, iii, 455, Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsīn*, p. 252.

¹⁷⁴ *Aghānī*, vii, 214.

by Di‘bil, who had bribed them with raisins and lotus-fruit. It is recited by those who know him in order to blame him, as well as by those who do not know him, since it was so ‘easy to say’, whereas no one was interested in Abū Sa‘d’s poem on Di‘bil except connoisseurs of poetry. Abū Sa‘d flees from Baghdad to al-Rayy.¹⁷⁵ According to Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, Abū Nuwās made many poems on Abān al-Lāḥiqī, none of which became well known, in spite of his fame; but the whole world knew the three lines made on him by Abān.¹⁷⁶ Said Boustany wonders, not unreasonably, whether some epigrams by Ibn al-Rūmī were not primarily intended for recital by children,¹⁷⁷ and the same remark could be applied to many other poets.

The poetic quality of all these poems may not be striking, but at least they were effective, quoted not only by the ‘street-arabs’ but by the anthologists and the critics:

I shall make *hijā*³ on you, if I live to do it, in poetry that is
not worth twopence, if they straighten it;
Saying: it is bad. It is enough for me that they say it is bad
and that it is recited.¹⁷⁸

Stories such as that of al-Makhzūmī and Di‘bil illustrate the incompatibility, in a poetic battle, of two contrasting types of *hijā*³. The poem of the former starts:

Donning the *ṭaylasān*¹⁷⁹ is not part of the dress of knights;
No, nor is the turmoil of battle like the place of honour in a salon;
Nafnaf’s striking the strings is not the striking of helmets...¹⁸⁰

The rest of the poem is predominantly *fakhr*, self-praise. Di‘bil, somewhat unfairly but effectively, uses a different register:

Abū Sa‘d, old bag,
who whores with his sister and his wife,
If you saw him, bending over,
you would think he is the arch of a bridge;
Or if you saw the prick in his arse,
you would say: a leg in the stocks.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ *Aghānī*, xx, 166 f., Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 296 f., ‘Abbāsī, *Ma‘āhid*, i, 206 f.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 241; cf. Šūlī, *Awraq (Shu‘arā)*, p. 33.

¹⁷⁷ Anonymous; Šūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, p. 28, Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 575.

¹⁷⁹ The dress of civil servants, scholars, judges, etc.

¹⁸⁰ *Aghānī*, xx, 166. Nafnaf was Di‘bil’s servant.

¹⁸¹ *Aghānī*, xx, 167, cf. xx, 169, 175; ‘Abbāsī, *Ma‘āhid*, i, 207; four more verses in Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 296 f., where Abū Sa‘d is the one who begins with an obscene epigram; and see Zolondek, *Di‘bil*, pp. 48 and 108.

It is a typical example of a poem that would, predictably, appeal to boys: an easy, short metre, colloquialisms (*-marah* for *-marʿah*; a word such as *qawṣara* 'old basket or bag') and, of course, obscenities and grotesque comparisons.

CHAPTER THREE

PHILOLOGISTS AND ANTHOLOGISTS

1. *Early scholars*

The tastes of the early philologists are more complex. The various scattered statements ascribed to Abū ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Alā’ (d. c. 154/770), Abū ‘Ubayda (d. 209/824), al-Aṣma‘ī (d. c. 216/831) and their colleagues do not always add up to a consistent body of criticism; at times their utterances seem at variance with their philological activities. Of course they may have contradicted themselves in the course of their lives. However, some contradictions are only apparent, due to imprecise, incomplete or ambiguous wording. Thus we can explain al-Aṣma‘ī’s seemingly ambiguous attitude towards *hijā’*. He ‘did not explain or recite poetry that contained *hijā’*’, according to al-Mubarrad,¹ who bases himself on al-Aṣma‘ī’s pupils; a strange remark considering that al-Aṣma‘ī compiled the anthology called after him the *Aṣma‘iyyāt*, a collection that includes both tribal and personal *hijā’* (no. 90 is an example of the latter type); that he transmitted *dīwāns* containing *hijā’* (e.g. the ‘Six *Dīwāns*’); and that he, moreover, edited the *Naqā’id* of Jarīr and ‘Umar Ibn Laja’ and those of Jarīr and al-Akḥṭal. Thus at least part of al-Mubarrad’s statement is untrue, added probably in order to complete the image of al-Aṣma‘ī as a critic dominated by religious scruples, who refuses to explain a term related to the *anwā’*, the astronomical dating system damned by the Prophet,² and who would not explain poetry if the explanation interfered with Koranic expressions. This attitude has been convincingly elucidated³ as a desire to keep philological and religious studies strictly apart; but in that case there would be no reason to abstain from studying *hijā’*. Although he certainly transmitted *hijā’*, his reluctance to explain it is confirmed by al-Jāḥiẓ, who says,

I heard al-Aṣma‘ī say to a man who asked him about some dishonourable tribal characteristics (*mathālib*): ‘By God, I will not say that I do not know them well, but I ignore them out of scrupulousness (*ada‘uhā taḥarrujan*). But, truly, God has never instructed me in them!’⁴

¹ Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 449, repeated in Suyūṭī, *Muzhir*, ii, 328, 404 and cf. Abū ‘l-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī, *Marātib*, p. 48, Abbott, *Studies*, iii, 154 note 8.

² See *EP* s.v. ‘anwā’.

³ Kopf, ‘Religious Influences’, p. 36, Bonebakker, ‘Religious Prejudice’, pp. 93 f.

⁴ Jāḥiẓ, *Burṣān*, p. 69, reading in *‘allamaniḥā*.

Thus it appears that al-Aṣmaʿī himself made a connection between religion and an aversion to tribal *hijāʿ*.⁵ It strikes us as rather hypocritical or at least inconsistent that he should transmit and edit poetry that ought not to be explained; after all, editing is merely the first form of interpretation and explanation. That he himself did not shrink from uttering coarse language is evident from the same passage in al-Mubarrad's *Kāmil*, where, when asked to explain a word, he refuses, saying, '*bi-istih wa-ist ʿirsih*, Up his (viz. the poet's) and his wife's!'

For a poet, mastery of *hijāʿ* is essential, according to al-Aṣmaʿī: as we have seen, the status of Dhū 'l-Rumma was lowered in his view because he fell short in *madīh* and *hijāʿ*.⁵ A 'stallion-poet' (*fahl*) must excel in virile aggressive genres; Islamic religious ideals have no place in them. As al-Aṣmaʿī said of Ḥassān Ibn Thābit,

Poetry goes soft if it is introduced into the Good. Take Ḥassān Ibn Thābit: he excelled before and after the coming of Islam. But when his poetry dealt with the Good, as in elegies on the Prophet, on Ḥamza, Jaʿfar and others, it went soft. (True) poetry is that in the manner of the 'stallion-poets' such as Imraʾ al-Qays, Zuhayr and al-Nābigha, with descriptions of dwelling-places and breaking up camp, with *hijāʿ*, panegyric, love poetry on women, the description of onagers, horses, fighting, and self-praise. But if you introduce it into the Good, it goes soft.⁶

Here al-Aṣmaʿī does not simply keep the domains of poetry and religion apart but even suggests a direct conflict; a view that, taken literally, would damn all poetry as un-Islamic and sinful. It might be argued that the opposite of the Good in this passage is the Indifferent rather than the Bad—for what evil is there in description and praise? But polarities are mutually attractive. Ibn Qutayba offers a version of al-Aṣmaʿī's words that suggests that a black-and-white interpretation was in fact preferred, if not by al-Aṣmaʿī himself, then in the course of transmission:

Poetry brings trouble (? *nakid*), its domain is Evil. When it enters the Good it becomes weak. There you have Ḥassān Ibn Thābit: one of the 'stallion-poets' of pre-Islamic times. When Islam came, his poetry went down in quality.⁷

It is remarkable that both versions of al-Aṣmaʿī's words are quoted without comment: no explanation is given, no softening of their impact is suggested, nor are they refuted. They are given merely as a striking, provocative statement which gives food for thought but should, it appears, not be taken to be literally and generally true; and this is no doubt a sen-

⁵ Above, p. 36.

⁶ Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 85 and 90; shortened in Murtaḍā, *Ghurur*, i, 269.

⁷ Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 305.

sible attitude, for although al-Aṣmaʿī seems to be uttering a general truth about poetry, illustrating it with the case of Ḥassān, it is likely that he said it merely as an afterthought in a discussion of the merits of al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdī, who, after a traditional introduction, continues a poem with a pious wish: 'May God lead you into the coolness of the Gardens, cheerfully, through a pleasing entrance!'—Here his verse goes soft, according to al-Aṣmaʿī, to whom a sound critical judgment cannot be denied.⁸

It should not be concluded that the worse the ethics, the better the verse according to al-Aṣmaʿī. He condemns an excess of 'evil'; Ḥammād (Ibn Ishāq al-Mawṣilī) said: My father said: Al-Aṣmaʿī said to me, having recited some poetry of al-Ḥuṭayʿa: He spoiled good poetry such as this by his *hijāʿ* on people and his exorbitant greed'.⁹ But *hijāʿ* is not condemned as such: the superlative (*ahjā bayt*) he uses in a positive sense when he pronounces al-Aʿshā's line:

You spend the night, in your winter-quarters, with full bellies, but your female neighbours (under your protection, *jārātukum*) are starving and spend the night with empty stomachs,

to be 'the best line of *hijāʿ*' said by the 'Arab'.¹⁰ Although the poet exposes his opponents for a 'cardinal' bedouin sin, his verse is apparently not 'soft': the 'Good' does not refer to ethics in general, to 'good or gentle themes',¹¹ but to specifically religious themes. There is a difference between lofty morals and religious ideals, although, understandably, pious people tend to confuse them, tacitly implying that the former are always derived from the latter.

Among the very pious was al-Aṣmaʿī's teacher, Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlāʿ. Being one of the 'readers' of the Koran did not prevent him from being an eager and extremely learned collector of early poetry (in a passing mood of excessive piety he is said to have burned a roomful of books with his notes on poetry). In connection with *hijāʿ* he is often quoted for his saying (resembling the words ascribed to Nuṣayb) that 'the best *hijāʿ* is what a virgin may recite in her private room without impertinence'.¹²

⁸ Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 89 f., Murtaḍā, *Ghurar*, i, 269.

⁹ *Aghānī*, ii, 170; similarly, he says that Muzarrid 'spoiled his verse by his *hijāʿ* on people' (Aṣmaʿī, *Fuḥūla*, p. 495). These two reports sound as if there may have been only one originally.

¹⁰ Ḥatimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 345, cf. Qālī, *Amālī*, ii, 158, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, iii, 374, Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 147, *Aghānī*, ix, 121, ʿAskarī, *Maṣūn*, p. 19, ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 171, 173 f., Nahshalī, *Mumtīʿ*, p. 173, etc.

¹¹ Thus Abbott, *Studies*, iii, 143, note 215.

¹² Ḥatimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 365; cf. Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, p. 304, ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 176, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 170, Zanjānī, *Miʿyār*, fol. 81a, Ibn Abī ʿl-Iṣbaʿ, *Tahrīr*, p. 584, Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Badʿiyya*, p. 13, Ibn Ḥijja, *Khizāna*, p. 95, Ibn al-Athīr, *Jawhar*,

Abū 'Amr was perhaps the first critic to compare, with some exaggeration, the role of the *jāhilī* poet favourably with the urban, money-conscious, readily vilifying poet of his days; as a result, he says, the orator-preacher (*khaṭīb*) has a higher status than the poet.¹³

These and other reports show that to Abū 'Amr, al-Aṣma'ī and their colleagues ethical and religious standards are not wholly irrelevant to poetic criticism. Aesthetic and ethical considerations alternately eclipse each other, the former usually having the upper hand. But it was thought bad form to let overtly religious ideas and poetry intrude on each other's territory: it was not so much a matter of morals but of decorum and aesthetics. No doubt partly because the Prophet had so vehemently denied being a poet, poetry, and with it poetic criticism, were relatively free from domination by Islamic ideals.¹⁴

2. *al-Jāhiz*

Religion, ethics and criticism of poetry are among the main concerns of al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868-9). When he writes on ethical subjects he condemns backbiting and calumny and describes their evil effects, such as in his treatise *The Art of Keeping Secrets and Holding One's Tongue*: fault-finding leads to fault-inventing and enlarging;¹⁵ many famous wars and feuds were the results of ill-spoken words and countless people were killed by their own tongue.¹⁶ In this treatise al-Jāhiz refers to 'speech' and 'conversation', never to poetry or *hiġā'* in particular.

His poetic criticism, however, is only rarely affected by religious or ethical considerations. His oeuvre as a whole is a treasure-trove for the study of *hiġā'*; but whereas many examples of *hiġā'* and its effects and many early opinions are quoted, his own views on *hiġā'* are not often

p. 311, etc.; and see above, p. 36. In Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 255 Abū 'Amr says: 'The best vilification (*shatm*) is that which virtuous people (*dhawū 'l-murū'āt*) may mention to each other and what religious people do not shrink from transmitting.' The same saying is attributed also to al-Akḥṭal (*Aghānī*, viii, 300) — surprisingly, since some of his *naqā'id* are far from decent, even though he has been favourably compared to his rivals on account of his efficient yet chaste *hiġā'* in many of his poem (*Aghānī*, viii, 291, 300). Similar ideas can be found in the present century: 'We shall not quote what a virgin or an educated person would be ashamed to mention or to read' (Dahhān, *Hiġā'*, p. 6).

¹³ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 241, cf. iv, 83.

¹⁴ Compare 'Abd al-Malik's comment on al-Rā'ī's lines: 'Vicar of the Merciful! We are pious people, prostrating ourselves in the morning and evening; / Arabs who believe that God has a right, sent down by Revelation, to alms tax on our property': This is no poetry but a catechism of Islam, the recitation of a Koranic verse!' (Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 249).

¹⁵ Jāhiz, *Rasā'il*, i, 160, translated by Vial (Al-Ġāhiz, *Quatre essais*, i, 87).

¹⁶ Jāhiz, *Rasā'il*, i, 170, translated by Vial, op. cit., i, 96.

stated explicitly. He does, however, at some length discuss the subject of obscenity in prose and poetry,¹⁷ making it clear that in his view obscenity lies in the things and acts described, not in the description or quotation. This attitude enables him to quote *hijā*³ of all kinds without scruple, including, for instance, irreverent quotation of the Koran:

“The earth would bring forth its burdens”,
and Di‘bil would be put back into his mother’s *ist*.¹⁸

Al-Jāhiz is fascinated by anything out of the ordinary and delighted with the odd sexual or scatological anecdote or poem. Fond of digressions, he never quotes *hijā*³ without a reason. In *al-Bayān wa-’l-tabyīn* the effects of *hijā*³ are described;¹⁹ *al-Ḥayawān* and *al-Bighāl* contain much *hijā*³ involving animals as well as people; invective and satire abound in his numerous other works, dealing with classes or types of people such as misers, civil servants, people with bodily defects, doorkeepers, lovers of boys vs. lovers of girls. Even when writing about animals he finds many pretexts for writing about people. As he says, ‘the object of much *hijā*³ on dogs is in fact *hijā*³ on a man, the dog being brought in as a means to achieve the intended result’;²⁰ the same goes for most other animals (who make it clear to us, in a tenth-century work, how much they resent this).²¹

It is, of course, not true that only things and acts, not words, are obscene. The very term *fuḥsh* is more often applied to words than to acts; al-Jāhiz himself does so too. But when he speaks of obscenity he does not strongly condemn it but describes and explains it. Thus, of a notorious line by Jarīr on the mother of al-Farazdaq:

You can see leprosy on the lower parts of her labia, like the tuft of hair
beneath al-Farazdaq’s lower lip when he is grey-haired,²²

al-Jāhiz warns us that we should not believe it:

This is merely obscenity (*safah wa-tafahḥush*) by means of which one seeks to anger the reviled person. Angry and foolish people, when they are annoyed, often say similar things. He who says ‘You son of such-and-such a woman!’ does not think that people will consider his words as a true testimony; he merely vents his anger.²³

¹⁷ Jāhiz, *Rasā’il*, ii, 91 ff., *Ḥayawān*, iii, 40 ff.

¹⁸ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, iii, 250, from an epigram by Abū Sa‘d al-Makhzūmī; cf. *Koran*, xcix, 2.

¹⁹ See especially i, 156 ff., iv, 34 ff.; cf. *Ḥayawān*, i, 352-66.

²⁰ *Ḥayawān*, i, 383.

²¹ *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*², ii, 217.

²² *Naqā’id Jarīr wa-’l-Farazdaq*, p. 440, *Aghānī*, viii, 35, xxiv, 211, Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *‘Iqd*, v, 300, ‘Askarī, *Dīwān al-ma‘ānī*, i, 77, etc.; a different version in Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, p. 455.

²³ *Burṣān*, pp. 104 f.

But foul language cannot but come from a foulness in the mind: this is at least the implication of a story related by al-Jāḥiẓ about Jesus, who, vilified by the people, replied with kind words; 'Everyone gives from what he has (to offer)', he explains to his disciples.²⁴ When the latter, seeing a dead dog, say 'How it stinks', Jesus says, 'How white are its teeth!'²⁵ What is inside must come out: three times al-Jāḥiẓ relates the answer of 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Utba Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 97/716) when asked why he, a pious scholar, made poetry: 'He who has a disease of the chest must expectorate'.²⁶

When al-Jāḥiẓ defends the mentioning of obscenities he is not defending or encouraging the poets who employ them. It is clear that he distinguishes implicitly between composing obscene invective poetry and quoting it: the latter is thought to be harmless when the aim is no longer the defamation of a person but the illustration of a motif or a poetic technique. In this distinction al-Jāḥiẓ was followed by numerous authors and anthologists. Although he is aware of the damning effect of *hijā'* on the reputation of its victims and describes it at some length, at the same time, as if to justify his attitude, he takes pains to point out that much *hijā'* is not based on facts (as the line by Jarīr quoted above) or, even if true, may give a distorted impression. For a prominent tribe or clan with many virtues and some faults is often attacked in fierce *hijā'* which may become popular, whereas an insignificant tribe without merits or bad faults is ignored and survives scot-free.²⁷ Some two centuries later, the cynical Abū 'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, or rather his *persona* the Mule, asserts that, since poets are lying in *hijā'* as well as panegyric, 'censure by some poet proves the merit of the censured'.²⁸

That *hijā'* may be subjective al-Jāḥiẓ illustrates by saying that 'an Arab may loathe something and revile someone for it, but if he himself is afflicted with it he boasts of it'.²⁹ But, he adds, in each case different aspects are considered; and it is erroneous to blame the Arabs, as some

²⁴ Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, ii, 177, cf. iii, 140, Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, ii, 370, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, ii, 276, Ḥamdūnī, *Tadhkira*, ii, 119.

²⁵ *Ḥayawān*, ii, 163. These utterances of Jesus are not found in the New Testament; they are apparently based on passages such as Luke 6: 27 or 6: 45.

²⁶ *Bayān*, i, 357, 11, 97, iv, 46, the last time in connection with *hijā'*. See also Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 284, *Aghānī*, ix, 146, Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p.212, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, iii, 116, Murtaḍā, *Ghurar*, i, 399, etc.

²⁷ *Bayān*, iv, 36-39, *Ḥayawān*, i, 357-61. 'The most ignoble (*al'am*) of people are those nameless persons that are neither satirized nor praised' (ascribed to Abū 'Ubayda, Ḥamdūnī, *Tadhkira*, ii, 240).

²⁸ Ma'arrī, *Šāhil*, p. 175. He goes on to deny that the reputation of a number of victims of notorious *hijā'* suffered at all.

²⁹ *Ḥayawān*, v, 174; many examples given in his *Burṣān*, pp. 10 ff.

people do, because they praise and blame the same thing.³⁰ As Jarīr is reported to have said: 'Something may be (a reason for) praise but poetry may turn it into blame; it may be (a reason for) blame but poetry may turn it into praise'.³¹

It follows from this that *hijā'* is not simply the negative equivalent of *madīḥ*; that it is not its destructive and therefore easier counterpart. Al-Jāḥiẓ does not agree with those who had maintained this:³²

These arguments, mentioned as coming from Nuṣayb, al-Kumayt,³³ al-ʿAjjāj and Ruʿba, are adduced to vindicate them; which is ignorant, if these words are authentic. For someone may have a talent for arithmetic but no talent for speaking, or for commerce but not for agriculture, or for camel-driving songs but not for the gay chanting of poems...³⁴

The implication is that *hijā'* is an art in its own right which requires a special gift. That al-Jāḥiẓ admired this art in all its expressions is evident from the large quantity of *hijā'* that he quotes with obvious pleasure in all his major works.

3. Early anthologists

In the time of al-Jāḥiẓ the first biographical and thematic anthologies of poetry are compiled. Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī's *Ṭabaqāt* is the first substantial representative of the former kind that has been preserved. In an introductory part Ibn Sallām (d. c. 230/845) is concerned, among other things, with the moral qualities of poetry. He speaks about 'godly' and chaste poets in pre-Islamic times and of those 'debauched' ones who do not mince words.³⁵ From the examples it appears that he is primarily thinking of erotic poetry;³⁶ but he is clearly aware of the fact that some erotic poetry served as a form of *hijā'*, by involving the female relations of the opponents. Jarīr, says Ibn Sallām, 'in spite of his excessive *hijā'*, abstained (*yaʿiff*) from mentioning women, and never made love poetry on women other than his own'.³⁷ Of course Jarīr's alleged 'chastity' applies to his love poetry only: his 'excessive *hijā'*' is the opposite of chaste. In fact, Ibn Sallām nowhere condemns *hijā'* that is not chaste and

³⁰ On this point see Khafājī, *Sirr*, pp. 228 f., Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 249, Qarṭājannī, *Minḥāj*, pp. 74, 138, Sharīshī, *Sharḥ*, i, 75.

³¹ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 328; cf. below, pp. 100 f., 115.

³² See above, pp. 35 f.

³³ Al-Kumayt had claimed that he would be able to make short poems because he could make long ones.

³⁴ *Bayān*, i, 207 f.

³⁵ *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 34 f.; cf. above p. 15.

³⁶ *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 35-39.

³⁷ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 39.

he freely quotes the vilest kinds. Indeed, *hijāʾ muqdhīʿ* is mentioned as a possible reason for the positive evaluation of poetry:

Much of the poetry that may be heard is forged, fabricated, worthless: it has no value as evidence as (pure) Arabic,³⁸ no moral content (*adab*) that may be derived from it, no motif (or thought, *maʿnā*) that may be extracted from it, no proverb that may be quoted, no impressive panegyric, no *hijāʾ muqdhīʿ*, no proud boastfulness, no choice love-poetry.³⁹

The last-mentioned four categories are the four major modes of Arabic poetry, *madīh*, *hijāʾ*, *fakhr* and *nasīb*; a list that is a good deal older than some modern studies would suggest.⁴⁰ Ibn Sallām himself follows a certain al-Uṣaydī who said, 'The "houses" of poetry are four...'⁴¹

A fair quantity of *hijāʾ muqdhīʿ* is offered in the lengthy sections on the Omayyad poets, Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, al-Akhṭal and their contemporaries. Especially memorable lines, called *muqalladāt*, by each of the three poets mentioned are listed. The word *muqallad*, 'made into a necklace (to adorn or to disgrace)',⁴² is defined by Ibn Sallām as 'a self-contained line that is well known and used as a proverb';⁴³ 'self-contained' means needing no other lines or a background story (fragments of two lines are in fact included). A large portion of these verses is formed by lines of *hijāʾ*, though not of the obscene variety (al-Akhṭal's line ending in *būlī ʿalā ʾl-nārī*⁴⁴ comes closest). Ibn Sallām quotes some coarse fragments by Jarīr, such as lines on al-Baʿīth, 'the son of the red-arsed woman';⁴⁵ but he gives none of the passage of Jīʿthin, al-Farazdaq's sister, surely the most extreme part of Jarīr's sexual invective.⁴⁶

The *Ṭabaqāt* contains one longer poem of sustained pornographic invective; however, here the victim is no chaste and pious woman as Jīʿthin was,⁴⁷ but the 'false prophetess' Sajāḥ and her male colleague, Musaylima. Al-Aghlab al-ʿIjlī (d. 21/641), an important *rajaz*-poet, described their alleged sexual encounter 'in ebenso geschmackloser wie plat-

³⁸ i.e. it cannot serve as linguistic evidence for 'correct' usage.

³⁹ *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 5 f.

⁴⁰ Trabulsi, *Critique*, p. 215, Schoeler, 'Einleitung', p. 10: both begin with Thaʿlab.

⁴¹ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 319. In the different version of *Aghānī*, viii, 6 al-Uṣaydī is not mentioned; that of Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, p. 27 attributes the list (called the four 'pillars', *arkān*) to Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlā; cf. also Mubarrad, *Fāḍil*, p. 109, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 120.

⁴² Compare ʿAqīl Ibn ʿUllafa's words quoted above, p. 36 and see Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 185 f., where another etymology, ascribed to Ibn Sallām, is suggested.

⁴³ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 305, *Aghānī*, xxi, 305.

⁴⁴ Above, p. 37.

⁴⁵ *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 326 ff.

⁴⁶ Jīʿthin is mentioned only once, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 340, in a comparatively harmless line.

⁴⁷ *Naqāʾid Jarīr wa-ʾl-Farazdaq*, pp. 222, 682, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 472.

ter Weise', as Ullmann says.⁴⁸ Tasteless and vulgar though it may be, it is a vivid piece of invective that succeeds in its aim; to show the repulsiveness of the two protagonists of the poem. Ibn Sallām offers no comment, apart from mentioning the unlikely suggestion of someone who ascribed the poem to Jusham Ibn al-Khazraj, long before the time of Sajāh.⁴⁹

Rajaz, by dint of its lower status, could not compete, as a rule, with *qarīd* or *qaṣīd*, 'normal' poetry. Ibn Sallām relates that Jarīr said to Hishām al-Maraʿī, a rather obscure *rajaz*-poet,

That knave (meaning Dhū 'l-Rumma) has got the better of you (*ghalabak*)!
— But what can I do? I am a *rajaz*-poet and he is a maker of *qaṣīdas*; and
rajaz is no match for *qaṣīd* in *hijā'*.⁵⁰

Jarīr helped Hishām by making some lines for him; and although Dhū 'l-Rumma saw through the deceit, Hishām was judged to have defeated (*ghulliba* 'alā) Dhū 'l-Rumma.⁵¹ The agonistic aspect of *hijā'* seems to have interested Ibn Sallām. He does not mention the more or less formal *munāfarāt* of pre-Islamic and Islamic times, but he uses the concept 'to be victorious, to defeat' (*GHLB*) a number of times,⁵² and explains the confusing idiom: according to the Arabs, the passive participle *mughallab* means '(having been) vanquished', like *maghlūb*, whereas the corresponding finite form *ghulliba* means that the subject is the victor, *ghālīb*.⁵³ Thus, al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdī is said to have been defeated by Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, 'Iqāl Ibn Khālīd, Aws Ibn Maghrā' and Kaʿb Ibn Juʿayl;⁵⁴ al-Rāʿī by Jarīr;⁵⁵ Dhū 'l-Rumma by Hishām al-Maraʿī and others;⁵⁶ Tamīm Ibn Muqbil by al-Najāshī, who was silenced in turn by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ḥassān.⁵⁷ Al-Farazdaq claims to have defeated Jarīr with 'The Eye-

⁴⁸ Ullmann, *Untersuchungen*, p. 26; p. 22. Ibn Sallām quotes thirty *rajaz* lines (*Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 573-75); *Aghānī*, xxi, 31 f. has twenty-six lines, one of which is lacking in Ibn Sallām's version. The story of Musaylima and Sajāh is often accompanied by an obscene epigram put in the mouth of Musaylima, see e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ii, 273, *Aghānī*, xxi, 34, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, iii, 45, Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, ii, 248, Sharīshī, *Sharḥ*, iv, 35, Zamakhsharī, *Mustaqṣā*, i, 149. See also Nafzāwī's 'sex manual' (*The Perfumed Garden*, pp. 79-85, *The Glory of the Perfumed Garden*, pp. 266-69).

⁴⁹ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 576.

⁵⁰ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 473.

⁵¹ *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 474 f. The story is quoted in *Aghānī*, viii 56 f., xviii, 18 f., Ḥātimī, *Hilya*, ii 50 f. On the practice of helping fellow-poets (*murāḥfada*) or asking others (*istirfād*) see Ḥātimī, *Hilya*, ii, 49-51, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 286 f.

⁵² *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 105, 125, 329, 435, 467.

⁵³ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 105; cf. Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 91, Jāhīz, *Bayān*, ii, 312, iii, 11, iv, 84, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 106.

⁵⁴ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 105, *Aghānī*, v, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 435.

⁵⁶ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 467.

⁵⁷ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 125.

gouger', 'The Harassed', 'The House of Him Who Sits Crouched' and 'The Fluttering Banners', referring to various lines (or rather the poems in which these words occur)—although neither vanquished the other in the course of some forty years, according to Ibn Sallām.⁵⁸

One should not be led to believe that in all these cases there were formal contests: the verdict was apparently pronounced by common opinion, or the consensus of later critics, rather than a judge or arbiter. Nor was it a universal rule that *qaṣīd*-poetry could be matched only with *qaṣīd*, for in some cases a remark in ordinary prose was sufficient to silence a poet.⁵⁹

The *Ṭabaqāt* is not concerned with the Abbasid period; nothing in the book indicates the existence, in Ibn Sallām's time, of new types of poetry. The *Book of Poets* by his contemporary Diʿbil forms a contrast. Diʿbil, who died c. 246/860 at an advanced age, was a poet, famous particularly for his *hijāʾ*. His book is not preserved, but from numerous quotations⁶⁰ it appears that it included many Abbasid poets. At the beginning of his book, it is said, 'he warned against interfering with poets, even though it be with the lowest-ranking in poetry'.⁶¹ Diʿbil himself did not shrink from *hijāʾ* on kings and caliphs, but he exposed himself to the wrath of poets only when he could not avoid it.⁶²

One of the differences between Abbasid and earlier poetry is the far greater amount, in Abbasid times, of light-hearted *hijāʾ*, humorous epigrams, coarse jokes instead of angry invective. Although many of Diʿbil's own poems seem to belong to the former category, according to him *hijāʾ* is engendered by hatred or detestation: *man arāda 'l-hijāʾ fa-bi-'l-baghḍāʾ*.⁶³ Similarly, anger (*ghaḍab*) had been connected with *hijāʾ* by others: implicitly by Arṭāh Ibn Suhayya (c. c. 86/705),⁶⁴ explicitly by an unknown critic: '*hijāʾ*, threats and hurtful rebuke come with anger'.⁶⁵ That venting one's anger is, next to humiliating one's opponent, an important function of *hijāʾ* is not always sufficiently stressed by critics and theoreticians.⁶⁶ Diʿbil's inclination towards *hijāʾ* was certainly inspired

⁵⁸ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 329; for more instances of *ghalab* and its derivatives, see e.g. *Aghānī*, xiii, 38, 41, 193, 329, xvi, 208, xviii, 18, and cf. Ibn Rashīq, '*Umda*, i, 106-8.

⁵⁹ See *Aghānī*, xiii, 38, to be compared with xiii, 41 where the answer is in verse, with the same result.

⁶⁰ Collected by Zolondek, *Diʿbil*, pp. 133-80 and Muʿayyid, *Nuṣṣ*.

⁶¹ *Āmidī*, *Muwāzana*, i, 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Ibn Rashīq, '*Umda*, i, 122.

⁶⁴ Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, pp. 80, 522, *Aghānī*, xiii, 31, Ibn Rashīq, '*Umda*, i, 120, Baghdādī, *Qānūn*, p. 467.

⁶⁵ Ibn Rashīq, '*Umda*, i, 120; on this type of generic classification, see Heinrichs, 'Literary Theory', pp. 37 f.

⁶⁶ But see above, p. 45 and below, p. 79.

by an angry outlook on mankind in general. Asked why he endangered his life by his invective on caliphs, viziers, generals and everyone else, he replied,

I have found that benefit will be derived from people only when they are frightened. They do not take any notice of a poet, no matter how good he is, if they do not fear his wickedness... The bad qualities of people outnumber their good qualities. Not everyone whom you honour is honourable; not everyone whom you describe as generous, glorious and brave (which he is not) will be beneficent by means of your words. But when he sees that you have hurt someone else's honour and exposed him, then he will be wary of you for his own sake, fearing that something similar may befall him.⁶⁷

True *hijā'* is hurtful and serious; joking insults are no 'true' *hijā'*, even though they are still classified as *hijā'*. A poem by Ibn Abī 'Uyayna on his cousin contains such lines as

Leave him to me, that Khālīd, and I shall cut his heart-veins!
I found in his speech things resembling his farting.

The last line is:

When heads are (proudly) borne high, then cover your head and lower it!

When Muslim Ibn al-Walīd (or Dī'bil, in a different version) hears this, he is shocked: 'My God, you have torn him to shreds and dishonoured him! I thought you were joking and jesting, until, with your last line, you ended up in ugly earnest.'⁶⁸

But not all jesting is harmless. The functions of *hazl* and *jidd* in *hijā'* are complex, more than in other poetic modes. Mock-panegyric, mock love-poetry or mock-elegies turn into satire or invective; but mock *hijā'* still is *hijā'*, if one disregards the rhetorical device called *ta'kīd al-madh' bimā yushbih al-dhamm*, pretending to blame someone, which turns out to be a form of praise.⁶⁹ The problem of *hijā'* is often that the text alone is not enough to decide its nature: one needs to know the intention of the poet and his relationship with the victim. Thus it happened that Muslim, or Dī'bil, was deceived at first by Ibn Abī 'Uyayna's poem. 'Khalaf al-Aḥmar used to tease Muḥammad al-Yazīdī a lot (*kān ya' bath ... 'abathan shadīdan*); sometimes he was serious, putting it in the form of jesting (*rub-bamā jadda fih wa-akhrajah makhraj al-mazh*).'⁷⁰ Aḥmad Ibn Rawḥ makes a

⁶⁷ *Aghānī*, xx, 125.

⁶⁸ Compare the two versions in *Aghānī*, xx, 111-13.

⁶⁹ See below, p. 104.

⁷⁰ *Aghānī*, xx, 231, followed by a long obscene poem, cf. Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, pp. 76 f., Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, xi, 71 f.

joking obscene epigram on his friend Abū Nuwās, who answers in earnest (*jāddan*).⁷¹ Making unserious *hijāʿ* is a hazardous activity, as is illustrated by several stories in which the victim thinks that the poet has gone too far. It is told, for instance, how Yazīd Ibn Muʿāwiya invited al-Akhtal to make some not-incedent *hijāʿ* on him (*uhjunī walā tufhish*); but he ends up being angered by the result.⁷² Similar stories are told about Kuthayyir with al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī,⁷³ Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī with Salm al-Khāsir,⁷⁴ and Ismāʿīl Ibn Jarīr with Ṭāhir Ibn al-Ḥusayn.⁷⁵ Abān al-Lāḥiqī and al-Muʿadhdhal Ibn Ghaylān were friends, but they fell out with each other after their mutual *hijāʿ* for the sake of fun (*yataʿābathān bi-ʿl-hijāʿ*);⁷⁶ a line said ‘as if in fun (*ka-ʿl-ʿābith*)’ by Arṭāh Ibn Suhayya causes an enduring quarrel with al-Rabīʿ Ibn Qaʿnab;⁷⁷ Bashshār Ibn Burd mentioned a friend in a coarse line merely because he happened to pass by, not even forced by the rhyme, as the angry victim remarks⁷⁸—an excuse used by Diʿbil⁷⁹ and Hammād Ibn ʿAjrad⁸⁰ in such cases. Al-Aḥwaš shocks a friend by his *hijāʿ* by way of a joke (*yumāziḥuh*).⁸¹ Ibn Harma takes too seriously an invitation by Ibn Mayyāda to make mutual *hijāʿ*.⁸² People’s reactions being often unpredictable, one cannot maintain that in each of these cases the poet was at fault rather than his victim, or that the poem was rhetorically, if not poetically, a failure (granted, of course, that it was not intentionally malicious).

If the victims themselves cannot always discern between jokes and seriously intended *hijāʿ*, one cannot blame critics and anthologists if they have similar difficulties. That Abū Tammām (d. 231/845) was at least aware of them appears from the way *hijāʿ* is dealt with in his very influential anthology called *al-Ḥamāsa*, the first to be arranged according to themes. The chapter-division does not coincide exactly with the usual traditional classification of poetic modes; it seems somewhat erratic at first sight, and Abū Tammām has been blamed, not always unjustly, for putting pieces of poetry in the wrong chapters.⁸³ To give but two

⁷¹ Abū Nuwās, *Dūwān*, i, 44 ff., cf. Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 442 f.

⁷² Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsīn*, p. 261.

⁷³ *Aghānī*, ix, 7 f., 10 f.

⁷⁴ Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, *Warāqa*, p. 85.

⁷⁶ Ṣūlī, *Awraq (shuʿarāʿ)*, p. 7, *Aghānī*, xxiii, 157.

⁷⁷ *Aghānī*, xiii, 41.

⁷⁸ *Aghānī*, iii, 173 f.

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, *Warāqa*, pp. 22 f.

⁸⁰ *Aghānī*, xiv, 359 f. Compare Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vii, 440, on Abū Nuwās.

⁸¹ *Aghānī*, iv, 244.

⁸² *Aghānī*, iv, 369 f.

⁸³ See, e.g., Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, iii, 398, Klein-Franke, ‘The Ḥamāsa’, pt. II, p. 169, Gamal, ‘The Basis of Selection’, pp. 32 f., Van Gelder, ‘Against Women’, p. 63.

examples, the first poem of the first chapter, on 'bravery', contains *fakhr*, *madīh* and *hijā'*; and the last epigram of the last section, on 'blaming women', is not about women at all.

The fifth section, on *hijā'*, contains eighty poems or fragments (the average length is only about four lines, the longest piece 13 lines). Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239) found this chapter inferior to the others;⁸⁴ and although Abū Tammām himself was an important poet his own *hijā'*, too, was deemed inferior to his other poetry.⁸⁵ There are obvious differences in tone and style between Abū Tammām's *hijā'* and that contained in the *Ḥamāsa*, to be explained by equally obvious facts: the *hijā'* in the anthology is largely by pre-modern poets; most of it is directed against tribes, whereas almost all of Abū Tammām's *hijā'* is addressed to individuals. Abū Tammām is much coarser: obscenities abound; the *Ḥamāsa* is loftier in tone and subjects, even though some scurrilous epigrams are included in the chapter on *hijā'*.⁸⁶ It is possible that the two sections on *hijā'* in the *Ḥamāsa* and the *Dīwān* would have been rather more similar if the latter had been edited by Abū Tammām as well: poets are usually more inclined to expurgation when editing their own *dīwān* than are those who compile the work of others.

The last, rather short, section of the *Ḥamāsa* is entitled 'blaming women'. Elsewhere⁸⁷ I have tried to answer the question why it was not included in the section on *hijā'* by suggesting that *madhammat al-nisā'* was in fact an extension of the preceding section, 'pleasantries' (*mulah*)—there are some indications that the title of the last chapter was a later addition not deriving from Abū Tammām. The chapter of *mulah*, too, contains poems that could be called *hijā'*; but like the poems in the last chapter they are light verse, either unmoral, not concerned with morals, or immoral, deliberately inverting accepted morals. The first six chapters of the *Ḥamāsa* (together forming almost 95 % of the text) are strongly connected with the standard virtues, and it may not be a coincidence that there seems to be a correlation with the four 'cardinal' virtues that were discussed by Qudāma Ibn Ja'far in his *Naqd al-shi'r*.⁸⁸ courage, intelligence, (*ʿaql*), temperance (or continence, chastity, *ʿiffa*)⁸⁹ and

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Istidrāk*, p. 18.

⁸⁵ Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 108, Āmidī, *Muwāzana* (unpublished part, MS Cambridge Qq 286) fol. 38a ff., Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 689.

⁸⁶ *Ḥamāsa* (Freytag), pp. 648 f., 654 f., 681.

⁸⁷ Van Gelder, 'Against Women'.

⁸⁸ See below, pp. 64 ff.

⁸⁹ *ʿIfa* can be translated as 'temperance', like its original, σωφροσύνη; but very often it is restricted to the field of sexuality, see for instance *Koran*, xxiv, 33, 60. Abū Tammām himself uses *ʿaff* as the opposite of *zānī*, 'whoring' (*Dīwān*, ii, 388).

generosity are the main themes of 'bravery' (*ḥamāsa*), good manners or wisdom (*adab*), chaste love-poetry (*nasīb*), and 'guests and praise-poetry' (*al-adyāf wa-'l-madih*), respectively: the first, third, fourth and sixth chapter of the *Ḥamāsa*. The second, with elegies and laments, logically follows on *ḥamāsa*, the main cause of mortality; and the negation of all this is the subject of the fifth chapter, *bāb al-hijā'*. Qudāma's four cardinal virtues are derived from the four Platonic virtues.⁹⁰ These were known to the philosopher al-Kindī,⁹¹ so there is at least a possibility that Abū Tammām, a contemporary of al-Kindī, was familiar with them.⁹²

Abū Tammām's criteria of selection were complex. He included fragments because they were unusual, relatively unknown, and, above all, because they were good poetry. But apart from the aesthetic quality of the individual pieces it appears that Abū Tammām was led by ethical principles in the plan of the *Ḥamāsa*. For him *hijā'* was, ideally, concerned with virtues. This is not refuted by the fact that he applies the term *hijā'* also to his own, sometimes scurrilous, invective;⁹³ for there too he attacks the supposed vices of his opponents. If the quality of the poems is somewhat below the standard demanded by the critics, they may nevertheless have been effective enough to the addressees (among whom there are very few illustrious persons: another possible reason why Abū Tammām did not strive for stylistic excellence).

Many later anthologies entitled *Ḥamāsa* followed Abū Tammām's plan wholly or largely. Where they depart from it the ethical slant of the original is often preserved. The *Ḥamāsa* compiled by Ibn al-Shajārī (d. 542/1147), for instance, has a chapter on 'blame and reproach' (*al-lawm wa-'l-ʿitāb*) as well as *hijā'*; both are 'ethical'; two brief chapters near the end of the collection, on 'comparisons in *hijā'*' and 'pleasantries' (*mulah*) include some unethical forms of *hijā'*. The same distinction has been preserved in *al-Ḥamāsa al-baṣriyya* (compiled in the 7th/13th century), where *madhammat al-nisā'* follows *hijā'* but is still separated from it. This anthology, like many others, ends piously with repentance and renunciation of worldly things (*al-ināba wa-'l-zuhd*),⁹⁴ to be contrasted with works

⁹⁰ cf. Bonebakker, in Qudāma, *Naqd al-shiʿr*, introd., pp. 39 f.

⁹¹ *EP*, art. 'akhlāk', p. 327b.

⁹² Often quoted is Abū Tammām's repartee to criticism by al-Kindī, see Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ii, 250, Ṣūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, pp. 231 f., Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 500 f., etc. Rosenthal has some doubts about the story: it is 'too convincing' ('Al Kindī als Literat', pp. 275-78).

⁹³ e.g. *Dīwān*, iv, 298, 389, 402.

⁹⁴ For similar final chapters, see *al-Ḥamāsa al-maghribiyya* (cf. GAS, ii, 74), 'Alī Ibn Ḥamza's redaction of Abū Tammām's *Dīwān*, al-Ṣūlī's redaction of the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Muʿtazz, that of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī edited by himself (cf. Schoeler, 'Die Einteilung', pp. 42, 45, 50), and works such as Ibn Ḥazm's *Tawq al-ḥamāma*, al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, al-Ibshīhī's *Mustaṭraf*, al-Nawājī's *Ḥalbat al-kumayt*, al-Ḥamdūnī's *Tadhkira*, etc.

that, like Abū Tammām's *Hamāsa*, end on a lighter note such as Ibn Qutayba's '*Uyūn al-akhbār*', Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's *al-'Iqd al-farīd* or al-Bayhaqī's *al-Maḥāsīn wa-'l-masāwī*.

The great thematically-ordered *Kitāb al-ma'ānī 'l-kabīr* by Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), although it ends in a contemplative mood with chapters on elegies, old age, wisdom (*ādāb*) and noble character (*makārīm al-akhlāq*), has no underlying ethical plan: it is concerned with philology, lexicography, and the idiom of early poetry. One chapter is entitled '*hijā'* and *hijā'* on women',⁹⁵ which seems to imply that *hijā'*, properly speaking, applies first and foremost to men: usually, in early poetry, if women are reviled the aim of this is to put their menfolk to shame. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the word *madhamma* was used in the last chapter of Abū Tammām's *Hamāsa*. The standard virtues are male virtues; as al-Ḥuṣrī said, 'most of what men are praised for is a reason to blame women and a disgrace for them. If women are praised for generosity, fulfilling one's pledges, courage, intelligence, and similar male qualities, these would be shortcomings for them and reasons for blaming them'.⁹⁶ 'Niggardliness and cowardice are among the virtues of women'—a saying ascribed by al-Ghazālī to a woman (who is called intelligent, for once).⁹⁷

Ibn Qutayba discusses fragments of *hijā'* on men and women indiscriminately, among them many of a scurrilous nature. But he quotes them neither because he revels in sordidness nor in order to condemn the poetry or the poets, but merely to explain difficult words and expressions. In his *al-Shi'r wa-'l-shu'arā'* too he is a philologist rather than a literary critic, even though it is an important source of early critical views. As for *hijā'*, he has an open mind. In his polemical *Kitāb al-'arab* he condemns those who are fond of *hijā'* and *mathālib*.⁹⁸ The introduction of *al-Shi'r wa-'l-shu'arā'*, however, presents both *hijā'* and *madīḥ* as the instruments of God to lower or to raise people's reputations.⁹⁹ Moreover, like al-Jāḥiẓ he disagrees with the view that *hijā'* is destructive and therefore easier than *madīḥ*:

It is not as al-'Ajjāj said, nor is the comparison that he made appropriate: as *madīḥ* is (a form of) constructing, so *hijā'*, too, is (a form of) constructing. Not every builder who can build one type (of building) can build other types.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ānī*, pp. 559-601.

⁹⁶ Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 404.

⁹⁷ Ghazālī, *Counsel*, p. 163, cf. Ṣafadī, *Ghayth*, i, 249.

⁹⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *'Arab*, pp. 346, 357 f.

⁹⁹ Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁰ *Shi'r*, p. 94.

The sections on the individual poets include many lines of *hijāʿ* and anecdotes connected with them. When he speaks of *khawāṭir al-hijāʿ*¹⁰¹ he condemns neither the lines nor the poet as malicious or bad; it does not imply that the victims are attacked unjustly. 'Evil *hijāʿ*', if anything, is praise rather than blame, for it refers to the bad effect on the victim's reputation by means of a successful poem. Obscenities are freely cited but receive no comment.¹⁰² Ibn Qutayba's liberal view on such quotation, adopted from al-Jāḥiẓ, is expressed in the preface of his '*Uyūn al-akḥbār*'.¹⁰³ The last part of this anthology, entitled 'Women', is similar to the last chapter of Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa* in that it is frivolous, full of *hijāʿ*, mainly concerned with outward, physical appearances rather than moral virtues, and not limited to women.¹⁰⁴ In both works the last chapter serves as *hazl* after *jidd*, relaxation after the moralistic nature of the main parts. The '*Uyūn al-akḥbār*', 'the first comprehensive manual of Islamic ethics',¹⁰⁵ is intended to instruct through entertaining; its instruction has a practical as well as an edifying side. It is interesting to observe that at least part of such a work is decidedly and unashamedly unethical. It is of course possible to discover a moral point in the quotation of a line such as Diʿbil's:

If you were as narrow-arsed as you are narrow-minded,
or broad-minded as your anus is broad, you would be the most
perfect of people walking the earth,¹⁰⁶

as a condemnation of narrow-mindedness and passive homosexuality, even though the line is quoted in the chapter on 'ugliness'; but in the many epigrams on physical imperfections no such edifying import can be discerned.

One is tempted to say that it is fortunate for the history of Arabic literature, and for our knowledge of *hijāʿ* and light verse in particular, that influential authors and anthologists such as Abū Tammām and Ibn Qutayba (who was, moreover, an important orthodox theologian) had liberal views on what can be written down. But it is likely that they confirmed rather than shaped prevailing attitudes in their times; they conformed to a taste existing already in their society, a taste to which they owe much of their popularity and influence.

¹⁰¹ e.g. pp. 203, 288, 390, 433, 469, 725, 813.

¹⁰² e.g. pp. 340, 350 f., 370, 432, 477, 632, 698.

¹⁰³ '*Uyūn*, i, *muqaddima*, pp. *lām-mīm*; cf. i, 318, 321, ii, 210.

¹⁰⁴ There are chapters 'on ugliness', 'on blacks', 'old women and men', 'tallness and shortness', 'beards', etc.

¹⁰⁵ *EP*, art. 'akhlāk' (R. Walzer and H. A. R. Gibb).

¹⁰⁶ '*Uyūn*, iv, 39.

Theirs was not the only attitude, of course. Staunch moralists, intolerant of any filthy or unethical utterances, did not always restrict themselves to the field of religion; some moved into the domain of *adab*, which can hardly be called an intrusion since *adab* had such strongly ethical connations. One of them was Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (d. 281/894), author of a number of moralistic works. In his 'Noble Qualities of Character' (*Makārim al-akhlāq*), which consists of numerous *aḥādīth* and *akhbār* with some poetry, without comment, the prime virtue is 'modesty' (*hayāʾ*),¹⁰⁷ which is contrasted with *fuḥsh*.¹⁰⁸ 'I avoid reviling people with all my might, for the worst of men is he who seeks to revile', says an unknown poet.¹⁰⁹ Similar quotations can be found in Ibn Qutayba's anthology, it is true;¹¹⁰ the difference is that Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā as a compiler of *adab* consistently lives up to his moral precepts, unlike Ibn Qutayba. To the former, *adab* is ethics, to the latter, ethics is only part of *adab*.

Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā was more concerned with piety than with poetry. His minority opinion—among *udabāʾ* at least—on invective and obscenity was shared to some extent by Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣbahānī (d. 297/910) who wrote works on law and theology but whose main interest in *Kitāb al-zahra* is poetry. Most of the quotations in it are given without comment; but the chapter division itself gives an indication of his views on the various genres and modes. *Hijāʾ* is subdivided into four types: ch. 68 'On those reviled for their deeds and upbraided for their niggardliness', ch. 69 'On those reviled because they ran away from battle and were afraid to meet the enemy', ch. 70 'On those reviled for their ugly physique (*qubḥ khilqatih*) or blamed for their evil characteristics (*sūʾ khālīqatih*) and ch. 71 'On those reviled for their origin, apart from their evident merits'.¹¹¹

There is no system here; a mere two moral qualities, a lack of generosity and of courage, do not exhaust traditional bedouin ethics, although they represent its two most important aspects. However, the last two sections show an awareness of the essential problem of the justness of *hijāʾ*. Most of the fragments quoted in ch. 70 are mixed: *hijāʾ* on character and appearance combined, based on the inevitable association in the human mind, of moral with aesthetic repulsion. Al-Jāḥiẓ

¹⁰⁷ The work is structured on the basis of a *ḥadīth* in which 'Ā'isha lists ten virtues, see p. 8 (English introduction, p. 2); cf. Ḥamdūnī, *Tadhkira*, ii, 170, Ibshihī, *Mustatraf*, i, 127.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, *Makārim*, pp. 17, 19, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Bellamy's translation, *Makārim*, p. 13 and Introd. p. 54.

¹¹⁰ For instance, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUmda*, i, 279, also in the chapter on 'modesty'.

¹¹¹ Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 146-69.

quotes as a well-known saying: 'Ask what you need from people with handsome faces';¹¹² a section of his *al-Ḥayawān*¹¹³ gives examples of 'panegyric on account of beauty and other things'. Clifford Geertz has remarked that

The Arab, and especially the Muslim Arab, concern with bodily integrity, the tendency to identify physical imperfection with moral, has often been noticed (There is even a special morphological class for adjectives denoting defects—"mute," "blind," "deaf," "lame," "scabrous," "demented," "moronic," "pregnant.")¹¹⁴

I am not sure that the Arabs, or the Muslims, are different from other people in this respect, and the linguistic argument of the *afʿal* pattern seems tenuous.¹¹⁵ But it is true that the tendency mentioned by Geertz is very often encountered in Arabic literature, and especially in invective poetry the confusion or combination of moral and physical qualities is frequent as a rhetorical but natural device, whereby the two aspects are mutually reinforced. In the examples in *al-Zahra* that show this combination the moral ugliness is usually said to be the worse of the two:

Their appearances are ugly; but when you get to know them,
their appearances are beautiful compared to what you know of them,¹¹⁶

—a line that could not very well be turned the other way round.

The quotations in the fourth chapter (no. 71) are most of them *hijāʿ* on tribes and clans. None of the lines are explicitly obscene; the last fragment, three lines in which the consanguine female relations ('those women God declared forbidden to him in *sūrat al-Nisāʾ*') of a hypothetical opponent are called whores, induces Ibn Dāwūd to add a comment on improper *hijāʿ*:

I did not wish to include in this book any slander (*qadhf*), or to contaminate it with any sort of foolish obscenity (*al-safah wa-l-sukhf*), or to mention in it any *hijāʿ* on a tribe whose honour all Muslims ought to uphold, or on any man who likewise ought to be respected. Otherwise this chapter—indeed, this whole book—could be filled with the various types of mutual vituperation.

¹¹² Jāhiz, *Rasāʾil*, iv, 219.

¹¹³ Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, iii, 91 ff.

¹¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, Lawrence Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 207.

¹¹⁵ Since the *afʿal* pattern is not used for typically moral defects (cf. the Arabic for 'coward', 'stingy', 'unchaste', etc.) but almost exclusively for physical properties (cf. Wolf Dietrich Fischer, *Farb- und Formbezeichnungen in der Sprache der altarabischen Dichtung*, Wiesbaden, 1963), it can be turned against Geertz' contention.

¹¹⁶ *Zahra*, ii, 161, anonymously; the line is by Muslim Ibn al-Walid, see e.g. *Aghānī*, xix, 34, xiv, 179, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUmda*, iv, 36, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 381, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, viii, 665, ʿAskarī, *Maṣūn*, p. 21. On the theme of *khalq* and *khuluq* see also Rāghib, *Muḥādārāt*, i, 175 f.

tion and boasting taken only from the *Naqā'id* of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, or only from the two *qaṣīdas* by al-Kumayt and Diʿbil, or the poetry of al-Ḥakamī¹¹⁷ and the likes of him with the exclusion of their predecessors. I would not have quoted these three lines but for the fact that their motifs are singularly good and well-nigh matchless for smoothness of diction and justness of sense, and that there is no mention in them of anyone by name or by his tribal affiliation.¹¹⁸

Ibn Dāwūd has taken no special pains to suppress or avoid personal names in the other quotations: so it appears that he condemns only obscenities, and in particular false accusation of unchastity (*qadhf*), the only form of slander for which Islamic law prescribes a fixed punishment. He disregards the difference between a formal accusation of fornication and abusive insults in lampoons: his scruples are legalistic, not moralistic.

¹¹⁷ Abū Nuwās. As for the poems by al-Kumayt and Diʿbil, see above, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Zahra*, ii, 169.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY MONOGRAPHS ON POETICS

1. *Between stylistics and ethics*

Towards the end of the ninth century the first monographs on poetics were produced. As for opinions on *hijāʿ*, they are on the whole less informative than the anthologies. The brief treatise 'Fundamentals of Poetry' (*Qawāʿid al-shiʿr*) by the grammarian Thaʿlab (d. 291/904) lists *hijāʿ* as one of the seven 'bases' (*uṣūl*) of poetry, but from the two fragments given as examples¹ we learn nothing; one wonders in fact why such a well-known concept as *hijāʿ* should need any illustration at all. One of them, two lines by Ḥassān, is also used to illustrate what Thaʿlab calls *ḥusn al-khurūj*, 'good transition'.² The various rhetorical and stylistic techniques employed in *hijāʿ* are discussed, or at least hinted at, in the many works on stylistics, of which *al-Badīʿ* by Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908) was a pioneering one. Obviously, some figures of speech and tropes are more closely connected with *hijāʿ* than others. Among the eighteen sections of *al-Badīʿ* those on *taʿrīd* and *kināya* ('insinuation' and 'allusion'),³ *al-ifrāt fī 'l-ṣifa* ('hyperbolic description')⁴ and *tajāhul al-ʿarīf* ('feigned ignorance')⁵ are the most obvious examples; one of the sections, that on *ḥazl yurād bihi 'l-jidd* ('jesting which is meant seriously') is in fact a form of *hijāʿ*.⁶ But there is no definition nor any analysis. In *al-Badīʿ* and all subsequent studies of poetical stylistics and rhetoric, *hijāʿ* is used in order to illustrate the nature of the several tropes and figures; one will look in vain for treatises where the priorities are reversed and where the nature of *hijāʿ* is analysed systematically in terms of the more important stylistic devices employed in it.

Some of these devices are mentioned in passing. The monograph on poetical comparisons, *al-Tashbīhāt* by Ibn Abī ʿAwn (d. 322/934), is first of all an anthology, including a large amount of *hijāʿ*, subdivided for the most part on the basis of the *primum comparationis*, with hardly any com-

¹ Thaʿlab, *Qawāʿid*, p. 38.

² *Qawāʿid*, p. 61. The lines were often quoted by later critics in order to illustrate *istiṭrād*, see Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, pp. 47, 50 f.

³ *Badīʿ*, pp. 64 f.

⁴ *Badīʿ*, pp. 65-68.

⁵ *Badīʿ*, pp. 62 f.

⁶ *Badīʿ*, p. 63.

mentary. But the author shows how praise can be turned into *hijāʾ* by a simple exchange of predicates; anklets clanging noisily and silent, muffled belts form a reversal (*maqlūb*) of the usual description of beautiful slim waists and plump legs;⁷ one digression shows the employ, in *hijāʾ*, of the 'impossibility' motif: churning water, milking billy-goats;⁸ another gives several examples of what is arguably the most primitive form of invective, if it is not the magical curse: the flyting, consisting of simple name-calling and strings of insults directly addressed to the opponent.⁹ A particularly scathing form of *hijāʾ* which denies being *hijāʾ*: 'you are too despicable to deserve my *hijāʾ*' (mentioned before)¹⁰ is the subject of digressions by al-Mubarrad,¹¹ al-Šūlī¹² and others.¹³

None of the poetical anthologies from the ninth and the tenth centuries are greatly concerned with the ethics of *hijāʾ* or its 'decency'. Gross obscenities abound in works such as Ibn Abī ʿAwn's *Tashbīhāt*, the *Ṭabaqāt al-shuʿarāʾ* by Ibn al-Muʿtazz (one wonders why, on one occasion, he feels compelled to say of a long *hijāʾ*-poem: 'it is obscene so we have left it out'),¹⁴ *al-Waraqā* by Ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 296/908), or the most important of them all, *al-Aghānī* by Abū ʿl-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967). A different stand is taken by two authors of important treatises on poetics. Ibn Ṭabaṭabā (d. 322/934), in his *ʿIyār al-shiʿr* ('The Standard of Poetry'), rather nostalgically contrasts pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, where each genre, as he thought, was 'based on truth' (apart from such legitimate untruthfulness as in hyperbolic descriptions and comparisons), with 'modern' poetry, in which the poets strive to be subtle, striking, witty and elegant but are not interested in the truth of their praise or censure.

If *madiḥ* falls short of the quality that we have mentioned (scil. truthfulness), the poet who employs it as a plea will be deprived of his remuneration; and if *hijāʾ* falls short in this manner, the addressee will despise it: he will feel safe from its becoming popular or people transmitting it and spreading it about, deriving fun from its witticisms.¹⁵

Ibn Ṭabaṭabā seems to ignore the possibility that the addressee, too, as well as the public, might not care much about the truthfulness of poetry.

⁷ *Tashbīhāt*, p. 113.

⁸ *Tashbīhāt*, pp. 269 f.

⁹ *Tashbīhāt*, pp. 291-93; other examples, in poetry and prose: Azdī, *Hikāya*, pp. 12 f., 119 f., 122, 139-44, Thaʿālibī, *Yatima*, iii, 35-37, Hamadhānī, *Maqāma* no. 43 ('al-Dīnāriyya'), Tawḥīdī, *Imtāʿ*, iii, 59 f.

¹⁰ Above, p. 17.

¹¹ Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, pp. 475 f.

¹² Šūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tamīm*, pp. 41-50.

¹³ See e.g. Nahshalī, *Mumtāʿ*, pp. 215 ff., Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 109 ff.

¹⁴ *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 336.

¹⁵ *ʿIyār*, p. 9.

In order to facilitate the emulation of early poetry Ibn Ṭabāṭabā provides a list of the occasions of praise and blame among the Arabs, 'some of them concerning one's physical constitution (*khalq*), such as beauty (*jamāl*) and having a well-shaped body (*baṣṭa*), others concerning one's character (*khuluq*)',¹⁶ illustrated by almost seventy virtues. They are followed by a catalogue of some thirty-five vices or defects. There is not much system in these enumerations; some terms are very general and include or overlap with others. The distinction between, for instance, *ghadr* and *khiyāna*, or *qubḥ* and *damāma* seems slight. But the tenor, however, is clear: *hijā'* or *madīḥ* may deal with intellectual, moral as well as physical characteristics, but the last category is greatly outnumbered.¹⁷ Each virtue or defect depends on the circumstances: chastity when one is tempted is better than chastity when one is not exposed to temptation, stinginess is worse in the rich than in the needy.¹⁸

The remaining parts of *'Iyār al-shi'r* are chiefly devoted to various stylistic qualities. The author's opinions on the forms of *hijā'* prevalent in his own days may be derived from what has been preserved from his own poetry. Epigrammatic, it is never obscene.¹⁹ Physical defects, however, are exploited mercilessly in poems on a leper and a pock-marked face.²⁰ In the former epigram the disease is wittily connected with the victim's alleged bastardy, and both imperfections are made subservient to the main point of the attack: a certain Abū 'Alī al-Rustamī's claim to be a prophet:

You have been given some of the Signs of God's Apostles
by which you are exalted above our heads:
You came by yourself, without a father; and there is a whiteness
in your right hand: you are Jesus and Moses.²¹

The other poem is an exercise in comparisons on a purely physical defect.

2. *Qudāma Ibn Ja'far*

Ibn Ṭabāṭabā's reactionary outlook in *'Iyār al-shi'r* is belied, to some extent, in his own poetry; he was, after all, an admirer and follower of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, a 'modern' poet *par excellence*. Such a discrepancy is not

¹⁶ *'Iyār*, p. 12.

¹⁷ They cannot always be clearly kept apart: *qamā'a* 'smallness' implies 'insignificance' and 'paltriness', etc.

¹⁸ *'Iyār*, p. 13.

¹⁹ The two obscene fragments of early poetry quoted in *'Iyār al-shi'r* serve to illustrate an obscure motif, *'Iyār*, pp. 36, 37.

²⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, xvii, 155 f., 'Askarī, *Dīwān al-ma'ānī*, i, 212 f., Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, ii, 79 f., 'Abbāsī, *Ma'āhid*, i, 180.

²¹ A reference to Moses' miracle, *Koran*, xx, 22, xxvii, 12, xxviii, 32, vii, 108, xxvi, 33.

to be found in the case of his contemporary Qudāma Ibn Jaʿfar (d. after 320/932), for unlike the majority of critics and theoreticians of poetry he did not write any himself, as far as we know. His *Naqd al-shiʿr* ('Critique of Poetry') is the first true Arabic poetics, which attempts to give criteria for distinguishing good verse from bad, by analysing the essential elements of poetry, separately and in combination.

At the beginning of the book Qudāma appears as an uncompromising aesthete: poetry must be judged on the basis of its artistry and craftsmanship, not on the basis of its contents:

All *maʿānī* (ideas, motifs) are at the poet's disposal; he is free to speak on any one of them as he likes or prefers. No *maʿnā* that he wishes to speak of is forbidden to him.²²

The *maʿānī* are merely the substance, the subject-matter (*mādda mawḍūʿa*), the working material to which the artist applies his art, just as wood serves for the carpenter. It does not matter which *maʿnā* the poet works on, 'be it lofty or low, obscene or in good taste, intemperate or moderate, laudatory or calumnious, or any other praiseworthy or blameworthy *maʿnā*', as long as the poet strives at reaching the utmost perfection. For the same reason he is at liberty to contradict himself in different poems, first praising and then blaming the same thing. One should not condemn Imraʾ al-Qays, for instance, for his famous line 'Many a pregnant woman have I visited at night...' because it is 'obscene', for this does not affect the good quality of the poetry, just as the carpenter's craftsmanship is not affected by the quality of the wood he uses.²³ Apparently it does not occur to Qudāma that one might be tempted to blame the carpenter for his choice of inferior material; moreover, since the professed aim of the book is to distinguish between good and bad poetry, it is, ultimately, not craftsmanship that matters but the result, and a chair made of bad wood is certainly a bad chair.

Qudāma professes not to be interested in the moral content of poetry. Similarly, its truthfulness is of no concern to the poet or the critic:

A poet should not be praised for his 'sincerity'. One may merely demand from him, whenever he takes up no matter which *maʿnā*, that he handle it well at a particular time. One cannot demand from him that he will never revoke whatever he has said at another time.²⁴

In love-poetry, too, good quality is required; the poet's sincerity and his beliefs are irrelevant.²⁵ The poet is obliged only to do justice to any par-

²² *Naqd*, p. 4.

²³ *Naqd*, pp. 4 f.

²⁴ *Naqd*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Naqd*, p. 69.

ticular *ma'nā*, according to its intended purport (*al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd*) and not straying from it.²⁶ It is here, however, that morals, excluded at first, do come in, after all, through a back door almost as wide as the front door. Qudāma begins his discussion of the principal *aghraḍ* or modes with sections on *madīh* and its opposite, *hijā'*.

At the outset of the chapter on *madīh* he approvingly quotes a famous saying attributed to the caliph 'Umar, who reputedly had admired the poet Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā 'because he praises a man only *bimā yakūn lil-rijāl*'.²⁷ There are several versions of this saying;²⁸ the obvious meaning is that Zuhayr is said to praise men truthfully, for their real qualities.²⁹ Qudāma apparently takes it to mean, however, that Zuhayr praised them because of what is fitting for men: not necessarily for their real qualities but for what should be their qualities. This is evident from his version of the saying (with the modal *yakūn*, *li-* instead of *fī*, and the generalizing plural 'men'), from his subsequent paraphrase (*bimā yakūn lahū wa-fīh wā-bimā yaliq bih*), and, more important, from his treatment of the poetic modes.

These qualities, the proper subject of panegyric poetry, are restricted to four cardinal virtues: intelligence, courage, justice, and temperance or chastity ('*aql*, *shajā'a*, '*adl* and '*iffa*'), and the virtues derived from each of these, separately or in combination. Praising someone for other reasons is wrong.³⁰ Irrelevant, accidental properties can be no cause for praise.³¹ Thus the description of someone's handsome body or appearance should be left out of *madīh*, nor should one praise someone on account of his noble ancestry.³² In support of his view Qudāma quotes 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān, who criticized a line by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt: 'The crown glitters on the top of his head, above a forehead

²⁶ *Naqd*, p. 23, reiterated in similar words pp. 28 and 111.

²⁷ *Naqd*, p. 28.

²⁸ As in *Naqd al-shi'r*: Marzūqī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥamāsa*, i, 9; *bimā fī 'l-rijāl*: Āmidī, *Muwāzana*, i, 276; *bimā yakūn fī 'l-rijāl*: Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 90, Rāghib, *Muḥādarāt*, i, 47; *bimā huwa fīh*: Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, p. 138; *bimā yakūn fī*: Aghānī, x, 290; *bimā fīh*: Aghānī, x, 289, Ibn Sallām, *Tabaqāt*, p. 52, Ibn Rashīq, '*Umda*, i, 98, Suyūṭī, *Muzhir*, ii, 482; yet other versions in Qurashī, *Jamhara*, p. 57, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, '*Iqd*, v, 270 (*lā yamdaḥ illā mustahiqqan*), Kalā'ī, *Ihkām*, p. 258, etc.

²⁹ Compare, for instance, Ḥassān Ibn Thābit: 'Inform Hawāzin (...) that I make *hijā'* on them only *bimā fihā*', *Diwān*, p. 256, Khālidīyyān, *Ashbāh*, ii, 202, and 'Umar on al-Ḥuṭay'a: 'He praises and blames people *bi-ghayr mā fihim*', *Aghānī*, ii, 189.

³⁰ *Naqd*, p. 29; in the course of the discussion 'justice' is equated with 'generosity', *sakhā'*, or *jūd* (its bedouin near-equivalent) and replaced by it, cf. pp. 31, 51. 'Justice' reappears (p. 112) and 'generosity' (*jūd*) is called part of it (pp. 29, 116).

³¹ *Naqd*, pp. 111 f.

³² *Naqd*, pp. 112-14.

like gold', although it appears from other sources³³ that the caliph merely objected to the crown ('as if I were some foreign king!').

In all this Qudāma restricts himself to panegyric on men (whether they be kings, generals, civil servants, artisans, bedouins, thieves), because it is the commonest type, as he says.³⁴ As for the description of women, usual in poetry, he refers to another chapter: that on *nasīb*. But the rules of panegyric do not count there; it is defined as 'the mentioning by the poet of the physical and moral qualities of women (*khalq al-nisāʾ wa-akhḷāqahunna*) and the various circumstances of his love for them'.³⁵ *Nasīb* is a specific form of *wasf*, 'description'. Qudāma does not consider women as possible objects of true *madīḥ*, *hijāʾ* or *rithāʾ* ('elegy', which is merely one type of *madīḥ*).³⁶

Hijāʾ being the opposite of *madīḥ*, it follows for Qudāma that the same restrictions apply to it as well.³⁷ Ironic praise on account of 'false' virtues: large numbers of large bodies of the members of a tribe, fits in well with *hijāʾ*, for by granting these true facts the poet enhances the credibility of his *hijāʾ*.³⁸ Again, only the 'virtues of the soul' (*al-faḍāʾil al-naṣfiyya*) should be the subject of *hijāʾ* proper:

If, for instance, one charges someone with having an ugly face, a small stature, a tiny body, or with being poor, in difficult circumstances, or descended from undistinguished people, whereas his own deeds are good and his qualities noble and virtuous; or (if one charges him with the fact) that his parents did the wrong thing while he does the right thing, or that they went astray when he is found to follow the right course; or with the small number (of his clan) when he is noble; or with a lack of acumen (?)³⁹ when he is serious and keen: then I do not consider this as true *hijāʾ*.⁴⁰

³³ *Aghānī*, v, 79; cf. Āmidī, *Muwāzana*, ii, 367, Khafājī, *Sirr*, pp. 250 f.

³⁴ *Naqd*, p. 28.

³⁵ *Naqd*, p. 65.

³⁶ *Naqd*, p. 49.

³⁷ *Naqd*, pp. 44, 48 f.

³⁸ *Naqd*, p. 44.

³⁹ *ʿadam al-niṣār*? One MS has *ʿadam al-nuṣṣār* 'lack of helpers'; another has *ʿadam al-n. dār*: either *nuḍār* '(lack of) gold', which make some sense, or *niḍār/nuḍār* '(lack of) roots or origin', which makes even more.

⁴⁰ *Naqd*, p. 114. Compare Jonathan Swift ('On the Death of Dr. Swift'):

His satire points at no defect,
But what all mortals may correct;
For he abhorr'd that senseless tribe
Who call it humour when they jibe:
He spar'd a hump, or crooked nose,
Whose owners set not up for beaux.

When a poet describes his own poetry in this vein one can be reasonably certain that he is lying. Compare the case of Ibn Aflaḥ (d. 535/1141) (Ibn Aflaḥ, *Muqaddima*, English introd., pp. 7, 10-12).

All Qudāma's illustrations are of the type that he recommends: in his discussion of the poetic modes there are no examples of 'improper' *hijā'*. Although he does not explicitly condemn obscene expressions or motifs one might say, with Charles Pellat, that Qudāma 'stood up against the grossness of *hidjā'*',⁴¹ because most of the grossness rife in Abbasid invective consists in what would be improper *hijā'* by Qudāma's standards. But obscenity did not matter all that much to him, it seems; or he would not have illustrated a form of antithesis by means of a line by Khawla Bint 'Uyayna (read 'Utayba) Ibn Mirdās: 'He rubs his hot prick against her cold bottom, just as Zamyā' asks for the penetration of Ibn Ghālib's prick'.⁴²

Qudāma's poetics looks as if it were prescriptive: but it is intended primarily, as he says, as a means of judging existing poetry, rather than instructions in making poetry oneself. He is hardly interested in Abbasid poetry at all; as a result there is a certain discrepancy between his theory and his illustrations of *hijā'*. All the cardinal and secondary virtues mentioned by him are those of the individual. Most of Qudāma's examples, however, are taken from tribal *hijā'*, where virtues or vices are collective and affect every individual in spite of his personal merits, as al-Jāhiz had observed:

When the Arabs find that one man of a tribe has done a bad thing they charge the whole tribe with it, just as a tribe is praised for a good deed, even though it was done by only one person.⁴³

Such praise or blame is improper in Qudāma's system. He is able to find some support, in early poetry, for his opinion that being taunted with ugliness, small numbers or poverty cannot detract from a person or a group⁴⁴ (the examples show in fact that these very themes of *hijā'* were frequently and effectively used), but, significantly, the view that one's lineage or the conduct of one's parents does not matter is not corroborated by a line of verse, simply because such an opinion is not to be found in serious early poetry (and hardly ever in later times, for that matter).

Qudāma's opinions are not in need of support taken from poetry itself: he claims that their correctness is proved, first of all, by 'sound reasoning

⁴¹ *EP*, art. 'hidjā'.

⁴² *Naqd*, p. 80. I have not found the line elsewhere. Ibn Ghālib is al-Farazdaq, Zamyā' the 'amma of al-La'īn al-Minqarī. Perhaps Khawla is a corruption: an aunt (*khāla*) of 'Utayba Ibn Mirdās is said to have made coarse *hijā'* on al-La'īn al-Minqarī (Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, p. 370).

⁴³ Jāhiz, *Bukhalā'*, p. 234, with examples; see *Aghānī*, xxi, 305 for the opinion that 'nobody can be praised whose people are the subject of *hijā'*' and compare Mohammed's anxiety about Ḥassān's *hijā'* on Quraysh, above, p. 22.

⁴⁴ *Naqd*, p. 115.

and open-minded speculation'.⁴⁵ There can be no doubt that this reasoning was influenced by Greek views. The four 'Platonic' cardinal virtues were well known in Qudāma's time; he himself quoted Galen's *περί ἡθῶν*, *Fi akhlāq al-nafs*.⁴⁶ It is much less certain that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* or *Poetics* inspired Qudāma to introduce ethics in his poetics. Bonebakker sees 'no clear trace' of these works in *Naqd al-shi'r*;⁴⁷ Iḥsān 'Abbās, however, discerns the influence of the Arabic translation of the *Poetics*, where tragedy appears as *madīḥ* and comedy as *hijā'*, dealing with virtues and vices, respectively.⁴⁸ Others have maintained that Qudāma knew and used the *Rhetoric*, in which ethics plays a large part.⁴⁹

It is true that some of the passages of the *Rhetoric* look promising in this respect: the nine virtues enumerated in *Rhet.* 1366a-b include Qudāma's four cardinal ones (*shajā'a*, *'iffa*, *sakhā'* and *ḥikma* in the Arabic translation); more important, *Rhet.* 1367b offers the distinction between essential and accidental qualities in praise. The translation of the Greek, by W. Rhys Roberts, runs:

Praise is the expression in words of the eminence of a man's good qualities (...) Encomium refers to what he has actually done; the mention of accessories, such as good birth and education, merely helps to make our story credible—good fathers are likely to have good sons, and good training is likely to produce good character.

The early Arabic translation, however, is far less clear:⁵⁰ it is difficult to see how Qudāma—whose views here run counter to Aristotle's⁵¹—could have derived anything from it, unless he knew a better version.⁵² Aristotle also said,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Naqd*, p. 45, cf. Bonebakker's introduction, pp. 39 f. In the Arabic summary of Galen's *Ethics* the four virtues appear as *'iffa*, *naḥda*, *'adāla* and *fahm* (Jālīnūs, *Akhlāq*, p. 33). In the same passage he distinguishes between the pairs 'good' vs. 'evil' (*khayr* and *sharr*) and 'beautiful' vs. 'ugly' (*jamil* and *qabīḥ*); but the latter pair is used in both a moral and a physical sense.

⁴⁷ *Naqd*, introduction, pp. 41 f.; cf. Bonebakker, 'Aspects', p. 92.

⁴⁸ 'Abbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, pp. 197 f.

⁴⁹ Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, introd. to (Pseudo-)Qudāma, *Naqd al-nathr*, pp. 18 f., Trabulsi, *Critique*, p. 86, Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 325.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica. The Arabic Version*, ed. M. C. Lyons, i, 47; Aristotle, *al-Khiṭāba*, ed. Badawī, p. 43.

⁵¹ cf. *Naqd al-shi'r*, p. 113, condemning a poem by Ayman Ibn Khuraym: 'Many people are unlike their forefathers in virtue, and this poet mentions nothing but forefathers'.

⁵² Whatever the extent of Greek influence on Qudāma, he did not slavishly follow. His system of 'composite' virtues seems to have been his own contribution, no doubt inspired by the same spirit that made him consider the possible combined effects of the four 'elements of poetry'. Tetrads are omnipresent in Arabic literature. It is tempting, though probably unwarranted, to connect the four Platonic virtues with the four 'pillars of believing' in a saying attributed to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib: *ṣabr*, *yaqīn*, *'adl*, *jihād* (Qālī, *Amālī*, iii, 171), roughly corresponding to Qudāma's *'iffa*, *'aql*, *'adl* and *shajā'a*, respectively.

Praise, again, may be serious or frivolous; nor is it always of a human or divine being.⁵³

The Arabic translation changes this into:

It often happens that a human or spiritual being is praised for a virtue or something other than a virtue.⁵⁴

Through a mistake 'frivolous' praise has become 'praise for something other than a virtue', which tallies well with Qudāma's view. Yet, on the whole it seems more likely that he developed his theory independently of Aristotle's texts, while being superficially influenced by Greek logic and ethics.

It is not possible to determine with certainty Qudāma's ulterior reason for restricting praise and blame to the Platonic virtues and the corresponding vices. There are no indications that he saw the poet as a moral teacher in society, since then he ought to have condemned all or most *hijā'*: as it is said in the 10th-century *Epistles* of the *Ikhwān al-safā'*, praise and admonitions reform (*muṣliḥ*) in contrast to corrupting (*mufsid*) discourse such as abuse and intimidation, which lead to enmity and hatred.⁵⁵ Possibly Qudāma's criterion was that characteristics should only be praised or blamed on the strength of what they produce or effect: what counts is not someone's appearance or origin, but his deeds. Strictly speaking, moral responsibility should not necessarily come into this; one is not responsible for all one's deeds. But to Qudāma it was probably a matter of personal justice: his conscience told him, it seems, that it is not merely pointless but unfair to praise people for things for which they cannot be held responsible; when he asks for 'true' *hijā'* (*hijā'an jāriyan 'alā 'l-ḥaqq*),⁵⁶ the word *ḥaqq* means 'truth' as well as 'deserved right'.

There is a contradiction in this case: as said before, according to Qudāma a panegyric poem ought to describe an ideal type rather than a real person,⁵⁷ which is not strictly just; and if, as he says, *hijā'* is the opposite of *madīḥ*, then *hijā'* should also be concerned with types instead of reality, and describe a petty sinner as a paragon of vice, which is unfair. In order to save Qudāma's work from this inconsistency one could perhaps argue that to him 'justice' is strictly 'poetic': the ethics applies only to the ideal type, the 'perfect man' depicted in the poem, or

⁵³ *Rhet.* 1366a, translation by W. Rhys Roberts.

⁵⁴ *Ars Rhetorica* (ed. Lyons), p. 42, *Khijāba* (ed. Badawī), p. 38; cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Khaṭāba*, p. 84, Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ al-Khaṭāba*, p. 142. The difference is apparently due to the translator's mistaken opinion that σπουδή can be translated here as *ṣaḍīla*; cf. also *Rhet.* 1415b.

⁵⁵ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, i, 391.

⁵⁶ *Naqd*, p. 114.

⁵⁷ See above, p. 64; cf. *Naqd*, pp. 38-42.

his less perfect counterpart in invective, and not to the real person who caused the poem to be made in the first place. Yet, since Qudāma brings in ethics (justice being one of its four pillars), it is likely that he intended his theory to be ethical itself in its proper sense: that is, taking it for granted that praise and blame must be justly deserved; and this is how later critics interpreted Qudāma's views.

If his reasoning went like this, then he thought it to be self-evident, for he does not say it clearly. He justifies his restriction by postulating that men should only be praised for specifically human virtues, by which they are distinguished from animals.⁵⁸ Since he calls intelligence (ʿaql) 'the greatest of the virtues' and 'beastliness' one of the results of blindness of the rational discriminating faculty (*al-quwwa al-mumayyiza*),⁵⁹ we may conclude that moral responsibility, dependent on a rational choice between good and evil, was, indeed, Qudāma's criterion.⁶⁰ However, if the status of the only intellectual virtue is raised above the other, moral, ones, it stops being a virtue by Qudāma's own standards. Thus he creates a problem that he does not attempt to solve: it is difficult to see how stupid people can be blamed at all, since, lacking the means of making a choice, they are not morally responsible.

The problem has a broader dimension which did not remain unnoticed by critics of Qudāma's critique. For even in those gifted with intelligence, good acts may be involuntary. In Galen's work on ethics, of which Qudāma apparently knew a version,⁶¹ character (*khuluq*) is defined as 'a condition of the soul that induces man to perform acts of the soul without reflection or choice'.⁶² Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (d. 363/973), the Jacobite translator and philosopher, adds that 'in some people it may be an instinct and a natural disposition; in others it is brought about only through exercise and exertion'.⁶³ According to his teacher al-Fārābī (d.

⁵⁸ *Naqd*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ *Naqd*, p. 45, and see Bonebakker's introd. p. 39.

⁶⁰ Compare, for instance, the definition of *madh* by a much later theologian inclined towards philosophy, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413): 'It is praise (*thanā*) with the tongue (by means of language) for a good deed done voluntarily (*ikhtiyārī*) and intentionally' (*Taʿrīfāt*, p. 219; cf. Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, s.v. *ḥamd*, pp. 288-90).

⁶¹ *Naqd*, introd. p. 39.

⁶² Jālīnūs, *Akhlāq*, p. 25, reading *ikhtiyār* instead of *ikhtibār*, cf. Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, p. 120. Walzer (*Greek into Arabic*, p. 147) translates 'accurate knowledge', thus reading *ikhtibār*; but compare the similar passage in Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, in *Rasāʾil al-bulaghā*, p. 485, which has *ikhtiyār*. The reading *ikhtibār* 'trying to find out, examination' can be defended: see definitions of *khuluq* by al-Jurjānī (*Taʿrīfāt*, p. 106) and al-Tahānawī (*Kashshāf*, p. 446) which have 'without the need for thought or reflection' (read *rawiyya*, not *ruʾya* as in *Taʿrīfāt*).

⁶³ *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, in *Rasāʾil al-bulaghā*, p. 485. A Christian, he states that most people are predisposed towards bad *akhlāq*, 'for evil prevails in human nature' (pp. 485 f.). The same distinction between inborn and acquired virtues, present already in Aristotle's

337/950) the virtues and vices were not innate, but a natural disposition to virtues or vices could exist; one cannot be blamed or praised for this natural state, but only for a habitual state of repeated actions.⁶⁴ In short, Qudāma's poetics leads one into a multitude of implications in the fields of ethics, psychology and free-will vs. predestination, all happily ignored by him. This is understandable: he does not pretend to be a theologian or philosopher. When he, implicitly postulating free-will, concludes that praise and blame are possible depending on it, his logic is no worse than that of some theologically interested people who, conversely, want to prove the existence of free-will by means of the existence of praise and blame: some Mu'tazilites say, according to al-Nāshi' al-Akbar (d. 293/906), poet and theologian: 'Generosity and stinginess are among the acts of people, for they are praised and blamed for them,⁶⁵ and they would not be praised or blamed for what God does with them, but only for what they do themselves'.⁶⁶

The main defect of Qudāma's approach to poetry is, however, not its neglect of ethical and theological niceties, but its remoteness from the practice of the poets, and, indeed, from ordinary parlance. Not only are people constantly derided in *hijā'* or praised in *madīh* and *fakhr* for their appearances, their origins, etc., but animals are credited with qualities of character that seem identical with the same virtues that Qudāma called human virtues *par excellence* (Aristotle, on the other hand, had not excluded 'inanimate things, or the humblest of lower animals' as objects of praise).⁶⁷ Qudāma does not indicate the extent of the gap between his ideals and existing poetry: from the text of *Naqd al-shi'r* alone no one could guess that Qudāma damns most *hijā'* of his own days and of earlier periods.

His method of analyzing poetry never gained much popularity, but many of his ideas were taken over or at least discussed. Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. after 400/1010) uncritically paraphrases Qudāma on proper and improper *hijā'*;⁶⁸ al-Marzubānī (d. 384/993) cites him on faulty *hijā'*;⁶⁹ Usāma Ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188) summarizes him with: 'Praise someone for the characteristics of his soul, not for the characteristics of

Ethics, can be found, for instance, in *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Safā'*, i, 305 f. It does not matter much whether we speak of 'instinct' or 'intuition', the difference being mainly that, as Addison said, 'our superiors are guided by intuition, our inferiors by instinct'.

⁶⁴ Fārābī, *Fuṣūl*, pp. 109 f., transl. pp. 32 f.

⁶⁵ Presumably in the Koran.

⁶⁶ Van Ess, *Frühe mu'tazilitische Häresiographie*, Arabic text, p. 101, cf. German text p. 145.

⁶⁷ *Rhet.* 1366a.

⁶⁸ ʿAskarī, *Ṣināʿatayn*, pp. 104 f., 110-12, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 202.

⁶⁹ *Muwashshah*, pp. 346-49.

his body';⁷⁰ he supports Qudāma's view of panegyric without reserve: 'Vying in excellence should be on account of morals. For man is unfree as to his constitution, free as to his moral characteristics (*mujbar 'alā 'l-khalq, mukhayyar 'alā 'l-khuluq*).'⁷¹ Al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022) quotes him on the virtues in panegyric poetry.⁷²

The first to criticize Qudāma was, apparently, al-Āmidī (d. c. 370/981). His *Tabyīn ghalat Qudāma Ibn Ja'far fī Naqd al-shi'r*, 'The Exposition of Qudāma Ibn Ja'far's Errors in his *Critique of Poetry*',⁷³ has unfortunately not been preserved; that it attacked Qudāma on the point in question is clear from a passage in his *al-Muwāzana*, 'The Balancing', a comparison of the poetry of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī. In the chapter on *madīḥ* a section is devoted to 'what they (scil. the two poets) said concerning beauty, splendour, awe-inspiringness, magnificence and fair appearance'.⁷⁴ All these qualities, al-Āmidī says, are obligatory in panegyrics on caliphs and kings:

similarly, one ought to praise (such a person) for a beautiful and handsome face, since a beautiful face enhances his awe-inspiring appearance. The Arabs consider it a good omen, because it is an indication of praiseworthy qualities, just as an ugly and unsightly face does away with awe-inspiringness and is an indication of blameworthy qualities. The Arabs dislike it, consider it a bad omen, because the first thing that one sees when one meets someone is his face (...) A recent author who wrote a book on the critique of poetry⁷⁵ made a gross error in stating that panegyric on account of someone's handsome and beautiful appearance, or blaming someone for ugliness and unsightliness is neither true panegyric nor sound blame. He declared everyone to be wrong who praised or blamed for these reasons. With this opinion he deviated from the ways of all peoples, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, and he rejected most of the panegyric poetry and *hijā'* of the Arabs. I have sufficiently and thoroughly cleared up this detestable error of his in a separate book.⁷⁶

In the eleventh century two authors took up this point. Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1065 or 463/1071) quotes Qudāma on the virtues⁷⁷ and seems to

⁷⁰ Usāma, *Badi'*, p. 296; cf. pp. 289, 293.

⁷¹ *Badi'*, p. 171; note the two forms of paronomasia.

⁷² Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, pp. 422-24.

⁷³ Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-udabā'*, viii, 76, 86. Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba' (*Tahrīr*, p. 88, *Badi' al-Qur'an*, p. 4) mentions it as one of his sources.

⁷⁴ Āmidī, *Muwāzana*, ii, 362-71.

⁷⁵ Qudāma is mentioned by name elsewhere in the *Muwāzana* (i, 274 f., 277).

⁷⁶ *Muwāzana*, ii, 368 f.

⁷⁷ 'Umda, ii, 131, 145. His *Tazyīf Naqd Qudāma*, 'The Fallacy of Qudāma's *Critique* exposed', is lost (see Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba', *Tahrīr*, p. 88, *Badi' al-Qur'an*, p. 4, Ḥājji Khalifa, *Kashf*, (ii), col. 1973).

agree with him on at least one point: one ought to disregard the nobility of someone's ancestors.⁷⁸ But elsewhere he is critical:

Mostly one will depend on the virtues of the soul mentioned by Qudāma. But if accidental or physical virtues are added to these, such as beauty, splendour, having a fine physique, affluence, or belonging to a large clan then this is good. Qudāma, it is true, rejects this and denies it all; but this is not right. One ought to say: praise for virtues of the soul is nobler and more correct; but as for rejecting all other virtues in one stroke, I do not think that anyone will support him or agree with him.⁷⁹

Consequently, on invective poetry:

The best method of *hijā'* is to deny in someone the virtues of the soul, and the virtues that are composed (of these). *Hijā'* on physical blemishes is inferior to the first-mentioned type. Qudāma does not even consider it as *hijā'* at all. Similarly, defects and depravity on the part of one's male and female ancestors he does not consider as a blemish, nor does he think it right to use it in *hijā'*. But except for a negligible minority people are not of his opinion.⁸⁰

It is interesting to see that Ibn Rashīq, even when he admits Qudāma's view in principle, seems to undermine it by his wording. For Qudāma, in all likelihood, had implied that censure should be just: his theory of *hijā'* is based on the principle of fairness; but Ibn Rashīq employs the verb 'to deny', or 'to rob' (*yaslub*), as if a virtue actually present in a person could be denied in a poem.

A contemporary of Ibn Rashīq, Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 466/1074), quoted with approval part of the passage by al-Āmidī translated above in his *Sirr al-faṣāḥa* (apparently he did not know al-Āmidī's monograph on Qudāma's book). Al-Khafājī, pupil and admirer of Abū 'l-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī, was a critic, a minor poet, played a role in politics and also wrote on dogmatics.⁸¹ Perhaps that is why he, at last, brings in the problem of free-will and predestination that underlies the controversy:

What Abū 'l-Qāsim (al-Āmidī) says is correct. Even if we took into consideration only the fact that (human) souls are created with a natural inclination towards beautiful faces, this would have been a sufficient and adequate answer. If Qudāma believes that this is no virtue because one is created this way, then this is valid for all virtues of the soul; for a generous man is created as a generous person, a courageous man courageous and an intelligent man intelligent. Just as someone with an ugly face cannot exchange his appearance for another, so is an ignorant man unable to

⁷⁸ *ʿUmda*, ii, 145.

⁷⁹ *ʿUmda*, ii, 135.

⁸⁰ *ʿUmda*, ii, 174.

⁸¹ Ibn Shākir, *Fawāl*, ii, 220-24, Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, xvii, 503-8.

acquire an intellect superior to his own. Qudāma ought not to approve of praise on account of nobility of soul, or of descent and origin, because this, too, is analogous to appearances.⁸²

Al-Khafājī's rejoinder is not easy to answer, but it is too simplistic. As we have seen, theologians and philosophers before his time had already made a distinction between acts resulting from a natural disposition and those that are the result of conscious exertion. It is true, says al-Tawḥīdī in his *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʿānasa* (written c. 375/985), that a noble quality of character (*khuluq*) is derived from physical constitution or creation (*khālq*), and that, therefore, it is as impossible to transform a quality of character as it is to exchange one physical properties; nevertheless, books on 'mending one's character' or 'correcting the soul' have not been written as futile and pointless exercises, for a partial reformation of one's character is possible.⁸³ Virtues are not all alike in this respect: courage and its opposite are, more than others, connected with one's physical constitution; therefore a brave man will not easily change into a coward or *vice versa*. Generosity and stinginess, on the other hand, are pure or almost pure character traits; their owners may therefore be praised or blamed accordingly.⁸⁴ Intelligence—the chief virtue according to Qudāma—has nothing to do with one's character; it is outside the realm of ethics.⁸⁵

In the thirteenth century the discussion is taken up once more by Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī (d. 684/1285) and Ismāʿīl Ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-Athīr (d. 691/1292). Since both deserve to be studied separately and in more detail, I shall deal with their ideas in their proper places.⁸⁶

Thus Qudāma's opinions stimulated the discussion of one of the basic problems of *hiyāʾ*. His two main failings, a defective ethical theory and a lack of concern for Arabic poetical practice, were noticed and criticized. The ethical problem of truly deserved praise and blame is not limited to poetry, of course; it is just as unsolvable as that of free-will and predestination. Theologians have been applying themselves to the elucidation of similar questions when dealing with the difference between *ḥamd* and *madḥ*, and the opposite of both, *dhamm*. But in these discussions no attention is given to poetry and poetics. Yet there is no reason why the construction of an ethical theory should not be attempted which comprises poetry as well, while acknowledging the special status of poetical

⁸² Khafājī, *Sirr*, pp. 250 f. He seems to forget that Qudāma did in fact disapprove of praise or blame on account of someone's descent.

⁸³ Tawḥīdī, *Imtāʿ*, i, 148 f.

⁸⁴ *Imtāʿ*, i, 151.

⁸⁵ *Imtāʿ*, i, 153.

⁸⁶ Below, pp. 100 ff., 117 ff.

discourse. That poetry has rules of its own in this respect is admitted by Aristotle, who says in his *Poetics*: 'Correctness in poetry is not the same thing as correctness in morals'.⁸⁷ As long as poetics and ethics can be kept separate, Qudāma is consistent: people should be judged only for specifically human, i.e. moral, qualities, and poetry only for specifically poetical, i.e. aesthetical, properties. But as soon as the two domains were telescoped, in poetry of praise and blame, Qudāma lost sight of the difference; which is not wholly surprising, seeing that even the Greek philosophers had some difficulty in keeping ethics and aesthetics apart. Platonic and Aristotelian aesthetics has an ethical stamp; Aristotle's ethics, with its doctrine of the just mean and its emphasis on harmony and proportion, has an important aesthetic component. In this connection one may point at the principle, formulated by Aristotle, that beauty may consist in being well-adapted to the intended purpose, a teleological definition of beauty that seems to be echoed in Qudāma's statement that poetry is good, or beautiful, when it does justice to the intended purpose (*al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd*, see above, p. 64). Here he gave the word *gharaḍ* its technical meaning of 'poetical mode', whereas in the beginning of his work it simply means 'aim' or 'goal' when he says that an artistically high level is the 'aim' of the poetic art.⁸⁸ The ambiguity of this word may have helped to pave the way for the confusion between ethics and aesthetics in *Naqd al-shiʿr*.

The second shortcoming of Qudāma's work is, in the end, more serious. It is sometimes argued that the relative failure of *Naqd al-shiʿr* lies in its systematic and analytic approach, thought to be too foreign to Arab taste and unfit for the study of Arabic poetry. It is true that the systematic plan of the work never gained much popularity; but, again, there is no reason why a systematic theory should be incompatible with Arabic poetry. However, such a theory should at least try to explain, in discussing *hijāʾ* for instance, how its several types work in practice and why they are, or are not, effective.

Here Qudāma failed where ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī succeeded—but in another subject: figurative speech. Qudāma, in spite of his attention, in separate sections, for the interaction of the elements of poetry, was not even able to appreciate the combined effect of the rhyme-letter and the theme in a *rajaz* poem of eleven lines by Muḥammad Ibn ʿIlqa al-Taymī. Quoting it in the chapter on 'faults of the wording (or: the phonological level, *lafẓ*)', he calls it 'hideously barbaric', apparently because of its

⁸⁷ *Poetics*, 1460b, translation by M. E. Hubbard, in D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (eds.), *Ancient Literary Criticism*, p. 127; see also Aristotle, *Ethics*, p. 50.

⁸⁸ *Naqd*, p. 3.

rhyme in *-khī* (extremely rare and generally considered repulsive) and such lines as *ḍamma 'l-ṣamālīkhī ṣimākha 'l-aṣṣlakhī* ('...contained as the earwax in a deaf man's earhole'). Qudāma, needless to say, condemns it. Repulsive indeed, the poem is an invective on a certain Ibn al-Fanshakh and as such, with its repeated expectorative sounds blending in well with the theme and the addressee's name, highly effective.⁸⁹ Qudāma seems to have been insensible to humour; he does not show any affinity with light verse: a serious handicap when writing on *hijā'*.

3. *Classifications*

The tenth century saw a few more attempts towards a classification of modes and genres. One of the attempts to classify poetry has, however, nothing to do with modes or genres; it is wholly non-literary and based on ethics. Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), in the course of his reflections on the ideal state called *Fuṣūl al-madanī* ('Aphorisms of the Statesman'), divides poetry into six kinds. Unlike Plato, from whom he diverges on a number of essential points, he not only allows but recommends three kinds: poems which are aimed at the improvement of the three aspects of the human mind, viz. the rational faculty, the tendencies resulting from 'strength' (such as anger and pride) and those resulting from 'weakness' (lusts, fear, etc.). Thus the first kind of poetry leads to a true appreciation of virtue and vice, while the second and third, by breaking down excesses to moderation, induce people to act virtuously. The other three, blameworthy, kinds of poetry are the exact opposites in that 'they corrupt all that the former correct, bringing it from moderation to excess'.⁹⁰

Obviously, everything that goes under the name of *hijā'* cannot be fitted neatly into one of these six categories. Imaginably, even the most virulent lampoon could be among the recommended kinds, provided that its effect—if not on the victim then on the public—were positive according to the philosopher's standards. The classification, indeed the value, of a poem would be subordinated to its effect; and since one poem might well have different effects on different people, a particular poem might well be bad and good at the same time or alternately. But al-Fārābī does not enlarge upon the subject.⁹¹ In his rather more Aristotelian treatise on 'the Canons of Poetry' he lists a number of poetical modes recognized by 'specialists in Arabic and Persian poetry', who divide poems into

⁸⁹ *Naqd*, pp. 102 f., quoted without comment in Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 542 f., Muẓaffar, *Naḍra*, p. 432; cf. Muḥammad Yaḥyā Zayn al-Dīn, 'Arājiz al-muqillīn', *RAAD*, 57 (1982) pp. 171 f.

⁹⁰ Fārābī, *Fuṣūl*, pp. 135 f., cf. Dunlop's translation, pp. 49 f.

⁹¹ For an indication that his views were probably not all that liberal, see below, p. 100.

invective poems (*ahājī*), panegyric, boasting poems, riddles, comic poems (*mudhikāi*), love-poems, descriptive poems, etc.⁹² But he is not interested in these and goes on to discuss Greek genres (which include *qūmūdhiyā*, comedy, said to contain invective, *ahājī*, on people and animals, their blameworthy characteristics as well as their ugly appearances).

More satisfying, from a literary point of view, are the generic categories proposed by Iṣḥāq Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb, who wrote after 335/946. He postulates four basic types, including *hijā'*; some of its subdivisions or 'branches' being *dhamm* 'blame', *ʿatb* 'reproach', *istibtā'* 'complaining about slowness (in fulfilling promises)' and *ta'nīb* 'rebuke'.⁹³ The list is not meant to be exhaustive; and since not every item is illustrated it is not wholly clear what the precise distinction is between *hijā'* and *dhamm*, or *ʿatb* and *ta'nīb*. One of the basic types is *lahw*, 'light verse', comprising a heterogeneous collection of themes related to pleasure (love, hunting, wine and *mujūn*, which is mainly illicit sex and obscenities); it is possible that the less serious and more scurrilous varieties of what is usually called *hijā'* would qualify as *lahw* in Ibn Wahb's system. Ibn Wahb takes up one of Qudāma's points: whether in panegyric or *hijā'* one should employ motifs that are appropriate to the addressee: 'one should not praise a civil servant for his courage, or a specialist in Islamic law for his being a good epistolographer (...) but everyone should be praised for his own craft and his own virtue, and blamed for his own vice'.⁹⁴ It is true that, in practice, one may classify panegyric poems according to their addressees: since in each poem a more or less ideal type is portrayed, all poems on generals, for instance, tend to be rather similar thematically. Likewise there are distinct sub-genres: 'praise of civil servants', 'praise of caliphs', etc. In *hijā'*, on the other hand, many aspects that are 'improper' (in more than one sense) are deliberately brought in: whereas a good lineage and chastity may not be among the foremost themes when praising a philologist, their opposites are invariably part of coarse lampoons on such a person.

Nevertheless a classification partly on these lines was made by Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. c. 360/970) in his redaction of the *Dīwān* of Abū Nuwās. The chapter of *hijā'*⁹⁵ is subdivided into: 1. *hijā'* on tribes, nomadic and sedentary Arabs in Basra, 2. on high-ranking and noble persons,⁹⁶ 3. on scholars, 4. on poets, 5. on all sorts of people (*akhlāṭ al-nās*; they include

⁹² *Qawānīn*, ed. Arberry, p. 269 (translation p. 275), ed. Badawī, p. 152.

⁹³ Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 135.

⁹⁴ *Burhān*, p. 144.

⁹⁵ Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ii, 1-157.

⁹⁶ *ashraf* and *sāda*, here not having the restricted meaning of 'descendants of the Prophet'.

singing-girls, courtezans, their owners-trainers, civil servants, as well as, surprisingly, the river Nile, the rain and the month of Ramaḍān), 6. *hijāʿ* by way of jesting and mockery, 7. excessively obscene and badly composed *hijāʿ* (*al-mufriṭ al-mufḥiṣh wa-ʿl-ḍaʿīf al-raṣf*). A final section contains '*hijāʿ*' not belonging to any of the preceding categories'; Ḥamza explains that he only included it for the sake of completeness and that the poetry is so weak that it is in fact unfit to be transmitted.⁹⁷

Several criteria are used here: the addressee, the tone and the style, and the quality; often the reason why a particular poem is assigned to one of the sections nos. 5 to 7 is not clear. The relationship between *hijāʿ* and *mujūn* is shown by Ḥamza's remark that he has removed some poems from the former to the latter category.⁹⁸ *ʿItāb*, 'reproach', has a chapter of its own between panegyric and *hijāʿ* 'because it is half *madīḥ* and half *hijāʿ*'.⁹⁹ In thematically arranged *dīwāns* and anthologies *ʿitāb* and related types are usually kept apart from *hijāʿ*. Ibn Wahb and other system-builders, by accommodating *ʿitāb* within *hijāʿ*, or deriving it from *hijāʿ*, created a supercategory with a misleading name; for *hijāʿ*, in such a system, has lost its usual meaning of invective and humiliating verse. *Dhamm*, 'blame' or 'censure' would have been a better name; *hijāʿ* was chosen, probably, because the term was more current when poetry was spoken of. Even those who reduced poetry to two basic types used the term; see the anonymous opinion quoted by Ibn Rashīq: 'All poetry is one of two types: *madḥ* or *hijāʿ*'¹⁰⁰—perhaps an echo of the translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* with its fundamental opposition of *madīḥ* and *hijāʿ*, representing tragedy and comedy. In spite of these and other attempts of the theorists to stretch the meaning of *hijāʿ*, this meaning remained remarkably constant in common usage throughout the centuries.

⁹⁷ *Dīwān*, ii, 132; cf. 147 f.

⁹⁸ *Dīwān*, ii, 148.

⁹⁹ *Dīwān*, i, 3. The placing of *zuhd* 'ascetism' after *hijāʿ* is justified according to Ḥamza by the fact that the former consists in 'blaming the world' and the latter in 'blaming people's honour' (ibid.). Although this association of *hijāʿ* with 'blaming the world' was occasionally followed by later authors (see below, p. 120) the construction sounds rather contrived; see Schoeler 'Die Einteilung', pp. 35 f., Heinrichs, 'Literary Theory', pp. 42 f.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 121. When Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣīr (d. second half of 9th century) said that 'poetry is either *madḥ* or *hijāʿ*' (Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 434) he meant something else, viz. the overriding importance of these two types of poetry compared with the other *aghārād*.

CHAPTER FIVE

INCONSISTENCIES EAST AND WEST

1. *Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī and later anthologists*

When they turn their minds to terms and concepts, the critics tend to get carried away by their own constructs or those of their predecessors, thereby neglecting common usage and poetical practice. It has been remarked above,¹ for instance, that Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī paraphrased with apparent approval Qudāma's opinion on proper *hiǰāʿ*, in his work on stylistics *al-Šināʿatayn*, and his anthology, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*. The latter work has a lengthy section of *hiǰāʿ*.² Most of this section is devoted to moral and intellectual defects, it is true, but, especially towards the end, there are many instances of physical blemishes being mocked in poems praised by al-ʿAskarī, such as 'one of the nicest' epigrams of its kind by Ibn al-Rūmī:

You've got a face like the end of a document, with scribbles
of many people
Like the signatures of witnesses, illegible, attesting
that you are a bastard.³

With evident admiration he quotes Jarīr's likening someone's upper canines to black beetles in a dank and smelly well,⁴ the unpleasant effects of what seems a bad cold described by Ibn al-Rūmī,⁵ or Jaḥẓa on halitosis.⁶ Obscenities are likewise cited and called 'nice' and 'wonderful'.⁷ One particularly scurrilous fragment, thirteen lines on a singing girl by Ibn al-Rūmī, he praises as 'wonderful and unparalleled in its wit-tiness, its high quality and the abundance of its ideas';⁸ so that when he omits some lines in another quotation 'because they are *sakhīf*',⁹ this

¹ Above, p. 70.

² *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 170-216, grouped together with 'reproach' and 'apology' in one longer chapter.

³ *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 188.

⁴ i, 206.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., cf. i, 208 f.

⁷ For instance, i, 207. Note, here and elsewhere, the method of *tašhīf* erratically employed by the modern editor in a feeble attempt to mask some of the obscene words: read *naḡk* for *nabk* (i, 207), *nāʿika* for *nāʿila* (i, 184), *uyūrahum* for *ubūrahum* (i, 200), *ayrī* for *abrī* (i, 212). Other words are left undotted (*hilāraka*, i, 214).

⁸ i, 209.

⁹ i, 205.

word seems to mean 'inferior in quality, stupid', rather than 'obscene', although it is often used in that sense. Al-^ʿAskarī includes some of his own epigrams, such as

A black woman, whose tears drip like a furnace when it is
sprinkled with water:
She is as ugly as a sick man's diarrhoea on a plate.¹⁰

Near the end of the chapter, however, the author thinks that some justification is called for:

If my intention had not been to collect the most important motifs, as was stipulated before, I would have left out repulsive expressions in poetry and prose. But if scholars omitted the transmission of obscene (or 'inferior', *sakhīf*) poetry, they would be deprived of many useful bits of information and an abundance of beautiful passages, for instance from the poetry of al-Farazdaq, Jarīr, al-Ba^ʿīth, al-Akhṭal and others. If it were not proper to mention sexual parts frankly by their names, then the lexicographers would be mistaken in giving them these names; and that is absurd.¹¹

The apologetic tone is unmistakable; the wording of the last sentence is rather peculiar, but al-^ʿAskarī apparently had in mind what al-Jāhīz and Ibn Qutayba had argued before: words in themselves are not obscene. The comparison with lexicography is in fact illuminating: just as the 'metalanguage' of the lexicographers cannot be considered to have direct reference to the obscenities of the 'real' world and is therefore not obscene, so the discourse of critics and anthologists, including their quotations, is exempt from prudish and moral objections because it is removed from its original context onto a different level. This attitude can be found implicitly in many works of criticism and anthologies. The analogy is not wholly exact, however: in linguistics the distinction between the two levels is clear, but in the case of literary or 'metaliterary' discourse there is a considerable area of uncertainty between the two. There is no ambiguity if a poet utters a lampoon in the face of his opponent in order to revile him; but where exactly the next level begins is not so clear.

The attitude of anthologists who see no harm in quoting *hijāʾ* has its counterpart in the practice of those poets who, when editing their own works, exclude *hijāʾ* from them. Al-Buḥturī is reported to have ordered his son on his deathbed to burn all his *hijāʾ*, saying,

It is something that I have said at a certain time, venting (literally 'curing') my rage with it and repaying bad things done to me. But now this purpose

¹⁰ i, 205, cf. ^ʿAskarī, *Dīwān*, p. 160, *Ṣināʿatayn*, p. 261 (first line).

¹¹ *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 211.

is a thing of the past. If it survives it will be recited; people bequeath their enmity and friendship to their descendants, and I am afraid that some of this may affect you in your life.¹²

In any case, in spite of his apologetics, al-ʿAskarī praises two ‘chaste’ lines, calling them the most elegant *hijāʾ* that he knows and adding that they are ‘more eloquent than mentioning sexual parts and obscene and malicious things about (the addressees’) mothers and sisters’.¹³ In literary works, unlike lexicographical works, apologies similar to that of al-ʿAskarī are common. The subject of the thirteenth nightly session of al-Tawḥīdī’s *al-Imtāʿ wa-ʿl-muʿānasa*, devoted to *mujūn*, is justified with a reference to the necessary alternation of *jidd* and *hazl*, seriousness and jesting, for which the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās is invoked.¹⁴ ‘Do not be disgusted when you hear such things’, al-Tawḥīdī says elsewhere, after quoting some particularly scurrilous fragments:

for if you shun them altogether your understanding will decrease and your character will become obtuse. Nothing agrees better with the intellect than to examine worldly affairs, to know their good and bad sides, things open as well as hidden.¹⁵

His masterpiece of invective, *Mathālib* (or *Akhlaq*) *al-wazīrayn*—a book so intensely virulent that the very possession of a copy was thought to attract misfortune—¹⁶ is an inextricable mixture of literary and ‘metaliterary’ or critical discourse; its introduction is a long justification and apology for *hijāʾ*. In the course of it the grossest obscenities in poetry or prose are quoted: yet among the things that the two viziers are blamed for is their love of obscenities and vilification.¹⁷

Among critics and anthologists there are two extremes: those who see no need for a justification of obscenity, and those who will not have anything to do with *fuḥsh* at all. Among the latter was ʿAlī Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001), critic and cadī, author of ‘The Mediation between al-Mutanabbī and his opponents’, who approved of only that *hijāʾ*¹⁸

that runs as a jest and as nonsense (*al-hazl wa-ʿl-tahāfut*); that is not wholly outspoken nor wholly allusive; its content being readily understood and easily memorized; quick in clinging to the heart and cleaving to the soul. But calumny (*qadhf*) and obscenity (*ifḥāsh*) are merely abuse (*sibāb maḥd*), in

¹² *Aghānī*, xxi, 37, Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, (v), 2787 f. Judging by the amount of *hijāʾ* in the *Dīwān*, the order did not have the desired effect.

¹³ *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 182.

¹⁴ *Imtāʿ*, ii, 50, 60.

¹⁵ Tawḥīdī, *Baṣāʾir*, p. 49.

¹⁶ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, v, 113.

¹⁷ See e.g. *Mathālib*, pp. 86 f., 103 f., 111, 116, 120 f., 122.

which a poet does nothing but to provide a sound metre and correct syntax.¹⁸

Perhaps he was familiar with the views of al-Nāshi³ al-Akbar (d. 293/906), Mu^ctazilite theologian, poet and critic, who said in a poem on poetry:

When you make *hijā*³ on someone, you should loathe the ways of those
who use foul language;
And you should make outspokenness medicine in it, and you should
consider allusiveness a hidden disease.¹⁹

In another poem, however, al-Nāshi³ says:

If you want to hint at something dubious
you should leave the matter midway between clear and cryptic.
Thus you make the person who hears it mingle his doubts
with clarity, and his conjectures with certainty.²⁰

Al-Jurjānī praises, it is true, an obscene passage in a poem by al-Mutanabbī, but without quoting the worst lines;²¹ in the rest of *al-Wasāṭa* obscenities are strikingly absent. Although, in a discussion of al-Mutanabbī's alleged heretical opinions, he states that 'religion has nothing to do with poetry',²² one cannot deny a certain correlation between professed religiousness and a declared dislike of obscenity. Both are connected as much with decorum as with morals; since in poetry it is decorum that matters in the first place, not morals, al-Jurjānī condemns obscenity but not heretical ideas. Devout and pious people tend to be more scrupulous and prudish in this matter; yet it is surprising to see how many exceptions there are. One could not call al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba irreligious; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (5th/11th century), author of an anthology that is very liberal with *mujūn*,²³ also wrote studies on the Koran and ethics. The poet who was a paragon of obscenity, Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (or Ibn Ḥajjāj; d. 391/1001), was accused of lacking in morals and religion by those who did not know him; but, we are told, he was a decent man of good character, dignified behaviour and religiousness,²⁴ who was

¹⁸ Jurjānī, *Wasāṭa*, p. 24, quoted by al-Tha^cālībī (*Yatīma*, iv, 5) and with slight variations by Ibn Rashīq (*Umda*, ii, 171).

¹⁹ Quoted in Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 114; cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, (iv), 1300 (Rosenthal's translation iii, 388).

²⁰ Rosenthal's translation (Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, iii, 390); see Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, (iv), 1302 and cf. Huṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 686, Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 115.

²¹ Jurjānī, *Wasāṭa*, pp. 150 f., cf. Mutanabbī, *Dīwān* (ed. Dieterici), pp. 339-45.

²² Jurjānī, *Wasāṭa*, p. 64.

²³ See for instance the chapters on homosexuality, copulation, lesbianism, farting, etc., brought together in the section on '*mujūn* and *sukhf*' (Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, ii, 143-68).

²⁴ Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, xii, 333.

even appointed *muḥtasib*, 'market inspector', among whose duties was the supervision of public moral behaviour in Baghdad. In an interesting passage he tells how he learned his art by listening, on summer nights, pen and paper at hand, to the insults shouted by men and women on the roofs of the taverns next to his father's house, making notes and asking them on the following morning about any obscure points, like al-Aṣmaʿī and his bedouin informants.²⁵ The comparison with al-Aṣmaʿī is not unlike the analogy of lexicographer and anthologist mentioned before; the difference in this case being that Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, unlike the philologists, transformed his philological activities into poetry of his own.

Inconsistencies on the part of the critics, noted already on several occasions, are very common. Many profess their abhorrence of obscenity or coarse *hiǰāʿ* on one page while quoting examples on another. Even al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022), author of the anthology *Zahr al-ādāb*, which differs greatly, in this respect, from its contemporary, *Yatīmat al-dahr* by al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038), included a few scurrilous lines. He has kept his work free, he says, from 'base and plebeian' (*sāqiṭ* and *sūqī*) themes²⁶ and from 'vulgarity' (*ibtidhāl*);²⁷ he condemns jokes, apparently,²⁸ and says that he has safeguarded the book from obscenities by Ibn al-Rūmī on al-Akhfash al-ṣaghīr²⁹ and those poems by Rāshid Ibn Ishāq Abū Ḥakīma (or Ḥukayma; a 3rd/9th-century poet) that deal with his favourite theme, his self-declared sexual impotence.³⁰ Elsewhere, however, he quotes a well-known obscene line by Ibn Dāra (1st/7th century) accusing a tribe of their perverse fondness for she-camels;³¹ or a fragment by Ibn al-Rūmī on a black girl,³² adding, with reason: 'this is quite clear and not in need of any philological explanations'. With explicit approval he cites an invective epigram by an anonymous contemporary in which a line by al-Nābigha ('like camomile in the morning, after a shower: dry above and moist beneath') is used in a scurrilous sense,³³ as well as a similar perverted borrowing of a famous line by Muhalhil: 'But for the wind one could hear in Ḥujr the rattle of helmets (*bayḍ*, also 'eggs', 'balls') struck by steel swords (*dhukūr*, also 'penises')'.³⁴

²⁵ *Wafī*, xii, 333 f.

²⁶ Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 33.

²⁷ *Zahr*, p. 36.

²⁸ *Zahr*, pp. 521 f.

²⁹ *Zahr*, p. 532.

³⁰ *Zahr*, p. 714. On Abū Ḥakīma see *GAS*, ii, 577 f.

³¹ *Zahr*, p. 56.

³² *Zahr*, pp. 276 f.

³³ *Zahr*, pp. 278 f.; the poet is al-Lahḥām al-Harrānī, a 10th-century poet from Bukhārā, see Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, iv, 105.

³⁴ *Zahr*, p. 279; cf. Tawḥīdī, *Imtāʿ*, ii, 53, Ibn Masʿada's refutation of Ibn Gharsiyya's *Risāla* against the Arabs, in *Nawādir al-makḥḥūtāt*, i, 268 and Qartājannī, *Minḥāj*, p. 331.

Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), to give another example, gives rather more *fuhsh* in his biographical dictionary. He pretends to do so reluctantly:

I say with Abū Manṣūr (al-Thaʿālibī): But for the words of Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mahdī, who said that 'seriousness in polite literature (*adab*) is serious, jesting in it (merely) jesting', I would have kept this book free from these obscenities (*mujūn*).³⁵

Elsewhere he tells us that he has suppressed lines from invective poems that were too scurrilous,³⁶ although it is difficult to see why he saw no objection to many lines that he did quote, such as those by Ibn Sukkara,³⁷ Ibn al-Rūmī,³⁸ al-Wāsānī,³⁹ to mention but a few. Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) too, in his biographical dictionary, says more than once that he would have included poems 'but for the obscenities in them',⁴⁰ while quoting more or less obscene lines in other places.⁴¹

Sometimes the objections to certain kinds of *hijāʾ* are more specific. ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201), author of the vast anthology *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, shows on many occasions that he is not averse to quoting even the smuttiest kinds of *hijāʾ*.⁴² But after giving 33 lines, some of them rather coarse, of a poem by Ibn al-Habbāriyya (d. c. 509/1115) against the leading persons of the Seljuq state, he adds: 'I have left out many lines, because they refer to the Noble See (*al-sudda al-sharīfa*)'⁴³ meaning the caliph: although everybody involved had long since died, the dynasty of the Abbasids was still reigning.

Other anthologists cannot be accused of overt inconsistencies because they do not impose any restrictions upon themselves explicitly. Their own preferences diverge greatly, however. The brothers al-Khālidi (d. c. 390/1000 and 380/990) in *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir*, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), in his *Ghurur al-fawāʾid*, or Usāma Ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188) in *Lubāb al-albāb*—to name some different types of anthology—hardly include any scurrilities; al-Ḥātimī (d. 388/998) in *Hilyat al-muḥāḍara*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī in *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabāʾ* and al-Bākhārī (d. 467/1075) in *Dumyat al-qaṣr* rather more.

On the possible sexual connotations of Muhalhil's line, see S. P. Stetkevych, 'Ritual and Sacrificial Elements in the Poetry of Blood-Vengeance: Two Poems by Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmaḥ and Muhalhil ibn Rabīʿah', *JNES*, 45 (1986), p. 43.

³⁵ Yāqūt, *Muṣjam al-udabāʾ*, ix, 207 (on Ibn al-Ḥajjāj), cf. Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, iii, 30. It seems that Ibn al-Mahdī did in fact say, 'seriousness in *adab* as well as jesting in it is serious' (*Aghānī*, xx, 281).

³⁶ *Muṣjam al-udabāʾ*, ix, 264, x, 152, 253; cf. xi, 122.

³⁷ ii, 88 f.

³⁸ iii, 239.

³⁹ e.g. ix, 257-64 (cf. Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, i, 349-55).

⁴⁰ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, ii, 182, 183, iv, 465, v, 385.

⁴¹ e.g. i, 273, 323, ii, 34.

⁴² e.g. Iṣfahānī, *Kharīda (al-ʿIrāq)*, ii, 543 f.

⁴³ *Kharīda (al-ʿIrāq)*, ii, 84.

There is, I believe, not much of a pattern in this divergence; they are largely explained by personal preferences and circumstances. On the whole, critics and anthologists from the western parts of the Arab world were more restrained in this respect than their eastern colleagues. In some cases this may be explained as a consequence of the puritanical outlook of ruling dynasties such as the Almoravids or the Almohads, under whose rule some important works on poetry and criticism were composed in Spain. In other cases, however, one cannot do much more than resort to some regional *zeitgeist* hovering over, for instance, al-Qayrawān and influencing al-Ḥuṣrī, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Nahshalī, Ibn al-Rashīq and Ibn Sharaf in their works of criticism. The two last-mentioned, in their mutual *hijā’*, did not shun obscenity. But Ibn Rashīq condemns it in his *al-‘Umda* and Ibn Sharaf’s criticism is often moralistic.⁴⁴

An aversion to *fuḥsh* did not imply, in their case, a disregard of *hijā’* altogether. Although al-Nahshalī (d. 405/1014), according to Ibn Rashīq, ‘never made *hijā’*’,⁴⁵ a large proportion of what remains of his *al-Mumtī’*⁴⁶ is devoted to the illustration of the function and the effects of *hijā’* in many anecdotes culled from older, familiar sources, and arranged in chapters that were used by Ibn Rashīq in his *al-‘Umda*. *Al-Mumtī’* being an anthology, its critical content is slight. The chapter on ‘physical beauty and handsome faces’⁴⁷ shows al-Nahshalī to be an opponent of Qudāma’s views of proper *madīḥ*, but Qudāma or his opinions are mentioned nowhere. Only occasionally are al-Nahshalī’s own comments inserted, as when he analyses the invective density of four lines ascribed to al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī.⁴⁸ That he was interested in the classification of poetry is evident from a few quotations in *al-‘Umda*:

‘Abd al-Karīm said, Poetry is of several types:⁴⁹ poetry that is wholly good, such as what belongs to the category of ‘asceticism’ (*zuhd*), good admoni-

⁴⁴ See Ibn Sharaf, *Masā’il al-intiqād*, pp. 52 ff. on Imra’ al-Qays, p. 34 on Ibn al-Rūmī (who will be punished in the Hereafter for his *hijā’*).

⁴⁵ *‘Umda*, i, 112. Other poets from al-Qayrawān who refrained from making *hijā’* were al-Bazzāz and al-Khushanī. cf. Bouyahia, *La vie littéraire*, p. 343 note. One should not conclude that, as Bouyahia says, ‘les poètes ifrīgiens n’aimaient pas faire la satire’; yet it seems to me that the more virulent forms of *hijā’* were cultivated on a smaller scale and less readily admitted as ‘polite’ literature than in the East.

⁴⁶ All we have is an abridgement, *Ikhtiyār* or *Muntakhab*, see Bouyahia, ‘Le livre d’al-Nahshalī “retrouvé”’.

⁴⁷ Nahshalī, *Mumtī’*, pp. 73-92.

⁴⁸ *Mumtī’*, pp. 57 f.; on these four lines see Ibn Qutayba, *Shi’r*, pp. 161, 165, *Aghānī*, xi, 13.

⁴⁹ *asṇāf*; thus the edition Cairo 1325/1907, i, 76. The edition by Muḥammad Muḥyī ‘l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd has (*arba’at*) *asṇāf*, ‘(four) types’, leaving the reader in uncertainty whether the parenthesis is found in a MS or an emendation by the editor, cf. the preface, p. 8.

tions, (...); poetry that is wholly charm (*ẓarf*), such as descriptions and comparisons (...); poetry that is wholly evil (*sharr*), viz. *hijāʿ*⁵⁰ and those rash attacks by a poet on people's honour; and poetry by which one makes a profit.⁵⁰

A somewhat different division, also into four categories, appears in another quotation:

ʿAbd al-Karīm said, There are altogether four types of poetry: panegyric, *hijāʿ*, gnomic poetry (*ḥikma*) and 'light verse' (*lahw*). Each type branches out into subtypes: panegyric into elegy, self-praise and gratitude (*shukr*); *hijāʿ* into censure (*dhamm*), reproach (*ʿitāb*) and complaining about slowness (in fulfilling promises, *istibtāʿ*); gnomic poetry into proverbs (*amthāl*), commending abstinence, and admonitions; and light verse into love poetry, hunting poetry and description of wine and inebriated persons.⁵¹

This classification is almost identical with that by Ibn Wahb.⁵² Comparing the two passages by al-Nahshalī one may discern a superficial likeness between the two sets of four. But one notices, first, a discrepancy in that 'descriptive' poetry, a rather neutral category, called *ẓarf* in the former passage, has been restricted to specific types of poetry with a distinct flavour of sinfulness; whereas *hijāʿ*, first called wholly evil, is said to include types that can hardly be called evil: censure and reproach. The apparent confusion results from what are in fact two different classifications: one being impressionistic, based on vaguely moral and aesthetic judgements, the other more exhaustive, based on thematic distinctions. Thus the term *hijāʿ* is used twice, but with different meanings, and it is likely that Ibn Rashīq was thinking of the more restricted meaning of 'invective' when he said that al-Nahshalī never made *hijāʿ*.

2. Ibn Rashīq

In *al-ʿUmda* Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1064 or 463/1071) gave *hijāʿ* all the attention it deserves.⁵³ Its function and effects are discussed in several chapters, especially 'On those who were raised by poetry and those who were abased by it',⁵⁴ 'On the protection of tribes by means of their

⁵⁰ *ʿUmda*, i, 118.

⁵¹ *ʿUmda*, i, 121.

⁵² Above, p. 76. 'Inebriated persons' (*al-makhmūr*) is obviously a misreading of Ibn Wahb's *al-mujūn*.

⁵³ His work *Kitāb al-mamādiḥ wa-l-madhāmm*, 'Praiseworthy and blameworthy qualities' (cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, ii, 88) is lost; rather than a study of *madiḥ* and *hijāʿ* it seems to have been a work on the lines of al-Bayhaqī's *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-masāwīʿ* or al-Thaʿālibī's *al-Laṭāʾif wa-l-ẓarāʾif fi l-aḍḍād*, cf. Sharīshī, *Sharḥ*, i, 75. On this genre, see Geries, *Un genre littéraire arabe: al-maḥāsin wa-l-masāwīʿ*.

⁵⁴ *ʿUmda*, i, 40-42; cf. Nahshalī, *Mumtiʿ*, pp. 149-69.

poets'⁵⁵ 'The benefits and dangers of poetry',⁵⁶ 'Exposing oneself to poets',⁵⁷ 'Poets who made little poetry and those who were defeated',⁵⁸ and 'Those who were unwilling to vilify inferior people'.⁵⁹ In these sections Ibn Rashīq has collected a wealth of illustrations, most of them familiar, adopting, on the whole, a neutral stance without much personal comment. As so often in Arabic literature, the author makes his point clear mainly by a tendentious selection of quotations and anecdotes. A personal remark is found in the last-mentioned chapter:

Some poets don the clothes of pride and show a disdain of answering the *hijā'* of their equals and superiors, afraid of being upbraided themselves. This happened in the case of some of our contemporaries known to me, although they are quick to revile the lower classes (*al-sūqa wa-'l-bā'a*) and bully children and those who do not master the art (of making poetry).⁶⁰

At the end of the chapter he quotes with approval the opinion of Nuṣayb and others⁶¹ that a good poet who is disappointed in his patron should not revert to *hijā'*: 'these are sensible and just words; if poets would keep to them, they and other people would have peace'. He adds,

They made panegyric poetry and disapproved of *hijā'*; the more reason for those who make no panegyrics to make no *hijā'* on anyone at all. Yet some make nothing but *hajw* or what resembles it, like Yaḥyā Ibn Nawfal, mentioned by Di'bil in his *Ṭabaqāt*,⁶² and among our contemporaries, too, we find many such people.⁶³

He admires Ibn al-Rūmī for his versatility and power of invention; he was famous especially for his *hijā'* (hence it is said *ahjā min Ibn al-Rūmī*), yet, says Ibn Rashīq, his *hijā'* was neither better nor more abundant than his panegyric poetry, 'but a little evil means a lot'.⁶⁴ This rather disparaging opinion of *hijā'* does not prevent Ibn Rashīq from illustrating the figure of *tafrī'* ('branching off') with an epigram by Ibn al-Rūmī, 'the nastiest of its kind that I have heard':

He has a nimble jockey	who moves upon his back,
Stabbing his posterior	with a variety of stabs,
With something longer than his horns	and thicker than his brains. ⁶⁵

⁵⁵ *Umda*, i, 65-67, cf. *Mumti'*, pp. 135-49.

⁵⁶ *Umda*, i, 69-75.

⁵⁷ *Umda*, i, 76-80, cf. *Mumti'*, pp. 171-91.

⁵⁸ *Umda*, i, 106-8, on *mughallabūn* (see above, p. 49).

⁵⁹ *Umda*, i, 109-13, cf. *Mumti'*, pp. 215-21.

⁶⁰ *Umda*, i, 111.

⁶¹ Above, p. 36.

⁶² On the late Omayyad poet Yaḥyā Ibn Nawfal (not mentioned in *GAS*) see Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, pp. 741-45; more references in Mu'aybid, 'Nuṣūṣ', p. 130 note 153. 'He made much *hijā'* and hardly any panegyrics' (Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r*, p. 742).

⁶³ *Umda*, i, 112 f.

⁶⁴ *Umda*, i, 286.

⁶⁵ *Umda*, ii, 44, Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, (vi), 2558. In the last line the motifs of cuckoldry and stupidity 'branch off' from the motif of passive homosexuality.

When discussing poetry itself, its techniques and genres, rather than its effects and its place in society, Ibn Rashīq largely but not wholly abandons the ethical outlook adopted in the earlier chapters. A good poet ought to master all modes, *jidd* and *hazl*, *madiḥ* and *hijāʾ* alike, as did Bashshār and Abū Nuwās.⁶⁶ *Hijāʾ*, with love-poetry, panegyric, self-praise, elegy, 'requests' (*al-iqtidāʾ wa-l-istinjāz*), reproach, threats and warning, and apology, is among the modes discussed separately. 'Sensible poets' should only resort to *hijāʾ* when forced to do so, and only after due warning and threats with *hijāʾ*;⁶⁷ but it is obvious that a poem which threatens in this manner is often itself a kind of *hijāʾ*, as is clear from Ibn Rashīq's illustrations. Ibn al-Rūmī's poem addressed to al-Akhfash al-aṣḡhar ('Say to our grammarian Abū Ḥasan...') is sufficiently scathing to be called *hijāʾ*, even though it pales in comparison with those epigrams that form the execution of the threat.⁶⁸

The chapter on *hijāʾ* begins, significantly, with Abū 'Amr's dictum on chaste *hijāʾ*⁶⁹ and similar recommendations, such as the one by Khalaf al-Aḥmar: 'the strongest *hijāʾ* is what is most chaste and most truthful'.⁷⁰ By his choice of quotations Ibn Rashīq attempts to show that a moderate, chaste, mocking tone is not only morally preferable but more effective rhetorically. He summarizes and elucidates this as follows:

All poets are of the opinion that in *hijāʾ* it is better to make short poems and to refrain from obscenities, except for Jarīr; for he said to his sons: When you make panegyric poems, be prolix in your praise, but when you make *hijāʾ*, do the opposite.⁷¹ He also said, Make people laugh when you make *hijāʾ*.⁷² The same method was followed by 'Alī Ibn al-'Abbās Ibn al-Rūmī, for he made long and obscene poems. But in my opinion allusions are more effective in *hijāʾ* than explicitness (*al-ta'riḍ ahjā min al-taṣriḥ*), because the former leaves more room for surmisal and clings more to the mind, urging it to investigate the matter and find out the truth. If, on the other hand, *hijāʾ* is explicit, one knows all there is to know; one accepts it as certain from the start, and day by day it slips away because one forgets it or is bored with it. This (scil. allusiveness) is the right method, provided that the addressee is of some stature and standing. But if hints cannot make him come to his senses and only explicitness can hurt him, then the latter! That

⁶⁶ 'Umda, ii, 104.

⁶⁷ 'Umda, ii, 167.

⁶⁸ 'Umda, ii, 168 f. See Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, (ii), 741-45, 766, (iii), 1247-50, (vi), 2632, Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, p. 341, Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, 530-32, Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabāʾ*, xiii, 250-55, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, iii, 301 f., etc.

⁶⁹ Above, p. 43.

⁷⁰ 'Umda, ii, 171.

⁷¹ Compare 'Umda, ii, 128, Rāghib, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 52, Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib*, p. 175. In the last two sources it is justified by the remark that 'people never tire of hearing wicked things'.

⁷² See Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, v, 300.

is why the *hijāʿ* by Abū Nuwās varies; similarly with Abū ʿl-Ṭayyib (al-Mutanabbī), because of the difference in rank among the addressees of their *hijāʿ*.⁷³

Here the question of obscenity is again connected with the opposition of *taṣrīḥ* vs. *taʿrīḍ*. Ibn Rashīq is obviously influenced by al-Nāshīʿ al-Akbar and al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī, both of whom he quotes in other contexts.⁷⁴ All three condemn obscenity: but whereas al-Nāshīʿʿs position on *taṣrīḥ* vs. *taʿrīḍ* is not clear, and al-Jurjānī prefers a combination of frankness and allusions, Ibn Rashīq recommends, in most cases, allusiveness, *taʿrīḍ* (which has a separate section in his book in the chapter on *ishāra*).⁷⁵ Although *taṣrīḥ* and *taʿrīḍ* usually refer to outspokenness and allusion in general, not limited to *hijāʿ*,⁷⁶ at times they mean: mentioning, or not mentioning, the name of the person attacked in a poem.⁷⁷ To several critics or poets it depended precisely on this point whether a poem could be quoted or incorporated in a *dīwān*.⁷⁸

As we have seen⁷⁹ Ibn Rashīq supports Qudāmaʿs view of ʿproperʼ *hijāʿ* less than half-heartedly, because he adds that only a small minority would go as far as Qudāma in denying the name of *hijāʿ* to ʿimproperʼ invective.⁸⁰ After discussing examples, including an analysis of al-Akhṭalʿs line ʿ... Piss on the fire!ʼ, he concludes the chapter:

In any case, I believe that the strongest *hijāʿ* is that which hits the mark and is poignant (*waqaʿa ʿalā ʿl-nukta*)—which is exactly what Khalaf al-Aḥmar said.⁸¹

This rather idealistic view of *hijāʿ*: the best is what is chaste and true, is taken up once more in a chapter on the ʿcurrency of poetryʼ where he says:

⁷³ *ʿUmda*, ii, 172 f.

⁷⁴ *ʿUmda*, ii, 114, 171.

⁷⁵ *ʿUmda*, i, 303 f. *Ishāra* is a more inclusive term for ʿallusionʼ.

⁷⁶ See for instance Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ii, 291, Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, (ii), 1217, Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, (ii), 539, 544, Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, (ed. Dieterici), p. 109.

⁷⁷ cf. *Aghānī*, ix, 308 f. Compare Jonathan Swift on himself, from the poem quoted before:

Yet, malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice, but spared the name.
No individual could resent
Where thousands equally were meant.

(ʿOn the Death of Dr. Swiftʼ).

⁷⁸ See, e.g., above, p. 59, Ibn Aflāḥ, *Muqaddima*, p. 64, English introduction, p. 7. On Maʿarrīʿs habit of changing or suppressing names see Smoor, *Kings and Bedouins*, index under ʿelimination of namesʼ.

⁷⁹ Above, pp. 71 f.

⁸⁰ *ʿUmda*, ii, 174.

⁸¹ *ʿUmda*, ii, 175 f. It is, of course, not exactly what Khalaf said.

There is no tribe among the Arabs that has not been defamed, subjected to *hijā'* and upbraided. Some of these have been lowered by such poetry, when it agreed with the facts; others were not affected by it, since it did not agree with the facts and did not find a place to strike them,⁸²

—which contradicts what was argued in preceding chapters on the power of poetry. Indeed, Ibn Rashīq goes on to enumerate tribes and clans who did suffer from *hijā'* and 'were torn to pieces', in spite of their bravery and excellence. 'One is powerless against them (scil. the 'branding-irons' of *hijā'*-poems), even when they lie', as a poet said quoted by Ibn Rashīq.⁸³ The contradiction remains unresolved; it is not strange that *al-ʿUmda* became popular, for everyone can find in it some support for his own preferred views on poetry.

As a poet, Ibn Rashīq conformed to the usual practice of his contemporaries, not encumbered by the moral scruples expressed in *al-ʿUmda*. As many coarse invective epigrams are made merely as jokes, it is possible to consider them as falling outside the realm of morals altogether; the *ʿUmda* is silent on this point. *Hijā'* upon oneself by way of jest is similarly ignored.⁸⁴ Ibn Rashīq's rival, Ibn Sharaf, made such an epigram on himself and a bath:

Our bath is like an arsehole: stinking, dark and narrow.
I, in the midst of it, a prick, buggering it (sweat is the spittle).

Ibn Rashīq, jumping at the opportunity, added:

You are one-eyed and bald, too: your comparison is true.⁸⁵

In view of their relationship this is probably not to be regarded as jesting between friends. Ibn Rashīq even incorporated one of his own epigrams in *al-ʿUmda*:

His spouse—no harm in saying it—
is (like) the spouse of Zayd Ibn ʿUmayr:
Always whoring; but when she menstruates
she procures a prick for a friend.
She has two feet of the she-camel
of Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr.
Thus are Higher Things achieved
that are nothing if not good.⁸⁶

⁸² *ʿUmda*, ii, 182.

⁸³ *ʿUmda*, i, 78, cf. Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 159.

⁸⁴ For examples of self-mocking *hijā'* see Ibn Sallām, *Tabaqāt*, p. 397, Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, iv, 63, Ibn al-Jarrāh, *Warāqa*, pp. 84 f., 128 ff., *Aghānī*, vii, 269, x, 258, xx, 195, ʿAskarī, *Diwān al-maʿānī*, i, 194, ii, 250. An often quoted example is al-Ḥuṭayʿa's *hijā'* on himself (Ibn Qutayba, *ʿArab*, pp. 358 f., *Aghānī*, ii, 163 f., 197, Bayhaqī, *Mahasin*, p. 266, etc.).

⁸⁵ Ibn Shākir, *Fawāt*, iii, 359 f.; compare the version of Ibn Zāfir, *Badaʿiʿ*, i, 114.

⁸⁶ *ʿUmda*, ii, 88. The epigram alludes to lines by Zayd Ibn ʿUmayr (or ʿAmr), see Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn*, iv, 106, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Iqd*, vi, 115 f., etc., and by Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr, the feet of whose camel hardly touched the ground (see his *Diwān*, p. 8).

The lines serve as an illustration of 'allusion' to well-known lines and this is, apparently, a sufficient justification. It is even possible that Ibn Rashīq made the epigram for the occasion as an exercise, without having anyone in mind, as indeed, his introductory words seem to suggest: 'I myself have produced (*ṣanaʿtu*; or is it a corruption of *ḍammantu*?) by way of *hijāʾ*...'.

3. Spain

Further west, in Spain, one finds similar discrepancies between prescriptive criticism and poetical practice. Ibn Shuhayd (d. 426/1035), an important poet and critic, says in a *risāla*,

... They told me that Idrīs had made obscene *hijāʾ* on him (scil. Abū Jaʿfar, the vizier; *hajāh wa-afḥaṣh*). But I do not approve of obscenity. So I said on him, by means of allusions (*muʿarriḍan*)—for allusion is among the embellishments of speech,

Abū Jaʿfar is a man who writes a nice hand with
the nib of his pen; his eloquence is sweet.
Filled with fat and flesh he is: a fulness
that does not fit his secretaryship.
He sweats, not the water of modesty,⁸⁷
but what leaks of the excess of ritual impurity.
The water runs softly in his inferior parts,
causing in his upper part a hardness.⁸⁸

It is surprising to see a critic with such lofty ideas on poetry and its inspiration⁸⁹ stoop to naïvely denying obscenity (*ifḥāṣh*) in this poem merely because instead of obscene words it employs simple allusions and circumscriptions. That Ibn Shuhayd knew how to use obscene words, too, appears from the punch line of another epigram where someone is described as sitting between two people as an *ayrin bayna khuṣṣayni*.⁹⁰

Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) included a few lines of *hijāʾ* in *The Ring of the Dove*.⁹¹ Having grown into an austere theologian and jurist he repented of this youthful folly. Like al-Nahshalī he divides poetry into categories by means of moral criteria. The only type that may be quoted

⁸⁷ *ḥayāʾ*; another version has *jibāh* 'foreheads'.

⁸⁸ Ibn Shuhayd, *Dīwān*, p. 115, Ibn Bassām, *Dhakhīra*, I, i, 263, Maqqarī, *Nafh*, ii, 413, Ibn Zāfir, *Badāʾiʿ*, i, 76.

⁸⁹ See his *Risālat al-Tawābiʿ wa-ʾl-zawābiʿ* and Monroe's Introduction to its translation.

⁹⁰ Ibn Shuhayd, *Dīwān*, p. 255. His masterly satire in prose on a glutton has a mildly scatological ending, cf. *Risālat al-Tawābiʿ*, pp. 162-66, Monroe's translation pp. 74-76; see also Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, ii, 47-49.

⁹¹ Ibn Ḥazm, *Tawq*, p. 131, three fragments, the last of which was left out by Arberry (*The Ring of the Dove*, pp. 244 f.).

unreservedly, he says in his *Marātib al-ʿulūm*, is gnomic and edifying poetry (*al-ashʿār allatī fīhā ʿl-ḥikam wa-ʿl-khayr*). Two types, panegyric and elegy, are barely permissible, with some qualifications ('for they are mostly lies'); whereas four types should be avoided: love-poetry, poetry glorifying vagabond outlaws (*taṣaʿluk*) and war, poetry describing foreign parts and travels in the desert, and finally *hijāʿ*, which is the worst of all,

for it induces a man to make light of behaving like a stupid privy-sweeper, and to apply oneself to the arts of those who earn a living by means of stupidity, depravity, vileness, sullyng people's honour, mentioning pudenda, and abusing the inviolability of fathers and mothers; all this leads to perdition in this world and the next.⁹²

Anyone who practises *hijāʿ* or other forbidden types Ibn Ḥazm calls a sinner, *fāsiq*.⁹³ Here, literary criticism is subordinated to moral instruction: the *Marātib al-ʿulūm* is 'a complete plan for education'.⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥazm does not consider the possibility that *hijāʿ* may be edifying and salutary, neither inspiring depravity nor inspired by it. His concept of *hijāʿ* is either narrow, restricted to malign types, or narrow-minded. His own prose style is characterized by a frequent employ of angry and vigorous invective, especially in his *Fīṣal*; obviously he would not have thought of this as *hijāʿ*. If the poet must be a moral teacher, then al-Fārābī's division into six types of poems is more fruitful. Be this as it may, Ibn Ḥazm voiced the general mood of Spanish-Arabic critics.

Some poets too had scruples about *hijāʿ*, such as Ibn Khafāja (d. 533/1139), who wrote in the introduction to his *Dīwān*:

Among those things that detract from the worth of poetry are practising it professionally in order to obtain gifts, and employing it for the sake of *hijāʿ* ... These two things do not belong to the essence (of poetry).⁹⁵

It is a neat reversal of the traditional view of *madīḥ* and *hijāʿ* as the two fundamental and central types of poetry. An invective epigram by Ibn Khafāja quoted by al-Ṣafādī⁹⁶ is not contained in his *Dīwān*, in which, as he says, he did not include unseemly motifs or expressions.⁹⁷ Another poet who shunned *hijāʿ* was Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 527/1132), who lived in Sicily, the Maghrib and Spain.⁹⁸ Like al-ʿAjjāj and Nuṣayb he felt the need to defend himself against the charge of incompetence:

⁹² Ibn Ḥazm, *Rasāʾil*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Cairo, 1954, p. 66, al-Dāya, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, pp. 311 f.; cf. ʿAbbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, p. 487.

⁹³ ʿAbbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, p. 488.

⁹⁴ R. Arnaldez in *EP*, art. 'Ibn Ḥazm'.

⁹⁵ Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, MS Leiden Or. 14056, fol. 9b. I have to thank Mr A. Schippers, Leiden, for drawing my attention to this passage.

⁹⁶ *Wāfi*, vi, 85.

⁹⁷ Introduction to his printed *Dīwān*, p. 10.

⁹⁸ *EP*, art. 'Ibn Ḥamdīs' (U. Rizzitano).

They said to me: You are not good at *hijāʿ*.
 I said: How come I am good at *madīḥ*, then?
 They said: Because you hope to be rewarded.
 (Upon my life, there is a good analogy!).
 I said, And my descriptive verse?—Fine, they said.
 I said: And my *nasīb*?—Charming, they said.
 There you are, I said, I have proof
 in which there is ample space for truth.
 Chasteness of the tongue is saying good things,
 immorality of the tongue is saying ugly things.
 Why should any Muslim man
 be wounded by the sword of my tongue?⁹⁹

‘I am a man whose tongue you will not see uttering *hajw* as long as I live’, he says in another poem. Many a vilifier he has forgiven, but not from meekness:

A wolf yelps at a lion,
 but the lion does not think him his equal.
 If he chose to overpower him
 he would not leave one bit for the birds.¹⁰⁰

Great masters of invective that bear comparison with Jarīr or Ibn al-Rūmī are not to be found in al-Andalus. *Hijāʿ* was certainly less cultivated in the West, although it should be taken into account that our knowledge of it has been negatively influenced by the anthologists; one only has to compare Ibn Bassām’s *Dhakhīra* with al-Thaʿālibī’s *Yatīma al-dahr*, or Ibn al-Kattānī’s *Tashbihāt* with its eastern counterpart by Ibn Abī ʿAwn. If the anthologists had had a different taste more would have been preserved of the poetry of al-Yakkī, who excelled only in *hijāʿ*, most of it obscene,¹⁰¹ or al-Abyaḍ, who was killed on account of his *hijāʿ*,¹⁰² or Abū ʿl-Qāsim al-Sumaysir, ‘who made much *hijāʿ*’ and who wrote a book called *Shifāʿ al-amrād fī akhdh al-aʿrād* (‘The Cure of Diseases: On Defamation’),¹⁰³ and others.

That such an obscure minor poet as al-Yakkī is called by Ibn Saʿīd ‘the Ibn al-Rūmī of our time, the Ḥuṭayʿa of our epoch’¹⁰⁴ neatly epitomizes the difference in status of eastern and western *hijāʿ*, in that it implies a marked difference in both the quality and the quantity of what is preserved.

⁹⁹ Ibn Ḥamdīs, *Diwān*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Ḥamdīs, *Diwān*, p. 520.

¹⁰¹ ʿAbbās, *Tārikh al-adab al-andalusī*: ʿaṣr al-Ṭawāʾif, p. 144.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 143-45.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 139-42; cf. Ibn Bassām, *Dhakhīra*, I, ii, 372 ff., Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, ii, 496.

¹⁰⁴ ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 144.

The poetical fragments of Hispano-Arabic poets compiled by Ibn al-Kattānī (d. c. 420/1029) are seldom coarse and never obscene; the four epigrams contained in the sections against women and singing girls are a pale shadow of what Ibn Abī ‘Awn had to offer.¹⁰⁵ The themes of satirical and invective epigrams are largely the same: here too we find misers, spongers, bores, hunchbacks, short people, beards, noses; but many poems lack the pungency provided by scurrility. In one of the fragments quoted by Ibn al-Kattānī, a certain Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Utbī describes his *hijā*² rather lamely but perhaps appropriately as having ‘motifs like maidens strolling in embroidered mantles’.¹⁰⁶

In his large anthology *al-Dhakhīra* Ibn Bassām (d. 543/1147) inserts a digression on *hijā*². As if to atone for a witty but somewhat obscene allusion in a line of verse, he adds that he has safeguarded his book ‘from the disgrace of *hijā*²’ and proceeds with a subdivision:

*Hijā*² can be divided into two sorts. One is called ‘*hijā*² of noble people’ (*hajw al-ashraf*), which does not go as far as to be malignant abuse (*sibāb muqdhī*³) or distasteful scurrility (...) Rather, it consists of reprimanding and rebuking (...) The second sort consists of abuse; Jarīr and his contemporaries invented it. He used to say: when you make *hijā*², make people laugh. But this kind has never destroyed a family and no tribe has been reviled by it. It is from this that we have safeguarded this anthology, by keeping it altogether free from it. Abū Maṣṣūr al-Tha‘ālībī disgraced himself by what he wrote down in this vein in his *Yatīma*, thus branding himself with a lasting mark of infamy.¹⁰⁷

Ibn Bassām’s view concurs with that of Ibn Shuhayd, who had said: ‘It is very difficult to revile noble people, for you will find that ugly words glance off them and vicious speech does not demolish them’.¹⁰⁸ As for abuse, the *Dhakhīra* is not wholly free of it. After saying that he will not quote al-Sumaysir’s offensive *hijā*², Ibn Bassām does in fact give just such an epigram of his against the people of Kairouan;¹⁰⁹ and he quotes a line by Ibn al-Ḥaddād against al-Sumaysir, beginning: ‘People of Granada, bugger your Sumaysir’.¹¹⁰ Censuring al-Tha‘ālībī did not stop him from including a number of lines from a long and extremely scurrilous invective

¹⁰⁵ Compare for instance Ibn al-Kattānī, *Tashbihāt*, pp. 180 f. (Hoenerbach’s translation pp. 214 f.) with Ibn Abī ‘Awn, *Tashbihāt*, pp. 125-38.

¹⁰⁶ *Tashbihāt*, p. 72, Hoenerbach’s translation, p. 105. Even more strikingly jarring is the image employed by Muzarrid in a line of *hijā*²: ‘... buboes with pustules sharp and prominent like the nipples of breasts of young maidens’ (Lyall’s translation, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, no. 15 vs. 24).

¹⁰⁷ *Dhakhīra*, I, ii, 61-63.

¹⁰⁸ *Dhakhīra*, I, i, 202; cf. Monroe’s translation in Ibn Shuhayd, *Risālat al-Tawābi‘*, p. 33 note 97.

¹⁰⁹ *Dhakhīra*, I, ii, 372 f.; not all MSS have this passage.

¹¹⁰ *Dhakhīra*, I, ii, 391.

tive poem by the eastern poet al-Wāsānī, given in full by al-Thaʿālibī.¹¹¹

More strictly against invective was Moshe Ibn ʿEzra (d. c. 1140), the Jewish poet-critic who wrote his Hebrew poetics *al-Muḥāḍara wa-l-mudhākara* in Arabic and who was well-acquainted with the Arabic poetical tradition. His attitude towards poetry is ambivalent, embracing both ‘disparagement of poetry and admiration for the poets themselves and their poems’.¹¹² ‘As for *hijāʾ*’, he says, speaking of his own poetry, ‘it has never passed my lips against any particular individual, even though it would be an easy thing, since it is easier to destroy than to build’...¹¹³ In a lengthy diatribe against *hijāʾ* he invokes the philosophers:

Plato said: People with shortcomings try to find out shortcomings in others, and believe those who speak about them so as to have an excuse for their doings,¹¹⁴

and he even cites the ‘Koran of the Arabs’ in order to prove that one should pay no attention to insults and ‘turn away from the ignorant’.¹¹⁵ He condemns Ibn Gabirol because he, for all his inclination towards philosophy, was dominated by his ‘angry spirit’ and made light of reviling prominent people.¹¹⁶ Similarly, he praises Abū ʿUmar Ibn Sahl as a poet but reproaches him because ‘he did not control his passion in *hijāʾ*’.¹¹⁷

Yet he admits that he himself has produced both panegyric verse and its opposite:

If I have excessively eulogized someone or blamed contemporaries (...) (it is because) I proceeded on the way of the ancients and followed in the two communities (viz. Jews and Arabs) the opinion of those who have spoken on hyperbole and prolixity...¹¹⁸

If he blamed these ‘contemporaries’ (*ahl al-zamān*) anonymously or collectively, then there is no contradiction with his denial of having made *hijāʾ* against particular persons; moreover, it is possible that Ibn ʿEzra distinguishes between constructive *dhamm*, ‘blame’, however excessive, and destructive invective (*hijāʾ*).

Another reason for Ibn ʿEzra’s aversion to *hijāʾ* was, as he saw it, the desecration of the holy text that formed the basis of the medieval Hebrew poetic language¹¹⁹—an argument that could not be used by Muslim

¹¹¹ *Dhakhira*, IV, i, 70-73, Thaʿālibī, *Yatima*, i, 349-55.

¹¹² Scheindlin, ‘Rabbi Moshe Ibn Ezra’, pp. 112 f.

¹¹³ Ibn ʿEzra, *Muḥāḍara*, p. 106.

¹¹⁴ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 108.

¹¹⁵ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 112, referring to *Koran*, vii, 199.

¹¹⁶ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 70.

¹¹⁷ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 76.

¹¹⁸ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 114.

¹¹⁹ *Muḥāḍara*, p. 86.

critics with equal force because of the different history of the Arabic language. Apart from this, Ibn 'Ezra, though a rabbi and a poet of much pious verse, based his criticism of *hijā'* on general ethics rather than on religion; on the sayings of the ancient Greeks rather than the Torah.

CHAPTER SIX

PHILOSOPHERS

1. *From Aristotle to Averroes*

In spite of his tendency to quote the philosophers Ibn ‘Ezra shows remarkably little concern for Aristotle’s *Poetics* or the Arabic commentaries on it.¹ This is no doubt partly because *al-Muḥāḍara* is not a systematical treatise on poetics,² but it may be due also to the broad gap between traditional Arabic poetics and the study, by the philosophers, of Aristotle’s difficult text. Before the twelfth century merely a few scattered ideas were blown over from one side to the other; then some attempts were made to narrow or even bridge the gap, notably in the Arab West: Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 595/1198) tried to interpret and illustrate Aristotle by means of Arabic poetry and Arabic poetic terminology, and Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī (d. 684/1285) aimed at a synthesis of traditional Arabic and ‘Aristotelian’ views.³ The quotation-marks enclosing ‘Aristotelian’ are needed, for the history of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in Arabic has with good reason been called ‘the history of an error’.⁴ Properly speaking, it was a tragi-comedy of errors, because what began as a wrong, or at least very unfortunate, translation or ‘tragedy’ and ‘comedy’ as *madīḥ* and *hijā’*, respectively, gave rise to a generic theory of considerable interest.

The rendering of these terms by Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940) is certainly infelicitous but understandable. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037) chose a more correct solution. Not only does Arabic lack corresponding terms, the concepts ‘tragedy’ and ‘comedy’ were wholly unknown; therefore they let the Greek words stand—at the cost, however, of estranging completely the traditional critics, who took offence at the barbarous words, if they took the trouble to look into

¹ See his general remarks, *Muḥāḍara*, pp. 134 ff.

² Scheindlin, ‘Rabbi Moshe Ibn Ezra’, p. 104.

³ An earlier attempt was, it seems, the ‘Treatise on Poetics in which Greek and Arabic are mixed’ by Ibn al-Haytham (d. 430/1038); see Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn*, ii, 94. Nothing is known of it.

⁴ F. Gabrieli, ‘Intorno alla versione arabe della Poetica di Aristotele’ *Rendiconti della Reale Accad. nazion. dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Ser. VIa, vol. V, Roma, 1929, p. 235, quoted in Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, p. 105. See also Gabrieli, ‘Estetica’; on *hijā’* in particular: pp. 293, 300 f., 322, 326, 329.

these works at all.⁵ Abū Bishr's method is pardonable, and almost acceptable, as long as a translation is not taken to be an equation; but this is what happened inevitably. It is somewhat unfair to deride Abū Bishr for equating a Greek comedy with an Arabic invective poem if he only gave an approximation. When we see that Aristotle connects comedy historically with invective, and describes comedy as concerned with the ridiculous, the ugly, the ignoble, and in general with presenting people as worse than average,⁶ then we can at least understand why the translations were chosen.

Although tragedy and comedy do not exhaust the genres listed by Aristotle, their importance in his system and their neat opposition provided a starting-point for those critics who made the polarity of 'praise' and 'blame' the basis of a generic theory of poetry. Aristotle himself, speaking of the origin of poetry, had distinguished two elementary kinds of poetry, according to the character of individual poets: some were attracted towards the representations of noble actions, others, being less noble themselves, preferred to depict ignoble actions.⁷ Hence, panegyric and invective are basic categories. This idea was not wholly strange to traditional Arabic critics: we saw that Dhū 'l-Rumma did not qualify as a great poet in Al-Aṣma'ī's opinion because he did not excel in *hajw* and *madh*,⁸ and that Abū 'Alī al-Baṣīr declared poetry (that is, poetry that matters) to be 'either *madh* or *hijā*'.⁹

It was Ibn Sīnā who developed a poetics in which the distinction between praise and blame is fundamental:

The aim of every imitator is either amelioration (*taḥsīn*) or depreciation (*taqbiḥ*), for a thing is imitated either to be made better or worse (...) Every action is either base or noble. Since they [the Greeks] practiced the imitation of actions, some proceeded to imitate them for pure similitude, neither for amelioration nor depreciation. Every imitation and similitude, however, was implicitly prepared towards amelioration or depreciation, or, in general terms, towards encomium or invective.¹⁰

Ibn Sīnā, with the last two words, avoids the mistake of Abū Bishr: instead of *madīḥ* and *hijā*,² being too closely associated with Arabic

⁵ See Ibn al-Athīr, *Mathal*, ii, 5 f.

⁶ *Poetics*, 1448a, 1448b-1449a.

⁷ *Poetics*, 1448b; cf. 1448a: the objects of imitation are actions by agents who are either good or bad.

⁸ Above, pp. 36, 42.

⁹ Above, p. 77 note 100.

¹⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *Fann al-shi'r*, in Aristūṭālīs, *Fann al-shi'r*, pp. 169 f., as translated by Dahiyyat, *Avicenna's Commentary*, pp. 74 f. The translations of *taḥsīn* ('amelioration', 'to be made better') and its opposite are not quite correct: mimesis or imitation does not make things better or worse, but makes them look better or worse by representing them as good or bad. It is true that the Arabic terms are ambiguous.

poems, he employs the more general terms *madh* and *dhamm*.¹¹ His poetics is a blend of Aristotelian poetics and epideictive rhetoric; in the latter, 'praise' and 'blame' are basic categories.¹² Ibn Sīnā repeatedly reminds his reader, as if to avoid any misunderstandings, of the fact that he, or rather Aristotle, is speaking of Greek poetry. Occasionally he points out differences or similarities between Arabic and Greek poetry, as far as he knows it. Thus he explains that

Greek poetry was generally intended for imitating actions and emotions, and nothing else. The Greeks did not primarily occupy themselves with the imitation of persons, as did the Arabs.¹³

The Arabs used to compose poetry for two purposes: (i) to affect the soul by presenting a given matter that moves it in the direction of an action or emotion; and (ii) for pleasure alone—everything was imitated for the pleasure of its imitation.¹⁴

If this betrays a lack of knowledge of Greek verse, at least it shows some insight into Arabic poetry. But Ibn Sīnā did not set out to study, in a systematical fashion, the differences between Greek and Arabic poetry. His first loyalty is to Aristotle's text, and although he may have believed in the universal validity of some of its content, he does not say so explicitly.

When he paraphrases Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on 'praise' and 'blame' and the reasons for both,¹⁵ we can assume that he believed these ideas to be generally valid, and therefore applicable to *hijā'* and *madh*. However, the text does not prove this; it refers to Arabic *hijā'* only in passing,¹⁶

¹¹ *Hijā'* is said to be a component of comedy, *qumūdhiyā*: 'a kind in which evils, vices and *ahājī* are mentioned' (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Hikma al-ʿArūdiyya*, p. 31, *Fann al-shiʿr*, p. 166; cf. Dahiyat, op. cit., p. 67 and see the similar passage in Fārābī, *Qawānīn*, ed. Badawī, p. 153, ed. Arberry, p. 269, translation pp. 275 f., Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, p. 113). Elsewhere: 'Comedy is a kind of poetry in which *hijā'* is made, mixed with ridicule (*tanaz*) and mockery (*sukhrīyya*), directed at a person' (Ibn Sīnā, *Fann al-shiʿr*, p. 169, cf. Dahiyat, op. cit., p. 73). Aristotle's text (*Poetics*, 1449a) is rather different.

¹² Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary*, pp. 30, 48-51; cf. also Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, p. 161, Schoeler, *Einige Grundprobleme*, pp. 23-25.

¹³ Dahiyat's translation (op. cit., p. 74); Ibn Sīnā, *Fann al-shiʿr*, pp. 169 f. In spite of Gabrieli's commentary ('Estetica', p. 302) and Dahiyat's note, I think that one should perhaps translate 'things' or 'beings' instead of 'persons'; the Arabic has *al-dhawāt*. Dahiyat seems to suggest that the persons are the 'selves' of the poets: '... the "objects" of Arabic poetry are the "persons" (*dhawāt*), i.e., it is concerned with the expression of the poet's own emotion or impressions'; but Ibn Sīnā, in accordance with the traditional concept of the poetical *aghraḍ*, makes other persons or beings the object of Arabic poetry.

¹⁴ Dahiyat's translation, op. cit., p. 74; Ibn Sīnā, *Fann al-shiʿr*, p. 170.

¹⁵ See esp. Ibn Sīnā, *Khaṭāba*, pp. 83-93; cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1366a-68a.

¹⁶ Mocking, ridiculous metaphors are said to be appropriate in 'hurtful kinds of poetry in which *ahājī*, obscenity (*fuhsh*) and scurrility (*rafath*) are mentioned' (*Khaṭāba*, p. 212; cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1406b). The only line of poetry in *al-Khaṭāba* is a line of *hijā'* by al-Mutanabbī (p. 209; cf. Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, ed. Dieterici, p. 253).

although these and many other ideas discussed in the *Rhetoric* could be fruitfully applied to Arabic poetry.

Ibn Rushd, on the other hand, makes it clear from the beginning that his subject is precisely what is common to the poetry of all nations, or most of them.¹⁷ He tries therefore to establish as many analogies as possible between Aristotle's concepts and traditional Arabic ones. Thus he is not afraid to take over from Abū Bishr's translation the terms *madīh* and *hijā'* and to give them a fundamental status: 'He (scil. Aristotle) said: Every poem (*shi'r*) and every poetic discourse is either *hijā'* or *madīh*.'¹⁸ Ibn Rushd was aware of the incompleteness of the *Poetics*, comedy being the subject of the lost second part. However, he does not greatly regret the loss:

What is missing, concerning things common (to all nations), is the discussion of *hijā'*. But it would seem that the study of this would closely resemble what has been said in the section of *madīh*, since the knowledge of something can be derived from its opposite,¹⁹

—a conclusion that derives some justification from the procedure of Aristotle himself in the *Rhetoric*: 'No special treatment of censure and vituperation is needed. Knowing the above facts, we know their contraries'.²⁰

Following Aristotle, Ibn Rushd explains that noble people tend towards praising virtues, and those with a less perfect nature towards blaming vices. Therefore some poets excel in panegyric poetry but not in *hajw*, and *vice versa*.²¹ Both types may occur in combination, however:

Sometimes, however, he whose aim is *hijā'* on bad people and bad things is compelled to praise good people and virtuous acts, in order that the ugliness of the bad things may be more obvious.²²

The same point had been made by Ibn Sīnā.²³ As Dahiyat says, this was 'one of the characteristically Avicennian asides';²⁴ Abū Bishr's transla-

¹⁷ Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, in Aristūṭālīs, *Fann al-shi'r*, p. 201; Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, p. 177; Butterworth, *Averroes' Middle Commentary*, p. 59.

¹⁸ *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 201, Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, p. 177, Butterworth, *Averroes' Middle Commentary*, p. 59.

¹⁹ *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 250, Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

²⁰ *Rhetoric*, 1368a, translation by W. Rhys Roberts; cf. the old Arabic translation, ed. Badawī, p. 45, ed. Lyons, p. 49; Ibn Sīnā, *Khaṭāba*, p. 93, Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ al-khaṭāba*, pp. 162 f.

²¹ *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, pp. 204 f., Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, p. 180, Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²² *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 207; Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, pp. 182 f. (his translation is incorrect), Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²³ Ibn Sīnā, *Fann al-shi'r*, p. 172, Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary*, p. 79.

²⁴ Dahiyat, *op. cit.*, p. 79 note 3.

tion of the passage in question²⁵ hopelessly muddles *Poetics* 1448b,²⁶ and Ibn Sīnā, followed by Ibn Rushd, succeeded in making good sense out of nonsense by considering the poetry they knew. They might have added that the reverse holds as well: a panegyric theme may be enhanced by a contrasting invective section; in Arabic poems combinations of invective and praise or self-praise can be found in every imaginable proportion.

Whereas Ibn Sīnā had described 'comedy' as a combination of invective, ridicule and mockery,²⁷ Ibn Rushd reshapes the passage as follows:

With the art of *hijā'* is meant not only the imitation of everything that is bad and ugly, but also everything that is bad and to be mocked,²⁸ that is, despicable and ugly but not causing concern.²⁹

Apart from these general remarks we learn but little about Ibn Rushd's opinions on Arabic *hijā'*. Examples from Arabic poetry are liberally given in the portions devoted to stylistics, but in the rest they are lacking. 'You will easily find examples of this in Arabic poetry', he says, speaking of the three types of poetical utterance: positive, negative or neutral presentation (*taḥsīn*, *taqbīḥ* and *muṭābaqa*),³⁰ adding that, according to al-Fārābī, 'most of the poems of the Arabs deal with greed and what is offensive; for the kind they call *nasīb* is merely incitement to depravity; children ought to shun it'.³¹ It is obvious that Ibn Rushd's view of poetry is thoroughly ethical; he seems to deplore the fact that the Arabs, unlike the Greeks as he believes, frequently prefer the 'neutral' description to the promotion of virtue and the restriction of vice. Whether deliberately or not, he almost ignores the possibility that a poet perversely would praise vices (as happens regularly in *nasīb* as he apparently thinks) or mock virtues. Near the end of the treatise, it is true, he quotes three lines in which fleeing from battle is so well defended as to elicit the comment: 'You,

²⁵ Ed. Badawī, p. 92, ed. 'Ayyād, p. 39: 'Some of those who were more ignoble, having made *hijā'* on bad people, made afterwards panegyrics and eulogies on other bad people'.

²⁶ In Ingram Bywater's translation: 'The latter class produced invectives at first, just as others did hymns and panegyrics.'

²⁷ See above, p. 98, note 11.

²⁸ *kull mā huwa sharr mustahza' bih*: read perhaps *shay'* for *sharr*; cf. Abū Bishr's translation, ed. Badawī, p. 95, ed. 'Ayyād, p. 45.

²⁹ Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 208, Butterworth, op. cit., p. 71.

³⁰ *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 205, Butterworth, op. cit., p. 67.

³¹ *Talkhīṣ al-shi'r*, p. 205; Butterworth, op. cit., pp. 67 f. I have not found the quotation in al-Fārābī's works. Compare above, p. 75. I do not know on what reading Butterworth's translation 'desire and yearning' is based; Badawī's edition has *al-naham wa-'l-karīh*.

Arabs, have made everything look beautiful, even fleeing'.³² But this illustration is given in passing and not in the context of a discussion of *taḥsīn al-qabīḥ* or its counterpart, *taqbiḥ al-ḥasan*, although traditional criticism recognized their importance.³³ Any discussion of *hiǰāʿ* which neglects the rejection of accepted values, thus restricting the term to 'ethical' *hiǰāʿ*, is incomplete and unsatisfactory.

2. *Hāzim al-Qartājannī*

Al-Qartājannī's theory of genres is something of an improvement in this respect. Not only does he offer an elaborate system of *aghṛāḍ*, the 'aims' of poetry, he makes a fundamental distinction between the two 'ways' of seriousness and jesting, *ṭarīqatā 'l-jidd wa-'l-hazl*, the former deriving from virtuous and rational motives, the latter from shamelessness and folly (*mujūn wa-sukhf*)³⁴—the choice of these words makes it obvious that al-Qartājannī sees a close association between *hazl* and obscenity. The opposition of *jidd* and *hazl* is such a common topos in works of *adab* and ethics that at first sight it seems strange that before Hāzim al-Qartājannī no literary theoretician made it a basic criterion in the division of poetry: at most, *hazl* served as an appendix to the various serious kinds. This is however not wholly unjustified in view of the proportion of 'jesting' poetry in the whole of poetic production. Indeed, Hāzim himself shows that the division into *jidd* and *hazl* is not a symmetrical one: *hazl* is often a parasite, employing the same motifs and expressions as *jidd*; an indication that *hazl* is meant is needed, whereas *jidd* needs no such indication.³⁵

³² *Talkhīṣ al-shiʿr*, pp. 249 f., Butterworth, op. cit., pp. 140 f. The fragment is by al-Hārith Ibn Hishām, see *Hamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 88, Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, iii, 19, Guillaume's translation pp. 346 f. and many other sources. The comment was made by Rutbīl, ruler of Sijistān, according to Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, i, 140, *Aghānī*, iv, 170, etc.

³³ See above, p. 47; also Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 335-38 (section *taqbiḥ al-ḥasan wa-taḥsīn al-qabīḥ*). Compare also the 'figure' of *talattuf* introduced by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, defined as 'dealing subtly with a good concept in order to make it base, or with a base one in order to make it good' (*Ṣināʿatayn*, pp. 445-47, cf. pp. 59 f.), which is not unlike Ibn Rashīq's *taghāyur* (*ʿUmda*, ii, 100-104, cf. Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣḥāq, *Tahrīr*, pp. 277-89, Ibn Hījja, *Khizāna*, pp. 128-37, Ḥalabī, *Husn al-tawassul*, p. 103, etc.). Al-Tanasī has a section entitled *al-iqtidār 'alā taḥsīn al-qabīḥ wa-taqbiḥ al-ḥasan* (*Naẓm al-durr*, pp. 147-54). The poet al-ʿAttābī (d. c. 220/835) said that eloquence (*balāgha*) could depict falsehood in the image of truth (Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 113, 220, cf. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, v, 335 f.). The best poetry, according to al-Aṣmaʿī, takes up a low idea and makes it great through its words, or *vice versa* (Qudāma, *Naqd*, p. 99, Ḥatīmī, *Hilya*, i, 156, ʿAskarī, *Ṣināʿatayn*, p. 395, Khafājī, *Sirr*, p. 148, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, ii, 57, etc.). As for Greek equivalents, one may compare Plato's *Phaedrus* (see *Readings in Classical Rhetoric*, p. 25). For Persian literature, see Nizāmī ʿArūḍī *Chahār maqāla*, p. 30, Browne's translation p. 42.

³⁴ *Minhāj*, p. 327.

³⁵ *Minhāj*, pp. 329 f.

Serious motifs may be perverted in a context of *hazl*: Muhalhil's line³⁶ serves as an illustration. In *hazl* the wording should be neat, not strained and studied. Characteristic is a low style, employing the vocabulary of 'vagabonds, wanton people, those of (humble) occupations, the common people, women and children'.³⁷ Poetic logic in the two categories is different: whereas in *jidd* what is necessary and contingent should not be represented as impossible, nor should what is necessary be said to be contingent (the reverse is preferable), in *hazl* all this is possible, no matter whether one's aim is to mock (*tahakkum*) or merely to raise a laugh.³⁸ The same applies to contentious or contemptuous poems (*mushājara wa-mukābara*), even though they are not strictly *hazl*. Caution is needed when one mixes the two 'ways'.³⁹

It is plausible that Ḥāzīm, when he presented *jidd* and *hazl* as fundamental categories, was influenced by Ibn Sīnā's *Poetics*, as he was in many other respects (Ibn Rushd's *Talkhīṣ al-shiʿr* was unknown to him). 'Tragedy' and 'comedy', left untranslated by Ibn Sīnā, are adapted to Arabic terminology and concepts and represented, not by *madīḥ* and *hijāʿ*, but by *jidd* and *hazl*,⁴⁰ an altogether more satisfying procedure; all the more so because Ḥāzīm was not hampered by the limitations of the method of the philosophers, who were more eager to understand Aristotle's ideas and make them intelligible, than they were interested in Arabic poetry.

There are obvious connections between *hazl* and *hijāʿ*. In one of the parts of Ḥāzīm's *Minhāj al-bulaghāʿ* where this is evident, it is argued that different kinds of poetry require different metres. Here, too, Ḥāzīm is adapting Greek poetics to his own ends, although al-Fārābī had denied that such ideas could be applied to Arabic poetry.⁴¹ In self-praise, for instance, 'stately, splendid and strong metres' are appropriate: but

wherever he (scil. the poet) aims at jesting or contempt, when he aims at despising or mocking something, he should imitate this by suitably frivolous (*tāʾisha*) metres of little splendour.⁴²

Apparently, *ṭawīl*, said to be the strongest and most splendid metre, is not the most suitable one for *hijāʿ*, nor is *madīd* or *ramal*, which are appropriate in elegy because of their 'softness and weakness'.⁴³ It is

³⁶ *Minhāj*, p. 331; see above, p. 82.

³⁷ *Minhāj*, p. 331.

³⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 145.

³⁹ *Minhāj*, 329 f., 333-35.

⁴⁰ This identification was proposed by Ihsān ʿAbbās, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, p. 563.

⁴¹ Fārābī, *Qāwānīn*, ed. Badawī, p. 152, ed. Arberry, p. 269, translation p. 275.

⁴² *Minhāj*, p. 266.

⁴³ *Minhāj*, pp. 268 f.

implied that in the more serious forms of *hijāʿ*², however, metres such as *ṭawīl* and *basīl* are possible (as indeed they are).⁴⁴

In the chapter on *jidd* and *hazl* the connections and differences between the latter and *hijāʿ* are not explored systematically; *hijāʿ*² belongs to a different classification. 'Seriousness' and 'jesting' are 'ways' (*ṭuruq*) that lead to 'aims' (*aghṛāḍ*) discussed in the chapter that follows.⁴⁵ First Ḥāzīm mentions and dismisses a number of traditional generic divisions. His own exposition falls back on what he had said before, in the chapter on 'poetic motifs': poets are moved to make poetry by primary purposes (*aghṛāḍ uwal*). These are things that bring about joy or grief, or related emotions such as hope and fear. Depending on the circumstances these may lead to the uttering of praise or blame in all their variants.⁴⁶

Thus it is clear that the aims of poetry are of several kinds and types, subdivided into yet other types. The primary kinds are pleasure (*irtiyāḥ*) and concern (*iktirāth*), and what is compounded of the two, such as imbuing pleasure with concern or concern with pleasure: these are the 'moving' methods.⁴⁷ Below the level of these kinds are the following types: wonder and appraisal, satisfaction and anger, contention and inclination, fear and hope. Below the level of these types are secondary types, viz. panegyric, love-poetry (*nasīb*), elegy...⁴⁸

From the basic sources of poetry, summarized in this passage, the basic aims can be derived. These are defined as bringing about useful things and warding off harmful things.⁴⁹ *Hijāʿ*², then, is to be placed in the latter category. It is one of the four 'main types' (*ummahāt al-ṭuruq al-shiʿriyya*), together with congratulations, condolences and panegyrics,⁵⁰ a division resulting from his choice of criteria; he himself recognizes that in practical criticism people may prefer to divide poetry into panegyric, love-poetry, *hijāʿ*² and elegy, being the most important and commonest modes,⁵¹ although invective and 'agonistic' poetry (*muhājāt*, *munāfarāt*, *mushājarāt*, *mufākharāt*) are not as abundant as love-poetry, panegyric and elegy.⁵²

⁴⁴ No extensive statistical information is at my disposal; suffice it to mention that 46 out of 80 fragments and poems in the chapter of *hijāʿ*² in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa* employ the *ṭawīl*. Even in the 'frivolous' chapter against women *ṭawīl* is still the most popular with seven out of eighteen fragments.

⁴⁵ *Minhāj*, pp. 337-53, studied and translated by Schoeler, *Einige Grundprobleme*.

⁴⁶ *Minhāj*, pp. 11 f., Schoeler, op. cit., pp. 111 f.

⁴⁷ *al-ṭuruq al-shiʿriyya*: love-poetry such as *nasīb* is meant.

⁴⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 12, Schoeler, op. cit., p. 113. The text breaks off here; it is obvious that *hijāʿ*² is one of the 'secondary' types.

⁴⁹ *Minhāj*, p. 337.

⁵⁰ *Minhāj*, pp. 339, 341.

⁵¹ *Minhāj*, p. 349, Schoeler, op. cit., p. 104.

⁵² *Minhāj*, p. 349.

Included in *hijā'* are more or less mild forms of criticism such as reproach (*mu'ātaba*), 'taking to account' (*ta'dīd*), rebuke (*tawbīkh*) and scolding (*taqrī'*), depending on the extent to which the perpetrator of the harmful thing is blamed for his deeds.⁵³

Ḥāzim's classification is neat, consistent, and compatible with Arabic poetical practice. In the elaboration of the several modes, however, he shows little originality, as Schoeler says.⁵⁴ We do not learn much, after all, from rather perfunctory remarks such as:

The method of *hijā'* is to aim at those things of which one knows or estimates that the addressee of the *hijā'* will be distressed when they are mentioned, and will grieve when he hears of what is connected with him.⁵⁵

When he speaks of *aghrād* Ḥāzim is not necessarily thinking of poems or sections of poems: the level of *aghrād* is rather more abstract. Regarding his observations on the compatibility of *aghrād*, Schoeler remarks that Ḥāzim refers to the polythematic poem in which, for instance, *nasīb* and *madīh* are combined. He criticizes Ḥāzim's theory here because the not uncommon combination of *nasīb* and *hijā'* in one poem is ignored, since, as Schoeler suggests, it would not seem to fit his theory, which denies the compatibility of opposite types.⁵⁶ However, Ḥāzim is not necessarily concerned here with the polythematic *qaṣīda*, as appears from his discussion of single lines that combine seemingly contradictory *aghrād*: examples of 'praise through what looks like blame', *ta'kid al-madḥ bimā yushbih al-dhamm*, as it is called in traditional Arabic poetics since Ibn al-Mu'tazz,⁵⁷ or the reverse, which amounts to a form of irony or sarcasm, illustrated by a line of Ibn al-Rūmī:

The best thing in them (but there is no good in them) is that they do not sin against him who tells evil of them.⁵⁸

⁵³ *Minhāj*, p. 339. For a synopsis of Ḥāzim's system of modes, see Schoeler, op. cit., pp. 30-32.

⁵⁴ Schoeler, op. cit., p. 107 note 1.

⁵⁵ *Minhāj*, p. 352, cf. Schoeler, op. cit., p. 110, who may be right in translating the last few words (*mimmā laḥū bihī 'ulqa/alqa*) as 'worin für ihn (gleichsam) eine Tracht Prügel liegt'. Perhaps 'ulqa refers to the ignominy that will 'cling' to him.

⁵⁶ Schoeler, op. cit., p. 105 note 3; cf. *Minhāj*, p. 350.

⁵⁷ *Minhāj*, p. 350: in al-Nābigha's often-quoted line 'One fault they have: their swords are notched from striking the squadrons', the combination of *madḥ* and *dhamm* is justified since the latter is subordinated to and in keeping with the former.

⁵⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 350, Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, (i), 282. Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba' (d. 654/1256) claimed to be the first to have described this figure of speech, *ta'kid al-dhamm bimā yushbih al-madḥ* (*Tahrīr*, p. 550). But long before his time the critics were aware of the figure; see e.g. Khālidīyyān, *Ashbāh*, ii, 310-14, who called it *dhamm makhrajuh makhraj al-madḥ* and who criticised Ibn al-Mu'tazz for omitting it. One of the most often quoted examples is a line by al-Najāshī who damns with faint praise: 'A little tribe who never betray their covenant and never wrong people as much as a mustard-seed' (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, iv, 37, Tha'lab,

It is true that the combination of *nasīb* and *hijā'* in one poem should not have been omitted in Ḥāzīm's theory, since elsewhere he takes the trouble to explain why *nasīb* is compatible with panegyric but not with elegy.⁵⁹ In his view love-poetry in a panegyric poem serves as a kind of reward for the addressee of the panegyric; so one might have expected an explanation of how reward and punishment can occur together in one poem. The answer could be that one ought to postulate two groups of addressees: the person or tribe under attack, and those others among the audience that are not attacked. Sometimes the latter are the addressees properly speaking, the former being the subject of the poem. A more rhetorical justification is given by Ibn al-Rūmī:

Don't you see that before *hijā'*-poems, at their beginning,
I let *nasīb* precede,
So that they may penetrate the hearing. Then follows my *hijā'*,
burning, branding the hearts,
Like a stroke of lightning that comes after a shower;
like the laughter of white girls who let wailing follow.⁶⁰

Another explanation—they do not exclude each other—is provided by a story told about al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī (d. second half of 1st/7th century). Being treated in al-Ḥīra for an eye-disease he tries in vain to compose a poem against an opponent, when he is interrupted by the arrival of a beautiful woman who asks him to make some amatory verses on her. Once the woman has departed the *hijā'* he wanted to make is finished at a stretch, preceded as it is by *nasīb*.⁶¹ Furthermore, *hijā'* and love poetry are not always as clearly opposite as they seem: the description of female charms (*tashīb*) was not rarely interpreted as a form of invective by the indignant husbands, brothers and other relatives; an interpretation that was often intended by the poet himself. Apart from all this it must not be forgotten that in many cases the forces of tradition are more relevant than any poetic or rhetorical justifications: poets opened their formal *qaṣīdas* with *nasīb* because that was the way to do it.

None of these aspects are mentioned by Ḥāzīm; and in view of his eagerness to restrict possible combinations and mixtures of modes,

Maǧālīs, (ii), 431, Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 331, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, iii, 17, v, 318, Khālidiyyān, *Ashbāh*, i, 35, ii, 198, 310, ʿAskari, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 176, Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, p. 54, Nahshali, *Mumtiʿ*, p. 189, Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 52, etc. As pointed out before (above, p. 26) the caliph ʿUmar is represented in a story as wilfully misinterpreting the line.

⁵⁹ *Minhāj*, p. 351, Schoeler, op. cit., p. 108, and *Minhāj*, p. 338, Schoeler, op. cit., pp. 87-89, respectively.

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, (i), 328.

⁶¹ *Aghānī*, xii, 166 f. Compare Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmda*, i, 211 f., Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, pp. 112 f., 116.

whether *hazl* and *jidd* or *dhamm* and *madh*, one may surmise, with Schoeler, that Ḥāzīm deliberately ignored the problem, since in this theory it would have entailed a condemnation of numerous poems by respected poets.

Such a mixture of modes is dealt with elsewhere in the *Minhāj*, in a chapter on diction. Each mode has its typical vocabulary; it is wrong, therefore, to employ these typical words in the wrong mode. Ḥāzīm's examples are taken from the human body: *sālifa* 'sidelock' and *jīd* 'neck' belong to love-poetry, *hādī* 'neck' and *hāhil* 'shoulder' to self-praise and panegyric, *akhda* 'neck-vein', *qadhāl* 'back of the head' and *qafā* 'back of the neck' belong to *hijā*.⁶² He derived these thoughts from one of his sources, Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī, who had criticized the use of such words in the wrong context:

Praise should not be expressed in words properly used in blame, nor blame in words known to belong to praise. In all modes such words ought to be used as are fitting for each mode, in a serious context those words that belong to it, and in a jesting context those words that belong to it.⁶³

Ibn Sinān condemns therefore the use, in panegyric, of words such as 'feverish', 'the cursed devil', 'stupidity', 'madness' or 'neck' (*qafā*). He even quotes an insensitive anonymous critic who censured Ibn al-Rūmī for his line: 'Whose hair is made of silver, whose teeth are made of gold', because the words 'gold' and 'silver' belong to praise. Al-Khafājī leaves us in doubt whether he endorses this judgement, but it seems likely that he did, failing to see the irony.⁶⁴ Al-Qarṭājannī did not borrow this example, it is true; but he should have been warned by it for the pitfalls of irony and parody, which make the prescribing of rules for *hijā* a hazardous affair.

If his treatment of *hijā* in the chapters on the several modes is neither detailed nor original, this is at least partly because the essence of *hijā* has been discussed in preceding parts of the *Minhāj*, on mimesis and imaginative creation (*muḥākāh* and *takhyīl*),⁶⁵ when he speaks of *muḥākāt taqbīh*, mimesis that uglifies. This is analysed on an abstract level; a few individual lines, not poems, serve as examples. He seems to hint at the structure of a *hijā*-poem when he says that in blame (*dhamm*) one should begin with those characteristics of a thing that are most obviously ugly,

⁶² *Minhāj*, p. 364; cf. p. 152.

⁶³ Khafājī, *Sirr*, p. 154; cf. 156 on the several words for 'neck' and neighbouring parts of the body, and compare above, p. 4, note 12.

⁶⁴ *Sirr*, p. 155. Surprisingly, Ahmad Badawī agrees with the anonymous critic (*Usus al-naqd*, p. 259). I have not found the line in Ibn al-Rūmī's *Dīwān*. Silver hair and golden teeth can be found in a passage of *hijā* in prose in Azdī, *Ḥikāyat Abī 'l-Qāsim*, p. 57.

⁶⁵ Studied and translated in Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*.

followed by less obvious characteristics, like a painter who first paints the broad outlines and then gradually adds finer details.⁶⁶ Yet the compass of the illustrations that follow (for the corresponding recommended order in praise) is merely a line.

Positive or negative representation must concern either human acts or beliefs. Ḥāzīm discerns four areas with respect to which an act or a belief can be described as positive or negative: religion, intellect, virtue (*murūʿāt*, *karam*) and worldly fortune; that is, something is condemned in poetry usually with one or more of the following arguments, whether explicitly or implicitly: God will punish you for it; it is irrational and stupid; people will blame your character for it and dislike you; you will suffer in your possessions and desires.⁶⁷ By combining these categories—praise or blame for acts or beliefs concerning the four areas—Ḥāzīm is able to distinguish between numerous types of praise and blame, without discussing them separately; they are merely the possible sources of praise and blame that a poet may profitably investigate when he wants to praise or blame something. He must explore every aspect:

Beautification and uglification are applied, at times to the thing itself, at other times to doing, believing or desiring that thing, and sometimes to all this together. When (for instance) an old man loves a pretty girl and we should wish to move him, by means of poetic utterances, to give her up, we rely on blaming the act and denouncing youthful passion in old age, and related things. If she is ugly (*qabīḥa*), or at least someone who can be imaginatively represented as being ugly, then we can add blame of the girl's ugliness to blame of the youthful passion of the old man. If, however, the lover is a young man we rely on whatever is ugly in the woman's constitution and character-traits, such as perfidy and peevishness, etc., which are attributed to women; and being in love in youth we only represent as ugly for him on some rational ground or other.⁶⁸

Ḥāzīm does not make it clear whether or not he would call such a poem *hijāʿ*. According to one of his generic divisions, *hijāʿ* and *muʿātaba*, 'reproach', properly apply only in the case of those 'harmful' events that have already taken place, so that here we have a 'warning' (*indhār*), or perhaps 'intimidation' (*tahdīd*).⁶⁹ But when he speaks of the four main types of poetry (*ummahāt al-ṭuruq*) *hijāʿ* has a more inclusive meaning. In the practice of criticism much would depend on the tone, whether friendly or scathing: only in the latter case would one speak of *hijāʿ*; both

⁶⁶ *Minhāj*, p. 101, Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung*, p. 226.

⁶⁷ *Minhāj*, p. 106, Heinrichs, op. cit., pp. 233 f. Note that lack of 'virtue' is connected with 'shame' rather than with 'guilt'.

⁶⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 108, Heinrich, op. cit., p. 235.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 340.

types may be successful.⁷⁰ If the poem does not achieve its aim of preventing the marriage it ought to be called a failure, by Ḥāzīm's standards, although he does not discuss such a possibility. It could be argued that, even if unsuccessful, the poem might well deter people other than the original addressee. In any case, giving vent to one's own feelings of anger and scorn is not recognized as a legitimate aim of poetry, no matter how commonly this may be its main purpose in reality.

The passage on the old man and the girl is interesting in another respect. *Taqbiḥ*, loosely translated as 'uglification', means to represent a certain act or belief or object as unattractive, so that it may be shunned by the addressed person; in this sense it cannot, properly speaking, be applied to invective poetry in which the addressed person himself is derided for being physically ugly. The word 'ugly' (*qabiḥ*) is ambiguous for it may denote moral as well as physical ugliness. It is possible therefore that, in the passage translated above, one should read 'if she has a bad character' rather than 'if she is ugly'. Similarly, what has been rendered as 'whatever is ugly in the woman's constitution' (reading *khalq*) could be taken to mean 'whatever is bad in the woman's character' (reading *khuluq*, in which case the following *khalā'iq* would be a clarifying synonym)—as, indeed, Heinrichs does in his translation. This interpretation seems to be supported by the fact, as we shall see, that Ḥāzīm adopted, with some qualifications, Qudāma's distinction between true and false *hijā'*. But if the aim is to dissuade someone from marrying surely pragmatic, rhetorically effective arguments must prevail over moral considerations; moreover, it is the would-be groom who is addressed and not the girl. One may compare the case of *nasīb* which is, ultimately, not intended for the female beloved but for the addressee of the panegyric; and even Qudāma allowed praise of physical features in *nasīb*.

Taḥsīn and *taqbiḥ*, 'beautification' and 'uglification' are thus not to be confused with praise and blame of persons. Representing acts, beliefs or objects as attractive or unattractive is morally neutral, even though much of the four areas (religion, intellect, virtue, worldly fortune) is concerned with morals.⁷¹ As for people, Ḥāzīm offers a refinement of Qudāma's moral stance. In a chapter on 'authentic' (*aṣīl*) and non-authentic motifs in praise and blame he divides human acts into those that are free and those that one is compelled to perform. In some acts of the latter category

⁷⁰ Al-Ḥakam Ibn 'Abdal, so the story goes, even succeeded in breaking up a marriage of someone who had married above his station, by means of *hijā'*, see *Aghānī*, ii, 408 f.

⁷¹ Note that Ḥāzīm, unlike Ibn Rushd, gives *taqbiḥ al-ḥasan* its due place, *Minhāj*, pp. 72, 75.

there is an indication from which it can be deduced that a person has previously acted freely in a praiseworthy or blameworthy manner; these non-free acts may be the object of praise or blame, but they are non-authentic.⁷² Similarly, one praises someone for his noble origin 'because often an eminent root points to an excellent branch'. Thus, 'people have distinguished between proper (*ḥaḳīqiyyan*) and improper praise and blame';⁷³ then he quotes at length Qudāma's classification of the virtues,⁷⁴ adding that 'the ancients' had preceded him in this classification.⁷⁵ After citing Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī's reaction, who had argued that one cannot change one's character any more than one can change one's appearance,⁷⁶ Hāzīm continues:

This objection is not correct, for philosophers who have spoken on the virtues are agreed that a human being may be able (*qad yaqdir*) to acquire some virtues by adopting it as a (second) nature, and to perfect many of his shortcomings in this respect by means of habituation, exercise and mental effort.⁷⁷

He qualifies this, however:

Adopting this (second) nature can only take place if a natural disposition to acquire it is already there; (...) As for one's physical constitution and one's appearance, one cannot transform it in any way. Therefore, to praise someone for things deemed good in this respect is to deceive him; and to blame him for things considered bad in this respect is to do him an injustice. Evidence for this is a story told about al-Mughīra Ibn Ḥabnā' and Ziyād al-A'jam, who did not stop making *hijā'* on each other until Ziyād upbraided his rival for some diseases that had befallen some of his relatives. Then al-Mughīra said, 'How can we be guilty of what he has mentioned? These are diseases; but a man should only be upbraided for his own achievements'.⁷⁸

Thus, al-Qarṭājannī continues, Qudāma's view finds support in what is told about the Arabs (He chooses not to say that far more supportive evidence can be found there for the opposite view). Yet, praise for other than the four virtues is possible, but only if such a quality regularly co-

⁷² *Minhāj*, pp. 163 f.

⁷³ *Minhāj*, p. 165.

⁷⁴ *Minhāj*, pp. 165-67.

⁷⁵ The reference is to the Greek philosophers, not, as the editor thinks, to ancient Arab critics and transmitters of poetry.

⁷⁶ Above, pp. 72 f.

⁷⁷ *Minhāj*, p. 169.

⁷⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 169. The quarrel of Ziyād and al-Mughīra took place towards the end of the seventh century. Ziyād had taunted al-Mughīra, his brothers and his father more than once for such ailments and defects as leprosy and one-eyedness; cf. *Aghānī*, xiii, 89-99. The last sentence ascribed to al-Mughīra by al-Qarṭājannī is not found in the version of the *Aghānī*.

occurs with the true virtues, so that it serves as an indicator.⁷⁹ Apart from the example of someone's noble origin given before there are no illustrations; one should not infer that Ḥāzim believes that a handsome face usually goes with a virtuous character, but he may be thinking of praising someone for a friendly countenance, or for the abundance of ashes in his yard (to take a standard example of Arabic rhetoric), both as indications of his generosity. It can be assumed that the reverse holds true for *hijā'* as well in Ḥāzim's opinion.

Ḥāzim's poetics is dominated by the idea that poetry should be useful, not merely in a pragmatic sense but morally. Even *hazl*, jesting verse, is useful in some situations, although it is less important than serious verse. It is remarkable, therefore, that he does not explicitly condemn the coarser, unethical forms of *hijā'*. Even obscenities are tolerable at times: they must not be used 'in those contexts where they ought to be shunned',⁸⁰ but vulgar language,

when it occurs in the poetry of Ibn Ḥajjāj and his kind, those who specialize in jesting and bawdiness (*mujūn*), is approvable and praiseworthy in relation to its style (*ṭarīqa*).⁸¹

The mention of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, perhaps the most notoriously obscene poet in Arabic, leaves no doubt as to Ḥāzim's tolerant views, which appear to have been derived from al-Khafājī, who wrote:

'Abd Allāh Ibn Ḥajjāj, although his poetry contains many words not fitting in a serious context, used them in a filthy context; therefore they are good, not ugly.⁸²

Ḥāzim's attitude is all the more noteworthy since he was a poet himself in whose collected poems there is not a single line of *mujūn* or *hijā'*, not even of the ethical variety.

In the end, there is still a basic flaw in his theory and that of his predecessors among the philosophers: serious *hijā'*, according to Ḥāzim, attacks vice by means of *taqbīḥ al-qabīḥ* and good poetry is that which effectively succeeds in thus 'warding off harmful things'. Attacking virtue, *taqbīḥ al-ḥasan* and its opposite he depicts as forms of jesting only, ignoring the possibility that these forms may be serious as well as effective. If persuasion and rhetorical effect determine literary quality, then demagogues and street-vendors rank higher than most poets.⁸³

⁷⁹ *Minhāj*, p. 169, and cf. pp. 163 f.

⁸⁰ *Minhāj*, p. 151.

⁸¹ *Minhāj*, p. 332.

⁸² Khafājī, *Sirr*, p. 162; cf. *ibid.* p. 268 for a similar passage on obscenity in Ibn Ḥajjāj and others.

⁸³ cf. below, p. 114.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LATE CONTRIBUTIONS

1. *Compendia of traditional poetics*

The *Minhāj al-bulaghā*¹ is an exceptional work in many respects; by way of contrast one may compare it with the thoroughly traditional work of Ḥāzīm's contemporary, Abū 'l-Baqā' al-Rundī, from Ronda in Spain (he may have died in 684/1285, the same year as al-Qarṭājannī). In his *al-Wāfi fī naẓm al-qawāfi*² he discusses *hiġā*³ in a section on *dhamm*, which is damned out of hand: *dhamm* is, as the word itself says, blameworthy (*al-dhamm ka-ismih dhamīm*), even though a noble person may get satisfaction from an ignoble one by means of it. Where panegyric is mostly falsehood, *hiġā*³ is all immorality (*fujūr*).² These attempts at bons mots should not be taken too seriously, but they are not counterbalanced by a more constructive theory of *hiġā*³, which is merely subdivided, erratically, into allusion (*ta'riḍ*), openness (*taṣriḥ*), and contempt (*taḥqīr*).³

The subject of al-Rundī's *Wāfi*, like that of *al-ʿUmda* by Ibn Rashīq, is poetry in all its aspects. Works of a general nature such as these are a minority compared to the many works that specialize in matters of stylistics: on the one hand the ever-growing unsystematical lists of *badīʿ*, figures of speech and tropes, and, on the other hand, the more systematic study of stylistics and tropes inaugurated by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078) and proliferating in the following centuries especially in the form of commentaries on popular digests such as *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* by al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) and *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* by al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 737/1338). Neither type dealt with the *aghrāḍ* as such, although in the course of the discussion of the various tropes and figures it is sometimes demonstrated how they may function in *hiġā*³.

Among the general works on poetry is *Naḍrat al-ighrāḍ* by al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Faḍl al-Ḥusaynī (d. 656/1258), who lived in Mosul and Baghdad. The author cites many well-known anecdotes relating to the reception of

¹ Unedited; I have used the MS Leiden, Cod. Or. 2709 and the summary and discussion by al-Dāya (*Tārīkh al-naqd*, pp. 432-70).

² *Wāfi*, fol. 42a, Dāya, *Tārīkh*, p. 446.

³ *Wāfi*, fol. 42b. According to al-Dāya (op. cit., p. 447) there is a fourth kind, *tafḍīl*. Perhaps, in the MS used by him, there is some confusion with the following phrase: 'it is their habit in this to make short poems (*taqṣīr*)'; more likely, the phrase '*al-taḥqīr wa-'l-tafḍīl*' should be taken as the term for only one kind: the type described by ʿUmar as *muqdhīʿ* (see above, p. 26).

hijā' without bringing anything new.⁴ A long diatribe in *saj'* by a hypothetical opponent of all poetry⁵ dwells especially on *hijā'* made unjustly, by which benefactors are accused, noble men are slandered and chaste women dishonoured ('We could write books on the subject'). Al-Muẓaffar replies, predictably, that such excesses are deplorable but that poetry as a whole, or just dispraise, is not thereby condemned.⁶ He does not discuss the several poetic modes separately, unlike, for instance, Ibn Aflaḥ, a poet who died in 535/1141 in Baghdad, and whose *Muqaddima* on stylistics was still popular in the time of ʿIyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239).⁷

Ibn Aflaḥ is not exhaustive; among the *aghrāḍ* not mentioned by him are *nasīb*, *fakhr*, *rithā'*, *zuhd* and *mujūn*. His aim is to distinguish between related types that could be confused with each other. Before turning to Ibn Aflaḥ's distinctions it should be pointed out that much the same ground had been covered by Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī in his lexicographical work *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya*. Abū Hilāl defines *dhamm* as the opposite of *ḥamd*, and as referring to an act for which it forms a kind of punishment; whereas *hajw* is the opposite of *madḥ* and refers to both the act and the character trait. In terms of syntax, according to al-ʿAskarī, the direct object of *dhamm* is either the deed or the doer (one says, 'I have blamed him for his deed' and 'I have blamed his deed'), but the direct object of *hajw* is the doer only ('I have vilified him, *hajawtuh*, for his stinginess or his ugly face' but not 'I have vilified his stinginess or ugly face').⁸ Al-ʿAskarī continues with similar distinctions between *shatm*, simple abuse, and *sabb*, excessive and prolonged abuse; between *shatm* which may be deserved and *safah*, 'insolence', which is always undeserved; between *lawm* 'blame' which may apply to virtues (e.g. excessive generosity) and *dhamm* or *tathrib* and similar terms which only refer to vices; between *ʿitāb* 'reproach' between friends and *lawm* not between friends; between *ʿayb*, *ḥamz* and *lamz*, three terms for censuring and fault-finding.⁹

Echoes of these elaborate and perhaps somewhat too subtle distinctions of *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya* or similar works can be heard in Ibn Aflaḥ's *Muqaddima*, where they are applied to and illustrated with poetry. *Hajw*, the vilification (*qadhif*) of someone's character, is different from *dhamm*, vilification of someone's deeds.¹⁰ There seems to be little justification for

⁴ Muẓaffar, *Nadra*, pp. 300 ff., 349 ff.

⁵ *Nadra*, pp. 365-70.

⁶ *Nadra*, pp. 372 f.

⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Mathal*, ii, 59.

⁸ ʿAskarī, *Furūq*, p. 38.

⁹ *Furūq*, pp. 38-40.

¹⁰ Ibn Aflaḥ, *Muqaddima*, p. 54; cf. the English introduction pp. 38 f.

such a distinction in poetry; the examples given as *dhamm* would be called *hijā*¹¹ by other critics, e.g. the fragment by al-A^ʿshā containing the line ‘You spend the night full-bellied...’,¹² which is called *ahjā bayt* elsewhere.¹³ Similar distinctions are made between *lawm* and *ʿath*, and *wala*¹⁴ and *hamz*.¹⁵ *Wala*¹⁶ is defined as ‘explicitly stating one’s annoyance with one’s situation’—it is not clear on what authority—and *hamz* as ‘to condemn something by means of a veiled intimidation’, although many of the illustrations are rather of the type called *taʿkid al-dhamm bimā yushbih al-madh*.

One might have expected more of Ibn Aflah, a poet especially noted for his invective. When he collected his own poetry he took care, like many others, to exclude the worst, claiming—perhaps not without reason—that many spurious poems were commonly attributed to him, which caused him no little embarrassment.¹⁴ He moreover maintained that he had never insulted people deliberately without being provoked, that he never violated decency in his verse and never lied in it.¹⁵ But Ibn Khallikān called him a poet of much *hijā*¹⁶ and ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī tells us that

his *hijā*¹⁷ was vehement, his tongue foul; whenever he thought of an invective motif on someone he did not care whether that person was a benefactor or a malefactor, an enemy or a friend. There were few among those who bestowed favours upon him whom he did not repay with base words and open criticism.¹⁷

Even when we allow for some exaggeration in this passage (the author had reason to be biased against Ibn Aflah), it seems likely that a certain amount of hypocrisy in Ibn Aflah cannot be denied. Some critics and anthologists who would not make invective poetry themselves see no harm in quoting coarse lampoons; Ibn Aflah did the opposite, for he kept his *dīwān* and his work on poetry (which is largely an anthology) free of morally reprehensible verse.

Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, a more important critic (who, incidentally, severely criticizes Ibn Aflah’s *Muqaddima*)¹⁸ did not discuss *hijā*¹⁹ except in passing, as when he seems to be pleased with a bawdy allusion in an epigram by Abū Nuwās, on ‘women (...) who steal, when they spend the

¹¹ *Muqaddima*, p. 55.

¹² E.g. Ḥātimī, *Ḥilya*, i, 345, ʿAskarī, *Dīwān al-maʿānī*, i, 171; cf. above, p. 43.

¹³ *Muqaddima*, pp. 57 f.; cf. introd. p. 39.

¹⁴ *Muqaddima*, pp. 63 f.

¹⁵ *Muqaddima*, p. 64.

¹⁶ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, iii, 389.

¹⁷ Iṣfahānī, *Kharida (al-ʿIrāq)*, ii, 52 f.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Mathal*, ii, 59.

night, the tips of lances',¹⁹ or an anonymous epigram on a physician who is not a simple but a compound ignoramus, which, as he says, combines wittiness and mockery with gravity of language.²⁰ In a section on comparing poets he takes pains to exculpate Jarīr from the charge of repeating the same three or four themes again and again in his *hijā'*: the themes of 'the blacksmith' (on al-Farazdaq's alleged base ancestry), 'adultery' (on the alleged lewdness of his female relations, notably his sister Jī'thin), 'striking the Byzantine' (on al-Farazdaq's bungling of the execution, forced upon him, of a captive) and 'the expulsion from the mosque' (on which see e.g. *al-Aghānī*, ix, 329).²¹ After showing that this is not true in the first place, he adds that, if it were true, Jarīr would still be superior on account of his versatility in handling these themes.²²

2. 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī

Ibn al-Athīr's ideas on stylistics are not without originality. It is regrettable that he did not attempt to discuss and classify the poetic *aghrāḍ*; the same can be said, with even more reason, of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, probably the most sensitive and penetrating mind in Arabic literary criticism. In his two books of literary theory, *Asrār al-balāgha* and *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, he shows in great detail the role of syntax and imagery in literary discourse (mainly poetry and Koran). His interests are aesthetic above all: if one's criterion is efficacy of communication, the street-vendor's cry 'hot beans!' would be better than a subtle line of poetry.²³ But he is well aware of the psychological function of poetry. He contests the view that poetry is useless or even to be condemned because it is nothing but 'bons mots, jokes, weeping over deserted dwelling places and the description of its remnants, or the description of a camel, or exaggerated panegyric and invective: nothing that is needed for the improvement of religious or worldly matters',²⁴ or because it is full of 'jokes and foolishness, invective and abuse, lies and falsehood'.²⁵ There is nothing specifically poetic about all these things, 'Abd al-Qāhir says; they can be found in prose too. Moreover, jests and falsities may be used for serious purposes.²⁶

¹⁹ *Mathal*, iii, 69 f., in a chapter on *kināya*; Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ii, 131.

²⁰ *Mathal*, iii, 215, on the use of jargon in poetry.

²¹ *Mathal*, iii, 275; compare Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, pp. 193-98, Šulī, *Akhbār al-Buhturī*, p. 175, 'Askarī, *Šinā'atayn*, p. 30, Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, ii, 104 f, Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān* (ed. Ḥadīthī), p. 55.

²² *Mathal*, iii, 280 f.

²³ Jurjānī, *Asrār*, p. 131 f., Ritter's translation, p. 163 (the same cry, in a mocking context, in his *Dalā'il*, p. 453).

²⁴ *Dalā'il*, p. 56.

²⁵ *Dalā'il*, p. 60.

²⁶ *Dalā'il*, pp. 60-71.

Although this defence of poetry betrays a moralistic outlook in a general sense, al-Jurjānī is not concerned with the moral aspects of poetry; he is not interested in the occasions where invective or falsehood may or may not be appropriate. But he insists on the power of poetry in this respect. Thus *tamthīl*, 'comparison by means of analogy', enhances the effect, whether one intends argumentation, self-praise, apology, admonition, praise or blame. In blame 'it touches more painfully, burns more scorchingly, has a stronger impact and cuts more sharply' than a straightforward, plain statement.²⁷ By means of imagery poets are able, not only to create the illusion that a lifeless thing is alive, that a nonexistent thing exists visibly and something humble is noble, but also that the honour of a noble person is stained, virtue wronged, beauty ravished, dubious arguments raised to certain evidence, and *vice versa*.²⁸ With approval he quotes Ibn Sukkara (d. 385/995):

Poetry is fire without smoke;
rhymes have subtle, magical charms.
If musk—which is deserving of every praise—
were satirized, it would change into carrion.
How many a weighty man in a lofty position
was toppled by light letters!²⁹

Nothing indicates that al-Jurjānī finds it objectionable that prominent people should be humiliated in verse. He gives a few illustrations referring to persons, but his aloofness from moral issues is evident from the example singled out for special praise: an epigram on the moon, embodiment of beauty, by Ibn al-Muʿtazz, 'because he was not afraid of going straight against common opinion'.³⁰

The epigram is, indeed, a conscious exercise in what some critics have discussed under the term *taghāyur* or *talattuf*.³¹ It is not directed at a person, nor, as it happens, at the moon, but at a poetic convention. The same is valid of some other poems against the moon.³² The subject of Ibn al-Rūmī's poem on the moon is *hijāʾ* itself; it is worthy of being given in full:

²⁷ *Asrār*, p. 102, Ritter's translation, p. 128.

²⁸ *Asrār*, p. 317, Ritter's translation, p. 369.

²⁹ *Asrār*, p. 318, Ritter's translation, p. 370 (cf. Bürgel's rhymed version in his 'Von der kultur- und sozialgeschichtlichen Bedeutung', p. 37); Thaʿālibī, *Yatīma*, iii, 15, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, iv, 412, Ṣafādī, *Wāfi*, iii, 309.

³⁰ *Asrār*, pp. 321 f., Ritter's translation, pp. 372 f.; cf. Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Dīwān* (ed. Lewin), iv, 103, Sharīshī, *Sharh*, iv, 86.

³¹ See above, p. 100, note 33.

³² See for instance Thaʿālibī, *Tatīmna*, pp. 10 f. Similarly, when Ibn al-Rūmī in one of his several poems against the rose likens it to the anus of a defecating mule, he attacks a poetic convention and those who follow it (*Dīwān*, iv, 1452, 'Askarī, *Ṣināʿatayn*, p. 447, Nawāijī, *Ḥalba*, p. 244, Tanasī, *Naẓm*, p. 149, Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥādara*, ii, 406, etc.).

Many a reputation, deemed above vileness,
 has been stained by the insinuations of *hijāʿ*.
 If a man of letters wished to make *hijāʿ* on the full moon
 he would upbraid it with most foul intention,
 And say: 'Full moon, you deceive the nightly traveller,
 you mock the visit of a beautiful woman;
 'The spottiness in the pallor of your face resembles
 the patches on a leprous cheek;
 'You are afflicted with waning:
 it leaves you like a crooked nail-pairing;
 'Then you dwindle, at the end of the month,
 which wipes you off the skin of the sky'.
 Thus, if the full moon may be defamed by means of *hajw*,
 can any virtuous man be safe from the tongues of poets?
 Not because of panegyrics, but for fear of *hajw*
 do we receive presents from caliphs.³³

Is this to be taken as *hijāʿ* on *hijāʿ*? Rather the opposite; one may compare, by the same poet:

You may say (of honey): saliva of bees, praising it;
 and if you blame it, you say: vomit of wasps,
 In praise or blame, while not going beyond plain description:
 the magic of eloquence makes you see darkness as light.³⁴

What some would call lies and injustice is here presented as poetic truth and poetic justice.

3. Balāghiyyūn and badīʿiyyūn

The aesthetic and stylistic approach of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī was to dominate literary theory and criticism for centuries, once his ideas were systematically ordered in textbooks on the two main branches of medieval Arabic rhetoric: *ʿilm al-maʿānī*, the stylistics of syntax, and *ʿilm al-bayān*, the study of tropes. In the many compendia and commentaries the study of *aghrāḍ* did not find a place. The primarily ethical standards of the philosophers, followed by al-Qarṭājannī, had given way to aesthetical standards, as is reflected in terminology. Thus the philosophers spoke of *taḥsīn* and *taqbiḥ* (terms in which the moral implications of 'good' and 'bad' are stronger than the aesthetical ones) as the basic aims of figurative speech, somewhat reluctantly admitting the neutral *muṭābaqa*,³⁵ whereas the other group, the *balāghiyyūn*, recognized

³³ *Dīwān*, (i), 135.

³⁴ *Dīwān*, (iii), 1144, anonymously in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, i, 33. Compare Aristoteles' description of honey (*Soph. El.*, ch. 5 (167b), see Schoeler, 'Der poetische Syllogismus', pp. 44 f. note 6 and p. 65; taken up by Ibn Sīnā and others).

³⁵ See above, pp. 97, 100.

among the aims of a comparison *tazyīn*, 'embellishing representation' *tashwīh*, 'disfiguring representation', or *istiṭrāf*, 'original description'.³⁶

These *balāghiyūn* adopted in varying degrees the achievements of the students of *badīʿ*, who specialized in compiling lists of figures of speech and other literary embellishments, growing in number and refinement (they, in turn, borrowed from the others) but lacking system. In their works the *aghrād* had no place either. An exception is *Jawhar al-kanz* by Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn al-Athīr (d. 737/1336), which is in fact a shortened version of *Kanz al-barāʿa*, now lost, by his father ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl Ibn al-Athīr (d. 699/1299).³⁷ Its first chapter is entitled 'On the knowledge and virtues required of the chancery scribe',³⁸ but in spite of this and a few other chapters of a general nature the book deals mainly with poetry. Like *al-ʿUmda* by Ibn Rashīq, from which it derives much, it contains a chapter on poetry in general and its useful or harmful aspects.³⁹ The bulk of the work is devoted to *badīʿ*, divided into seventy sections.⁴⁰ However, the meaning of *badīʿ* is stretched beyond its usual limits, since, strangely, *hijāʿ* and *madḥ* are included; whereas chapters on other modes, such as love-poetry, self-praise, elegy, incitement and instigation (*al-ighrāʿ wa-ʿl-tahrīd*), gnomic verse, reproach, apology and asceticism follow after the part called *badīʿ*.⁴¹

At the beginning of the long chapter on *hijāʿ* the question of its ethics is taken up once more:

Hijāʿ is the mentioning of bad qualities (*masāwīʿ*), just as panegyric is the mentioning of human virtues. If (in panegyric) physical virtues are added to the human virtues, and accidental virtues (*faḍāʿil ittifaqiyya*) as well, i.e. those that occur extrinsically and accidentally, then this contributes to the perfection of the panegyric. Similarly, *hijāʿ* is properly concerned with human vices; but if physical defects and blemishes, and accidental and extrinsic ones, are added, then this *hijāʿ* becomes a more effective form of dispraise (*ablagh fi ʿl-dhamm*). Just as it is a fault to restrict oneself in panegyric to physical descriptions, so it is a fault in *hijāʿ*.⁴²

It is only in the following chapter, on panegyric, that Qudāma's four principal virtues are mentioned; 'all other positive qualifications are sub-

³⁶ Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ*, pp. 162, 164, *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ*, iii, 402-6, Ibn Mālik, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 57, etc.

³⁷ See GAL I 341, GAL S I 581, Sallām, *Tārīkh al-naqd*, ii, 290-312, Qulqayla, *Naqd*, 81-84.

³⁸ *Jawhar*, pp. 29-33.

³⁹ *Jawhar*, pp. 407 ff, 427-38.

⁴⁰ *Jawhar*, pp. 49-406.

⁴¹ *Jawhar*, pp. 451-606.

⁴² *Jawhar*, pp. 309 f.

sumed under these four'.⁴³ But like al-Āmidī he finds that an agreeable appearance, too, may be praised, since

a person's countenance and appearance are potential indications of his situation and his character, and of whether or not he deserves the position that he holds. Ibn 'Abbās has said: 'I only have to see the back of someone's head in order to know his intelligence'. They asked him: 'And when you see his face?'; he answered: 'That is an open book for me'.⁴⁴

Physiognomy, reading someone's character and mind from external and physical indications, is, indeed, an old and acknowledged branch of Arab science, confirmed by the Koran, it would seem.⁴⁵ The author of *Jawhar al-kanz* mentions that Qudāma had condemned self-praise on account of one's ancestors, but he believes that mentioning one's noble descent, or the merits of one's progeny, may enhance the *fakhr*, provided that the poet himself is virtuous too.⁴⁶ Although, he maintains, true self-praise should be on account of one's fear of God, in accordance with Mohammed's oft-quoted saying 'The noblest of you for God is the most God-fearing', he grants that this is not customary among poets, particularly not among the pre-Islamic Arabs.⁴⁷ In any case, external and physical properties should only be secondary: with their help the poet and his audience may identify true vices or virtues, which may be enhanced by them. They should not be used in isolation, unconnected with moral qualities; and it is understood that all praise and blame should be truthful.

This last point is confirmed in the discussion of the next issue raised by Ibn al-Athīr in the chapter on *hijā'*: the question of explicitness vs. implicitness:

There are things peculiar to *hijā'* that do not apply to panegyric. Among them is the fact that allusion in *hijā'* is often more eloquent and more effective than explicitness, in contradistinction to panegyric, where only explicitness is proper. For good qualities should be divulged and bad qualities should be hidden.⁴⁸

As said before,⁴⁹ the terms are ambiguous: *taṣnīḥ* and *ta'arīḍ* might refer to mentioning the name of the person under attack and leaving it out, respectively. Undeniably, the latter is more common in invective than in

⁴³ *Jawhar*, p. 349.

⁴⁴ *Jawhar*, p. 348.

⁴⁵ *Sūra* xlvii, 32: 'Did We so will, We should let thee see them (viz. those in whose hearts is disease) and thou wouldst know them by their mark' (Bell's translation). On Arab physiognomy see *EP*, art. 'firāsa', by T. Fahd.

⁴⁶ *Jawhar*, pp. 515-17. Qudāma had not mentioned self-praise as a separate genre.

⁴⁷ *Jawhar*, p. 515.

⁴⁸ *Jawhar*, p. 310.

⁴⁹ Above, p. 88.

panegyric, if not for decency's sake, then for the sake of the poet's safety. Or the terms might refer to plainness and allusiveness in general, as the passage quoted suggests. However, here as in the corresponding passage in *al-ʿUmda*, the author is thinking especially of obscenity, for he continues:

Furthermore, it is recommended in *hijāʿ* that the literal meaning should not be obscene, such as is avoided by pious and decent people; that it is not too unseemly to be recited in public gatherings; and that the wrath of the victim⁵⁰ need not be feared, in most cases. *Hajw* ought to consist of few verses, in a short metre, easy of diction. Slander, obscenity and abuse in a poem show that the poet is ignoble and despicable.⁵¹ Any poet who utters such things makes *hijāʿ* on himself rather than on the addressee; he becomes notorious among people for his foulness of language⁵² and slander, for which he deserves to be punished by law. It also shows his bad religion, for his slandering people is an indication that he despises religion and acts against the sacred law. A number of poets have practised this and have accordingly become notorious examples of irreligiousness. Among them were Abū Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī, Ibn Aflah, Ibn al-Habbāriyya and Ibn Munīr al-Tarābulusī;⁵³ they were known for the vehemence of their *hijāʿ* (...) But if one employs in *hijāʿ* ambiguity (*ihām*),⁵⁴ allusion (*taʿrīd*) and insinuation (*talwīḥ*), then there is still room left for escaping with an apology, unlike someone who makes slanderous and obscene *hijāʿ*. Moreover, allusions are more effective in *hijāʿ* than plain statement.⁵⁵

Thus the author's opinions on invective are based on a variety of considerations: ethics, decorum (both, as often, associated with religiousness), 'pragmatics' (the safety of the poet), and, almost as an afterthought, the poetical and rhetorical effects. That the last-mentioned criterion may well prevail in the end is suggested by the conclusion of the chapter with an analysis of al-Akhṭal's line '... Piss on the fire!', which he calls 'the most terrible (*aʿzam*) line of *hijāʿ* there is'—apparently a positive judgement (he adds, however, 'But God knows best').⁵⁶

The greater part of the chapter is devoted to the illustration of the several themes and types of *hijāʿ* and related subjects, the first of which is not only disproportionately long but out of place: 'Connected with *hijāʿ*'

⁵⁰ Reading *ghāʿilat al-mahjuww bih* instead of *ghāʿilat al-hajw bih*.

⁵¹ Reading *khasāsatiḥ* for *shamātatiḥ*.

⁵² Reading *badhāʿat al-lisān* for *nidāʿ al-lisān*.

⁵³ On Ibn al-Habbāriyya (d. c. 509/1115-16), a poet of much *hijāʿ* and *mujūn* in the style of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, see Pellat's article in *EP*, s.v. On Ibn Munīr (d. 548/1135) see *GAL* I 256, S I 455, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, i, 156-60 with more references.

⁵⁴ Thus the edition; in the MS that I consulted (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, *adab*, 1967) I read *ibhām*, '(deliberate) obscurity'. Not surprisingly, the terms are often confused. See Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions*, index.

⁵⁵ *Jawhar*, pp. 310 f. The last sentence is an unacknowledged quotation from Ibn Rashīq's *ʿUmda*.

⁵⁶ *Jawhar*, p. 346.

is “blaming the times and one’s contemporaries” (*dhamm al-zamān wa-abnāʾih*).⁵⁷ This all-embracing form of *hijāʾ* is in fact often too impersonal and not specific enough to qualify as *hijāʾ* in its usual sense: an arrow can hit humanity only in one person, not in all, and ‘blaming the times’ or ‘blaming the world’ rather belongs to *zuhd* and *ḥikam*, as does Ibn al-Athīr’s first example, attributed to Abū ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī:

Time that passes; bitter life;
Fate that brings unpleasant things again;
Dissolving soul; returning care;
A world which cries: No one is free.⁵⁸

It is but a small step from blaming the world to blaming Fate (*al-dahr*); and *zuhd*, often recommended by taxonomists of poetry for its moralism and religiousness, not rarely borders on heresy and unbelief. In Ḥadith-literature one finds statements condemning such blasphemies (whoever blames *al-dahr* blames God),⁵⁹ to which al-Maʿarrī himself refers in his *Risālat al-Ghufrān*.⁶⁰ But only when *al-Dahr* is personified and vilified can one speak of *hijāʾ*, as when a poet of ʿAbd al-Qays, nicknamed *shātim al-dahr*, ‘Fate’s reviler’, ascribes to Fate ‘a monkey’s face, thin like a shoe-strap’, distorted cheeks and a mangled nose.⁶¹ Most of Ibn al-Athīr’s illustrations are complaints about unnamed people; the plaintive tone is uncharacteristic of true *hijāʾ*. Ibn al-Athīr apparently equates *hijāʾ* with *dhamm*.⁶² With more reason ‘threats’ are also subsumed under *hijāʾ*.⁶³ The rest of the chapter is formed by a motley collection of short poems on stingy people (whose avarice is a sign of irreligiousness, according to the author),⁶⁴ on a hasty *imām*, on oculists with various bad habits, a hunchback, unsuccessful doctors, a repetitive preacher, judges, witnesses, jurists, Christians, a Jew, odious sick people and others, and

⁵⁷ *Jawhar*, pp. 314-28.

⁵⁸ *Jawhar*, p. 314. Though displaying *luzūm mā lā yalzam* it is not found in al-Maʿarrī’s *dīwān* of that name.

⁵⁹ References in *ET*² s.v. ‘dahr’.

⁶⁰ Maʿarrī, *Ghufrān*, p. 426, cf. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Poetry*, pp. 155 f.

⁶¹ ʿAmīdī, *Muwāzana*, i, 258 f., Maʿarrī, *Ghufrān*, p. 428, Abū Tammām, *Waḥshiyyāt*, p. 220. The not infrequent expression *ist al-dahr* is explained by lexicographers as simply the ‘fundament, or beginning, of time’, see the dictionaries and e.g. Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ii, 16; but there, as elsewhere, it occurs in an invective context.

⁶² Compare Ḥamza al-ʿIṣfahānī’s remark on the connection between *zuhd* and *hijāʾ*, above, p. 77 note 99. In a number of *dīwān* redactions ‘complaints’ (*shakwā*) are separated from *hijāʾ* and combined with ‘reproach’ or ‘self-praise’ (Schoeler, ‘Die Einteilung’, pp. 44, 47, 50).

⁶³ *Jawhar*, pp. 330-32.

⁶⁴ *Jawhar*, p. 332.

even three lines 'blaming a fortress', although this turns out to be a complaint with self-mockery.⁶⁵

I have dwelled on Ibn al-Athīr's chapter on *hijā'* at some length, not because of its intrinsic merits (for it does not offer much that is new), but because it is the last full discussion of *hijā'* in classical criticism known to me. The very long chapter on *hijā'* in the vast encyclopaedia *Nihāyat al-arab* by al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332) is merely a collection of poems and fragments, thematically arranged, interspersed with a few general remarks and well-known quotations.⁶⁶ The thirteen sections⁶⁷ are concerned with bad character-traits and wicked deeds, not with physical blemishes; only the last section, on 'inarticulateness' (*al-ʿiyy wa-l-ḥaṣar*) is exceptional in having a non-moral failing as its subject. But the popular anthology by al-Ibshīhī (d. after 850/1446), *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaṭraf*, includes in a short chapter on *hijā'* epigrams on an ugly woman, a big nose, a homosexual suffering from bad breath.⁶⁸

Al-Ibshīhī does not pretend to offer a thorough discussion of *hijā'*, but he explains the reason for incorporating it in his anthology:

The aim of *hijā'* (scil. in this work) is to appreciate its wittiness and the eloquent expressions and original motifs contained in it; not to seek satisfaction by slandering reputations and backbiting. *Hijā'* is an indication neither of the bad conduct of the addressee nor of the truthfulness of the poet in his accusations. Not everyone who is blamed is blameworthy. People may be satirized falsely, unjustly, by way of a joke, or by way of intimidation.⁶⁹

By explicitly restricting himself to the aesthetic function al-Ibshīhī implicitly pronounces an ethical judgement, as is to be expected in an anthology of *adab*. The chapter is hemmed in somewhat incongruously, not between discussions of other poetical *aghṛād*, but between 'praising and thanking', of which *hijā'* is in a sense the opposite, and 'truthfulness and lying'. Grossly 'immoral' chapters such as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī included in his anthology are not found in *al-Mustaṭraf*, which is a more moderate work. The other extreme is the highly moralistic *adab* anthology by Usāma Ibn Munqidh, *Lubāb al-ādāb*: although it has chapters on poetical *aghṛād* (panegyric, apology, reproach, elegy, love-poetry), *hijā'* is not included.

⁶⁵ *Jawhar*, p. 345: 'Every morning, on an empty stomach, I ride through the dust, choking, / On my way to that ruinous citadel (*qalʿa*), as if I were a stone shot from a mangonel. / My clothes are decaying, my life is near extinction: a true uprooting (or: destitution, *qalʿa/qulʿa*)'.

⁶⁶ Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, iii, 265-384.

⁶⁷ Fourteen are announced at the beginning, but in the text 'slander' (*al-ghība wa-l-namīma*) is combined with the near-synonymous *siʿāya*.

⁶⁸ Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, ii, 6.

⁶⁹ *Mustaṭraf*, ii, 2.

Not much concerned with ethics but all the more with eloquence and wittiness is the extensive group of treatises specializing in *badīʿ*, figures and tropes. It is impossible to discuss all the relevant details in these works; much in them is merely copied from predecessors. I shall concentrate on one relatively important author in this group, the Egyptian Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣbaʿ (d. 654/1256). His *Tahrīr al-tahbīr* is divided into 125 chapters on various stylistic phenomena; for thirty of these he claims to be the first to describe them. On several occasions he shows how a particular figure of speech is employed in *hijāʿ*, for instance when he analyses the effect of the antithesis in al-Farazdaq's line '...they do not betray nor do they keep their promises to their neighbour'.⁷⁰ 'Feigned ignorance' (*tajāhul al-ʿarīf*), 'repetition' (*takrār*), 'jesting with a serious purport' (*hazl yurād bih al-jidd*) and other figures of speech are said to be suitable for *hijāʿ*.

Among the subjects that he claims to be the first to describe, two are forms of irony. In both cases his claim is false, unless we charitably interpret it in the sense that he was the first to incorporate these tropes in a list of *badīʿ*. As was shown above, *hijāʿ* in the guise of praise (*fī maʿrīḍ al-madh*) was described before his time,⁷¹ as was *tahakkum*, 'verbal irony or sarcasm'. This powerful and important technique in *hijāʿ* was known from early poetry ('My people, although numerous, do no evil, not the slightest thing;/They reward the wrongs of those who wrong them with forgiveness, and the evil of evildoers with beneficence')⁷² and the Koran, the standard example being the frequent '*Bashshir*...', 'Give good tidings!' (viz. 'of a punishment painful').⁷³ In view of this it is surprising to see how long it took to be described by literary theorists as a separate, well-defined trope. Abū 'Ubayda did not discuss the verses with '*Bashshir*' or similar verses in his *Majāz al-Qurʾān*. His contemporary, the grammarian al-Farrāʿ (d. 207/822) was the first to explain them.⁷⁴ He seems to think that the trope was peculiar to the Arabs: 'Perhaps someone unfamiliar with the ways of the Arabic language may fail to recognize it (*ankarahū*)'. He was followed by Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004),⁷⁵ but it was only after the penetrating studies of Koranic stylistics by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)⁷⁶ that *tahakkum* acquired a

⁷⁰ Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣbaʿ, *Tahrīr*, pp. 113 f.

⁷¹ Above, p. 104.

⁷² Attributed to Qurayṭ Ibn Unayf in *Ḥamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 7, cf. 'Askarī, *Ṣināʿatayn*, p. 325, Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, ii, 228, 324, Marghīnānī, *Mahāsīn*, p. 102, Ibn al-Qayyim, *Fawāʿid*, p. 14, 'Alawī, *Tirāz*, ii, 385, Ibn Hījja, *Khizāna*, pp. 146 f., Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Badīʿiyya*, p. 12, etc. Compare al-Najāshī's line, quoted above, p. 104, note 58.

⁷³ *Sūras* iii, 21, iv, 138, ix, 3, 34, xxxi, 7, xlv, 8, lxxxiv, 24.

⁷⁴ Farrāʿ, *Maʿānī 'l-Qurʾān*, i, 239.

⁷⁵ Ibn Qutayba, *Taʿwīl*, pp. 185 f., Ibn Fāris, *Ṣāhibī*, pp. 214 f.

⁷⁶ See Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf* on *sūras* iv, 138, xi, 87, and especially xv, 6, where he adds that 'it may frequently be found in the speech of non-Arabs'. On *tahakkum* in the

regular place in literary studies. Al-Sakkākī describes ironic comparison ('How like a lion', said of a coward)⁷⁷ and metaphor.⁷⁸ Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba'ʿs contribution lies in his pains to distinguish between the several types. In *tahakkum* 'the literal meaning is serious and the hidden meaning jesting',⁷⁹ for instance when the back of a hunchback is praised for its curve resembling that of the crescent moon or a bow.⁸⁰ *Tahakkum*, then, is the reverse of *hazl yurād bih al-jidd*. When neither the literal meaning nor the hidden meaning is serious the trope is called *tandīr*.⁸¹ I must confess that I do not see precisely what the author has in mind with *tandīr* and the difference from other tropes, nor do I seem to be the only one, since most subsequent writers on *badīʿ*, usually keen to adopt the categories of their predecessors, do not discuss it.⁸² Apparently it refers to a friendly, non-malicious use of irony, called *tamlīḥ* by the *balāghīyyūn*⁸³ and distinguished from scathing irony, *tahakkum*, even though the distinction cannot always be made on the basis of the words themselves but has to be deduced from a broader context.

It is the context, according to Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba'ʿ, that distinguishes '*hijāʿ*' in the guise of praise' from *tahakkum*:

What distinguishes this type from *tahakkum*—although the 'praise' in it is (a form of) *tahakkum*—is the presence, in *tahakkum*, of words indicating some kind of dispraise, or a word from which it is understood that the purport is *hijāʿ*. The words of praise in this type (scil. '*hijāʿ*' in the guise of praise'), on the other hand, do not include anything of this: they always indicate nothing but praise, whether separately or in combination, as long as nothing intervenes which twists the sense into another direction.⁸⁴

Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba'ʿs formulations and distinctions on the subject of irony are duly copied by later authors such as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1350), Ibn Hījja al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434) and 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d.

Koran, see e.g. Zarkashī, *Burhān*, ii, 231-33 (condensed to one line in Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 111) where it is one of many 'modes of address (*wujūh al-mukhāṭabāt*)'.

⁷⁷ Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ*, p. 168, cf. *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ*, iii, 383.

⁷⁸ *Miftāḥ*, pp. 177, 180, 181, *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ*, iv, 78.

⁷⁹ Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba'ʿ, *Tahrīr*, p. 570; cf. his *Badīʿ al-Qurʿān*, p. 284.

⁸⁰ *Tahrīr*, p. 569. For a longer version of the poem, see Ibn Shākir, *Fawāt*, iv, 272. The poet is al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Dharawī.

⁸¹ *Tahrīr*, p. 573, *Badīʿ al-Qurʿān*, pp. 285 f.

⁸² Only al-Ḥalabī (*Ḥusn al-tawassul*, pp. 122 f.) mentions it (it appears as *tandūd*) and, through him, al-Nuwayrī (*Nihāya*, vii, 172).

⁸³ Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ*, pp. 168, 177, *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ*, iii, 383, iv, 78, Taftāzānī, *Muṭawwal*, p. 327, etc. *Tamlīḥ* means 'making pleasantries (*mulah*)'. For the connection with *milḥ*, 'salt', compare the western tradition, where 'salty' joking (*sal*) is a kind of epigram to be distinguished from types called *fel* ('gall') and *acetum* ('biting'). See Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 131 f., 138, 184. But unlike 'saltiness' in the West, *malāḥa* implies elegance rather than piquancy.

⁸⁴ *Tahrīr*, pp. 551 f.

1143/1731) in their commentaries on their own *Badīʿiyyas*, the importance of which lies in their value as anthologies rather than as works of criticism.

The many chapters of *badīʿ*, although together forming a highly heterogeneous conglomerate, have in common a concern for matters of stylistics. Themes, topoi, motifs, genres, *aghrād* or ethical aspects are mentioned only indirectly, if at all. Some chapters, however, lie on the borderline. Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣḥāʿ introduced, as a separate section in *badīʿ*, *al-shamāta*, 'schadenfreude', defined as 'showing joy when someone is struck by misfortune'.⁸⁵ The ethical implications are ignored—examples are taken not only from Ibn al-Rūmī but from the Koran itself—but it is questionable whether such a subject, which is neither figure nor trope, should be included in what is primarily a work on stylistics.

Ethical considerations do, however, come up in yet another of Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣḥāʿ's additions: the chapter on *nazāha* 'decency', which begins as follows:

It mostly concerns *hijāʿ*, even though, rarely, it may occur in other modes. It means that the expressions of *hijāʿ*, or another mode, are devoid of obscenities,

followed by Abū 'Amr Ibn al-ʿAlāʾ's dictum on *hijāʿ* fit for maidens.⁸⁶ The definition is slightly misleading: if *nazāha* rarely occurs in modes other than *hijāʿ* this does not mean that they are indecent; here the term is employed in the sense of 'decent although the contrary might have been expected'. It is clear from the examples that really 'chaste' *hijāʿ* is meant, and not the oblique type in which bawdy and scurrilous ideas are packed in clean wrappings. It was not difficult for the author to find a suitable Koranic example.⁸⁷ He did not bother to explain why *nazāha* is to be recommended; he can hardly have thought it an important advantage in itself if *hijāʿ* could be recited by bashful virgins. Obviously he was in favour of employing decent language; but why limit 'decency' to *hijāʿ* and Koran and not condemn obscenity in general? Perhaps because *mulaḥ* and *mujūn* are types of 'light verse' for which the rules of serious poetry are not valid. One may compare, for instance, the obscene fragment by Ibn Ḥajjāj quoted in the chapter on 'transition' (*takhalluṣ*),⁸⁸ to

⁸⁵ *Tahrīr*, p. 567, *Badīʿ al-Qurʾān*, p. 282.

⁸⁶ *Tahrīr*, p. 584, *Badīʿ al-Qurʾān*, p. 292. Surprisingly, the editor, in a note, utters his surprise at the author's ignorance of Abū 'Amr's saying. He means to say, as he does elsewhere, that the author's claim is false and that the 'figure' had been 'discovered' before. But, again, Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣḥāʿ's claim merely refers to the inclusion of the phenomenon in a work of *badīʿ*.

⁸⁷ *Sūra* xxiv, 48-50, cf. *Tahrīr*, pp. 585 f., *Badīʿ al-Qurʾān*, pp. 293 f.

⁸⁸ *Tahrīr*, p. 437.

the regret of the editor,⁸⁹ who is pleased to inform us, in his introduction,⁹⁰ that Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba^c's own *hijā*³ is neither vicious nor obscene, except for one epigram on a Jewish physician, quoted in *Tahrīr al-tahbīr*:

I saw Abū 'l-Khayr al-Yahūdī holding
a phial yellow as turmeric, with a clear liquid.
He sprinkled some of it on the surface of his face
and said, 'The fragrance of this revives my heart'.
I asked him: 'What is it?'. He answered, 'Urine
of a black one whose rod cures my disease,
'Fresh from my beloved: anyone has a passion
for where his beloved dwelled'''.⁹¹

These lines need not be taken as inconsistent with the author's prescriptions: *nazāha*, like the other stylistic phenomena discussed and illustrated in works on *badī*³, is merely a possible embellishment, not a necessary condition. In the works of Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba^c and his colleagues description and recommendation outweigh stringent prescription.⁹²

4. Strophic and vernacular poetry

From early Abbasid times the forms and themes of Arabic poetry remained largely the same for some ten centuries. Among the more important formal developments during this long period was the rise of several strophic forms. Whereas the 'standard' forms, whether appearing as *qaṣīda* or *qit'a*, could accommodate all known themes, the strophic forms tended to be more exclusive and specialized. The *muwashshaḥa* is, first of all, a love lyric, which may be combined with panegyric. It is true that Ibn Sanā³ al-Mulk (d. 608/1211), in his monograph on the *muwashshaḥ*, maintains that 'all types of poetry, such as love poetry, panegyric, elegy, *hajw*, bawdiness and asceticism, can be made in *muwashshaḥ* form'.⁹³ However, *hijā*³ is simply not found; only one name

⁸⁹ See his note, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Pp. 33 f.

⁹¹ *Tahrīr*, pp. 34 and 384. Cf. 'Abbāsī, *Ma'āhid*, ii, 171. The last line is a quotation not identified by the editor; see *Aghānī*, ii, 85, Qālī, *Dhayl al-Amālī*, iii, 92, Ibn Dāwūd, *Zahra*, i, 220, Khālidīyyān, *Ashbāḥ*, i, 82, 'Askarī, *Dīwān al-ma'ānī*, i, 274, *Shinā'atayn*, p. 15, Murtaḍā, *Ghurar*, i, 487 for various attributions.

⁹² Prescriptions are found notably in the chapter *al-tahdhīb wa-'l-ta'dīb* which contains general recommendations instead of dealing with one type of embellishment. *Nazāha* as part of *badī*^c was duly taken over by later authors, see Hillī, *Sharḥ al-Badī'iyya*, p. 13, Ibn Hījja, *Khizāna*, pp. 95 f., Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt*, pp. 57-61 (where the illustrations are mostly of the joking type, unlike those of the others), Suyūṭī, *Uqūd*, p. 130, *Itqān*, iii, 329 f., Subkī, 'Arūs, in *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ*, iv, 470 (where the term is misspelt as *barā'a*), Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, p. 1435, etc.

⁹³ Ibn Sanā³ al-Mulk, *Dār al-tīrāz*, p. 38.

is known of a *washshāḥ* who was feared for his satire: Abū 'l-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥazmūn, who made parodies of popular exiting *muwashshahāt* in the style of Ibn Ḥajjāj.⁹⁴ They have not been preserved. Undoubtedly obscene, they may not have been *hijā'* proper; the wording of al-Marrākushī and his examples suggest that Ibn Ḥazmūn's *hijā'* has the traditional *qaṣīd* form. Alternatively, he may have composed *hijā'* in the form of *zajals*, as has been suggested.⁹⁵

The *muwashshaha* was meant to be sung; one may reasonably suppose that a satirical song employing the classical language is not nearly as effective as a song in the spoken language of everyday. The *zajal*, and other forms not employing classical Arabic but a more or less 'vulgar' language, were therefore obviously better suited for popular satire and invective. Yet the greatest exponent of the *zajal*, the Cordovan Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160) 'does not appear to have used the genre of satire'.⁹⁶ It is possible, however, that he suppressed some of his own poems: in the introduction to his *Dīwān* he says that he has collected 'what is good and not wicked'.⁹⁷ The toleration of much *hijā'* lay precisely in the fact that it was literary by dint of its language. Low themes in low language could at times be tolerated and given literary status in the case of pleasantries and good-natured attacks—and Ibn Quzmān's *Dīwān*, *pace* Colin, is by no means devoid of light satire. But serious invective was another matter.

According to Iḥsān 'Abbās it was a certain (Ibn) al-Dabbāgh who introduced *hijā'* into the *zajal*.⁹⁸ As with the *muwashshaha* it took some time before the *zajal* was made the subject of a treatise. When the Iraqi poet Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī wrote his *al-Āṭil al-ḥālī* several types in *zajal* form could be distinguished on the basis of their themes:

The inventors (of the several types) have divided it (scil. the *zajal*) into four sorts that are distinguished by their content, not by metrical or other prosodical strictures. Whatever contains love poetry, bacchic or floral poetry they call *zajal* (proper); that which contains jesting, ribaldry and joking they call *bulayyq*; that which contains *hijā'* and defamation (*thalb*) they call *qarqī*; and that which contains pious admonitions and wisdom they call *mukaffir*.⁹⁹

The origin of the term *qarqī* is unknown to me;¹⁰⁰ I have not found it

⁹⁴ Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p. 215, cf. Hartmann, *Muwašṣaḥ*, pp. 38-40, 236.

⁹⁵ Hartmann, op. cit., p. 236.

⁹⁶ G. S. Colin, *EP*, art. 'Ibn Quzmān' (col. 851b).

⁹⁷ Ibn Quzmān, *Dīwān*, p. 6. For part of a satire ascribed to him but not found in his *Dīwān*, see Stern, *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry*, pp. 199 f.

⁹⁸ 'Abbās, *Tārīkh al-adab al-andalusī*: *ʿaṣr al-ṭawāʾif wa-'l-murābiṭīn*, p. 278 (see also p. 252), referring to Ibn Saʿīd, *al-Mughrib*.

⁹⁹ Ḥillī, *Āṭil*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Jammāl (*al-Adab al-ʿāmmī*, p. 122 note 4) points at *qarq* 'the sound made by a chicken', *qirq* 'low origin', 'habit', 'small people', or a children's game, which is not very helpful.

anywhere else, except in quotations of this passage or passages evidently depending on it.¹⁰¹ Among al-Ḥillī's own *zajals* in *al-ʿĀṭil*¹⁰² there is not a single *qarqī*. On the other hand, there is one obscene *bullayq* as well as a satirical one:¹⁰³ a father rebukes his dissolute daughter. Satire on oneself and on one's own people was traditionally regarded as nearer to jesting than to true *hijāʿ*: that is probably why the poem in question is called a *bullayq* rather than a *qarqī*; but *hijāʿ* is in any case not rare in other *bullayq*-poems.¹⁰⁴

Another, even later subdivision of the *zajal* omits the *qarqī* but mentions the *ḥammāq* as a variety containing *hajw* and jokes,¹⁰⁵ a term mentioned by al-Ḥillī as being unknown in Iraq (he does not associate it with any particular theme or mode).¹⁰⁶ Other forms in the vulgar language lent themselves to *hijāʿ*, such as the short four-line *mawāliyyā*;¹⁰⁷ a 9th/15th-century anthology contains a sequence of twenty *mawāliyyās* antiphonically alternating praise and *hijāʿ*.¹⁰⁸

Recognized and accepted by literary critics and anthologists, poetry in the vulgar language nevertheless had a relatively low status, which was not enhanced by the fact that jesting, occasional verse and 'light verse' in general prevailed in it. As a result the anthologists have preserved for us only a very small proportion of the many popular invective and satirical poems that were undoubtedly produced in the spoken language, and that could only be ephemeral if they were not written down. Another consequence of their low status was the neglect, by the critics and theoreticians of literature, of interesting questions, such as which factors determine the choice for either the classical or the vulgar language, and what the consequences are of this choice.

There is one kind of vernacular poetry that fell almost completely outside the scope of the critics: the Bedouin, or Bedouin-inspired, poetry of the desert regions, such as the poetry called *nabaṭī* from the Arabian Peninsula. In many ways the direct descendant of old Bedouin poetry in

¹⁰¹ See e.g. al-Jammāl, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰² *ʿĀṭil*, pp. 110-31.

¹⁰³ *ʿĀṭil*, pp. 126-28.

¹⁰⁴ e.g. Jammāl, op. cit., pp. 132, 187 f.

¹⁰⁵ Baghdādī, *Hāshiya ʿalā Sharḥ Bānat Suʿād*, i, 50, identical with Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar*, i, 108 f., cf. Jammāl, op. cit., p. 123, Hammer-Purgstall, in *JA*, 8 (1839), p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Ḥillī, *ʿĀṭil*, pp. 7-9; cf. Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, ii, 236, 247 f., Jammāl, op. cit., pp. 141 f. The *ḥammāq* is the subject of an appendix of *al-Durr al-maknūn fī 'l-sabʿ al-funūn* by Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ilyās al-Ḥanafī, completed in 912/1506, according to Ḥājji Khalīfa, *Kashf*, i, col. 732, cf. *GAL* II, 303, S II, 413 f.

¹⁰⁷ Two examples by al-Ḥillī in *al-ʿĀṭil*, pp. 147 f. Some prefer *mawāliyyā*, with *yāʿ* *mukḥaffafa*.

¹⁰⁸ al-Maqdisī (fl. 873/1468), *al-Jawhar al-maknūn*, see Hoenerbach's Introduction to Ḥillī, *ʿĀṭil*, p. 37.

classical Arabic, it continues most of its prosodic and thematic characteristics and its functions, even though its isolation from urban poetry was not total. Among the medieval critics Ibn Khaldūn was perhaps the only one to give some attention to the Bedouin poetry of his time.¹⁰⁹

5. *Islamic law and ethics*

That medieval Arabic poetry played an important role in the life of the intellectual élite and perhaps the lives of many others as well is without question. Yet one should not jump to the conclusion that therefore poetry, when it was popular and its poets esteemed, greatly influenced political events and social developments. Any such impact of a poem or a group of poems in particular is difficult to gauge and even more difficult to prove. We know that kingdoms were lost for the want of a shoenail; yet we do not know of any particular missing shoenail celebrated in history. Works of *adab* and historical works (themselves works of *adab*) are often full of poetry contemporary with the events described, some of which can be described as 'political' or 'social' *hijā*². That it significantly changed the course of history is at times likely but always uncertain. What is certain is that many poets and critics of poetry tend to overestimate its importance and influence. Even the great Omayyad poets, eulogizing the caliphs and mocking rival factions, served as much to amuse as to support the dynasty. On the basis of the many stories from later times in which the authorities are described as taking steps against poets of *hijā*² one can conclude that their motive was usually either personal revenge or pious zeal, rather than political manoeuvring.

We have seen that the poet of invective led a precarious life between punishment and impunity, or even encouragement, depending on the often erratic moods of those in power. The stories told about, for instance, the unexpected forbearance of the Roman emperors¹¹⁰ can be matched with similar anecdotes in Arab history. Apart from the irregular whims of rulers, legislation, where it existed in practice, could regulate and curb the activities of poets. The Romans had such laws; in modern European legislation defamation may lead to civil proceedings, implying an action for damages, or criminal proceedings, involving possible punishment. Islamic legislation, however, did not develop established

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, (iv), 1314-27, Rosenthal's translation, iii, 412-20. On contemporary Arabian poetry in the vernacular, see Sowayan, *Naba'i Poetry*.

¹¹⁰ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, translated by Robert Graves, Harmondsworth, 1957, on the tolerance shown by Caesar (pp. 40 f.), Augustus (pp. 79-81), Vespasian (p. 281), Nero (pp. 231 f.) and, at times, Tiberius, who quoted Accius: 'Let them hate me, so long as they fear me' (p. 138), a saying often quoted by Caligula (p. 164).

rules for dealing with libel and slander, with 'holding someone up to hatred, ridicule, or contempt', as the classic phrase goes, with the exception of the case of *qadhf*, 'slandorous accusation of fornication'. Admittedly, since accusation of homosexual acts and questioning someone's descent in a derisive manner also fall under *qadhf* according to the specialists, much *hijā'* could in theory lead to the punishment prescribed (eighty lashes), provided that the poet was serious and not joking, that he was lying knowingly, and provided that a complaint was raised that could be proved to be justified.

As far as I could ascertain, the legal textbooks are not concerned with *hijā'* in particular. They do not recognize an essential difference between poetry and ordinary speech, for 'poetry ranks as all speech: whatever is good in it is like what is good in ordinary speech, and whatever is bad in it is like what is bad in ordinary speech'; a saying sometimes attributed to the Prophet.¹¹¹ Writers on Islamic ethics had no difficulty in finding evidence that all slander and libel were forbidden. 'Slander on a muslim is a sin', another saying attributed to Mohammed, is quoted by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in a chapter on 'obscenity, slander and scurrilous language',¹¹² one of twenty chapters in 'The Evils of the Tongue' in the third volume of his *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. The title of the chapter shows that al-Ghazālī is aware of the connection between slander and obscenity; by implication he almost equates slander in general and *qadhf*. In yet another *ḥadīth* quoted by him Mohammed says: 'It is one of the greatest sins if a man were to slander his parents'. When asked, 'Why should a man slander his parents?', the Prophet explains: 'He will slander someone else's father, and then this other will slander his'.¹¹³ Again, there is no special mention of *hijā'*. All poetry is in fact suspect: whether praise or blame or love poetry, it is full of lies: poetry, together with singing, is therefore among the 'evils of the tongue',¹¹⁴ as are jesting, mockery and derision, calumny (*ghība*) and malicious reports (*namīma*).¹¹⁵

Al-Ghazālī is concerned not with punishment but with penitence and prevention. In actual practice it did not make much difference if the

¹¹¹ Ibn Rashīq, *Umda*, i, 27, Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 151, Shīrāzī, *Muhadhdhab*, ii, 328, Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, ii, 273, iii, 126, Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, ad *sūra* xxvi, 224, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Ma'ālim*, p. 213, etc. Al-Jāhīz attributes it to 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*Rasā'il*, ii, 160, Beeston, *Epistle*, pp. 23 f.).

¹¹² Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, iii, 121-23.

¹¹³ *Ihyā'*, iii, 122 f.; see also *supra*, p. 23.

¹¹⁴ *Ihyā'*, iii, 126 f. In the chapter on 'listening to music' (*ādāb al-samā'*) it is argued that some forms of poetry are good. Uttering or listening to obscenity and *hijā'*, whether sung or recited, are equally forbidden, unless the *hijā'* is directed at unbelievers or heretics (*Ihyā'*, ii, 282).

¹¹⁵ *Ihyā'*, iii, 127-31, 131 f., 141-54 and 154-58, respectively.

punishment for libel and slander in Islamic law was inadequately regulated. In the first place, laws could never be wholly effective: they are concerned with rights and obligations, and slander with honour and shame; and 'the conflict between honour and legality is a fundamental one'.¹¹⁶ Taking recourse to the law for redress merely increases one's humiliation, instead of wiping away the shame. Secondly, the discrepancy between the theory of Islamic legislation and jurisdiction in practice was nowhere greater than in the field of penal law. The discretion of the judge in dealing out *ta'zīr* (discretionary punishment) is built in within the legal system;¹¹⁷ the judge could be assisted, and his power supplemented, by the *muhtasib* or 'market supervisor', whose office of *hisba* had moral as well as juridical aspects and was given a religious sanction by connecting it with the concept of 'commanding good and forbidding evil'. The *muhtasib* was responsible, among other things, for public morals; he could act even when no complaint was raised.

In the several *hisba* manuals slander (*qadhf*) and obscenity are usually mentioned; *hijā'* apparently did not deserve special attention. In the 15th-century *Tuhfat al-nāzīr* by al-ʿUqbānī the opinion is recorded that 'reciting or singing poetry in a mosque is unobjectionable, except for *hijā'*',¹¹⁸ which seems to imply, even though it does not logically follow, that outside a mosque *hijā'* is permitted, just as when Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī (d. 202/817), on his way to Mecca, said to his friends,

I would love nothing more than to see you and talk with you. But this is a place where one should seek favour with God by means of pious works. I shall stay here one or two months, then I shall go back home. Would you please refrain from obscenity, indecency, *hijā'* in poetry or otherwise, when you sit with me.¹¹⁹

In Mecca 'he made many adhortatory and moralistic poems, nothing else'.¹²⁰ Similarly, Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlāʾ refused to discuss poetry, it is told, when returning from the pilgrimage;¹²¹ the poet Nuṣayb did not recite his poems on Fridays;¹²² others refrained from uttering of *hijā'* in

¹¹⁶ Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', in Peristiani (ed.), *Honour and Shame*, p. 30.

¹¹⁷ . On *ta'zīr* for abuse (*shatm*), see for instance Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 237 f.

¹¹⁸ *BEO*, 19 (1965-66), p. 303. The caliph ʿUmar had scolded Ḥassān for reciting poetry in the mosque of Medina, it is said (*Aghānī*, iv, 143), but was silenced by the reply: 'I have recited in it to someone who was better than you'.

¹¹⁹ Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Tabaqāt*, p. 275.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*; for *hijā'* by him, see e.g. *Aghānī*, xix, 271 f., xx, 218-22, 226, 229 f., 236. This and several similar anecdotes have been discussed by Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', esp. pp. 88 ff.

¹²¹ Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, p. 559.

¹²² *Aghānī*, ii, 397.

the 'holy month' (*al-shahr al-harām*).¹²³ An interesting variant of the attitude that morality is linked with religious ritual and cultic circumstances is exemplified by the behaviour of 'Ulayya (d. 210/825), daughter of the caliph al-Mahdī: she drank wine and sang songs only during her menstruation, that is, when she was ritually unclean and therefore unable to perform any religious rites.¹²⁴ Here, morality is inextricably intertwined with decorum, and decorum, in its turn, with religion.

Outside the sphere of religion, in this narrow sense, *hijā'* was tolerated to a surprising extent. As said before¹²⁵ Ibn al-Ḥajjāj was active as a *muhtasib* for a time in Baghdad. A *hisba* manual from the 8th/14th century enjoined schoolteachers to keep Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's *Dīwān* out of the hands of their boys;¹²⁶ very likely the reason was its obscene and scatological nature rather than its invective.

The reluctance of secular and religious authorities to act against poets of invective decreased considerably when they themselves were its victims. Even so, in the middle Islamic centuries as much as the early period, these poets were often either ignored or respected and feared rather than persecuted. Ignored, because the status of the poet in society had further declined together with the decline of Arabic as a language of ruling élites. But Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq al-Zawzanī al-Baḥḥāthī (d. 463/1071), 'who omitted not a single wordly or religious authority, nor any class of people' in his *hijā'*, was honoured by all for that reason;¹²⁷ Ibn Ḥazmūn from Murcia, mentioned before,¹²⁸ was respected and enriched 'by the cadis, the governors and viceroys of the West',¹²⁹ to mention but a few examples.

Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im al-Sharimsāhī (d. c. 720/1320), who invited punishment by making *hijā'* on the much-respected cadi of Damascus merely in order to make a name for himself, was forgiven and even rewarded by his victim.¹³⁰ Those who were punished were often

¹²³ Abū Zayd, *Nawādir*, p. 8.

¹²⁴ *Aghānī*, x, 163, cf. Sūlī, *Awraq (ash'ar awlād al-khulafā')*, p. 55. Similarly, pious girl students in Cairo today may use make-up and nail varnish during their monthly periods, as I have been told.

¹²⁵ Above, pp. 81 f.

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Ma'ālīm al-qurba*, p. 172, English abstract, p. 60.

¹²⁷ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, xviii, 18. On this poet, see Arazī, 'Le cas d'Abū Dja'far'.

¹²⁸ Above, p. 126.

¹²⁹ Marrākushī, *Mu'jib*, p. 216.

¹³⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, i, 171. Afterwards he was imprisoned for a while for his obscene *hijā'* on another cadi, *Durar*, i, 172. One may compare his behaviour with that of Durayd Ibn al-Ṣimma, who, in the pre-Islamic period, made *hijā'* on 'Abd Allāh Ibn Jud'ān precisely because the latter was such a well-known and noble man: 'I wanted to put my poetry in its proper place', as he explained (*Aghānī*, x, 20 f.); or young Bashshār, who was disappointed after Jarīr had ignored his *hijā'* on him: 'If he had answered, I would

punished relatively lightly, such as being imprisoned for short periods. Banishment can be considered as a severe punishment; Ibn ʿUnayn (d. 630/1233), who attacked the leading personalities of Damascus in a poem entitled *Miqrād al-aʿrād*, 'The Shears of Good Reputations', being so vile that Yāqūt did not want to quote more than the first two lines,¹³¹ was banished by Saladin.¹³² Harsh punishment could sometimes be warded off through the intercession of influential friends, as when Muḥammad al-Khujandī successfully pleaded on behalf of Ibn al-Habbāriyya, after Niẓām al-Mulk, angered by his *hijāʾ* on him, had ordered his execution.¹³³

An interesting tug-of-war could arise when a poet had more or less powerful protectors as well as opponents. Ibn Iyās relates in his chronicle *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* that in the reign of the Mamluk sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī, in the year 911/1505, the poet al-Salmūnī attacked with *hijāʾ* the cadī Muʿīn al-Dīn Ibn Shams, the head of the Treasury, who complained to the sultan. The sultan answered: If the law demands it, let him be punished. The poet was put in irons and led before the chief cadī, ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥna, who had him beaten and publicly exposed, bareheaded, on a donkey. It seems that the sultan had imagined something altogether less drastic, for when he heard about it he was so angry as to order that Ibn al-Shiḥna's tongue be cut off (another drastic order, which was apparently not carried out).¹³⁴ Two years later, in Muḥarram 913/1507, the incorrigible poet, no doubt embittered and emboldened by these events, made a long poem on Ibn al-Shiḥna which became well known. It was, according to Ibn Iyās, 'extremely scurrilous and excessively wicked'; he quotes twenty-two of the least offensive lines. The chief cadī showed the poem to the sultan, who summoned the poet and rebuked him. Although al-Salmūnī denied that he made all that was attributed to him, he was proved to be the author. The story repeats itself: the sultan tells the cadī to take the culprit away and to apply the law to him. Al-Salmūnī is led away in chains, although, as Ibn Iyās tells us, the sultan was secretly concerned about him. The cadis, from a professional solidarity, unanimously decide that al-Salmūnī should be whip-

have been a great poet!' (*Aghānī*, iii, 143). Al-Muʿammal Ibn Umayl (d. c. 190/806) said: 'How many an ignoble one would like me to abuse him, even though my abuse on him should be (as bitter as) colocynth! / But generously refraining from abusing an ignoble one harms him more than abuse when he is abused' (*Ḥamāsāt Abī Tammām*, p. 509).

¹³¹ Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, xix, 86. The title of the poem may have been derived from a line by Ibn al-Rūmī, '... kaʾanna fakkayka lil-aʿrādī miqrādū' (Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr*, 696).

¹³² Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, v, 14; see *EP*, art. 'Ibn ʿUnayn', with more references.

¹³³ Iṣfahānī, *Kharīda (al-ʿIrāq)*, ii, 71.

¹³⁴ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, iv, 87. Ibn al-Shiḥna 'machte sich aber durch seine Spottsucht viele Feinde' (*GAL S II*, 94).

ped and publicly exposed in Cairo. This time, however, a large crowd gathers in support of the poet: the populace, carrying their ammunition in their sleeves, begin to throw stones at the chief *cadi*, who is forced to exempt the poet from being whipped and exposed. Instead, he is condemned to imprisonment. At this stage neither the sultan nor the people can do much for him, it seems, for according to Ibn Iyās he stayed in prison for a long time.¹³⁵

Ibn Iyās describes these episodes as ‘rare’ or ‘curious’ events (*nādira laṭīfa*, *wāqi‘a gharība*); rare apparently not so much because a poet made *hijā*’ on *cadis* (their profession is, justly or not, among those attacked most often), but because of the ensuing events. Ibn Iyās finds it necessary to refer twice to ‘Umar’s measures against *hijā*’,¹³⁶ as if to justify the judges’ stern sentence.

¹³⁵ *Badā‘i*, iv, 112 f.

¹³⁶ *Badā‘i*, iv, 87, 112 f.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ECLIPSE OF *HIJĀ'*

Several centuries after the events described by Ibn Iyās *hijā'* is still basically the same. Of popular lampoons there was no lack. 'The Egyptians are particularly prone to satire', writes Lane, '...The lower orders sometimes lampoon their rulers in songs, and ridicule those enactments of the government by which they themselves most suffer'.¹ As for the 'higher' orders, such persons as are honoured by having their biography included in al-Jabartī's chronicle of Egypt do not seem to have indulged much in composing serious invective poetry, which has receded even more into the background. There is not much *hijā'* among the many poems quoted by al-Jabartī. He mentions a poem by Ismā'īl al-Zahūrī (d. 1211/1796-7) making fun of 'Alī 'Antar al-Rashīdī; he refrains from quoting it 'because of the *hajw* and *dhamm* in it'.² 'Āmir al-Anbūṭī (d. c. 1171/1758) was a poet of *hijā'* specializing in parodies of serious poems, by turning them into poems on food, which some sought to prevent by means of bribes.³ An interesting poet was Ḥasan al-Badrī al-Ḥijāzī (d. 1131/1719),⁴ who collected a *dīwān* of his poems on 'people of bad character', entitled *Ijmā' al-uyyās min al-wuthūq bi-'l-nās*, 'The Consensus of Those who Despair of Trusting in People'.⁵ The poems quoted from it by al-Jabartī are descriptions, in a popular and moralistic style, of events and disturbances rather than direct attacks on the people who caused them. This is probably why al-Jabartī nowhere uses the term *hijā'* in connection with these poems, although at times the idiom is that of true invective.⁶

Since the beginnings of modern Arabic poetry with al-Bārūdī (d. 1904), Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932), Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (d. 1932) and their con-

¹ Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 314; cf. Sawzan El-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad: a Concept of Egyptian Identity*, Leiden, 1978, p. 28. For some examples of children's verse, see Goldziher, 'Jugend- und Strassenpoesie', pp. 613 f.

² Jabartī, *ʿAjāʿib*, iv, 281; on the poet see Heyworth-Dunne, 'Arabic Literature in Egypt', pp. 687 f.

³ *ʿAjāʿib*, ii, 189-92, cf. Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., pp. 686 f. He had a precursor in Ibn Sūdūn (d. 868/1464), see *GAL S II*, 11, Bürgel, 'Von der kultur- und sozialgeschichtlicher Bedeutung', p. 43.

⁴ *ʿAjāʿib*, i, 81 f., 83 f., 89 f., 129 f., 134 f., 189-208, 252 f., 269, 273 f., 278-80, 283 f.; *GAL II*, 280, Heyworth-Dunne, op. cit., p. 681.

⁵ *ʿAjāʿib*, i, 189; according to Brockelmann it contains 'sūfische Gedichte'.

⁶ *ʿAjāʿib*, i, 81 f. on Yāsif the Jew, 134 on a preacher, etc.

temporaries, social criticism and political polemics are among the major concerns of the poets. But again, although satire and invective are common enough, there seems to be a reluctance, among poets and critics, to employ the term *hijāʿ*. The section entitled '*hijāʿ*' in the *Dīwān* of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm is merely three pages long; it comprises epigrams: trifles that, but for references to newspapers, electricity and the April-fool, might have been composed centuries before.⁷ But the serious attack on the failings of his compatriots, and 'Alī Yūsuf (d. 1913) in particular, stands among his 'social poems' (*ijtimāʿiyyāt*),⁸ and the chapter containing his 'political poems' includes many strongly worded satires. Of Shawqī it has been said that he did not produce any *hijāʿ*, 'because Shawqī's indulgent soul forbade him to practise this detestable genre'.⁹ Apparently his attacks on, for instance, Cromer or Riyāḍ Bāshā¹⁰ should not be called *hijāʿ*: the odium of that term was too strong for many people.

Of course the neo-classical poets made personal invective poems in the old style; but usually they were not printed. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn relates that his teacher, shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Jāwīsh, derided Sa'd Zaghlūl 'in some outrageous poems which were too extreme for publication and did not appear'.¹¹ Some of Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfi's (d. 1945) satires were obscene, 'but fortunately this kind of verse was not incorporated in his *Dīwān*'.¹² Thus, old-style *hijāʿ* survived into the 20th century.¹³ In the meantime, however, Arabic poetry as a whole had changed drastically, and so had sensibilities and customs. As a modern critic, Muḥammad Sāmī al-Dahhān, put it:

In the modern period morals changed and habits became different. In the Arab world a new feeling arose towards honour, hospitality, cowardice, stinginess; one began to protect people against impudent tongues and laws were made in order to stop people from slander and from mentioning parts of the body indecently or obscenely.¹⁴

Even more than before, coarse insults became unfashionable in polite society and *hijāʿ*, mostly identified as coarse invective, was given a sub-literary status. Some even claimed that the changes all but killed *hijāʿ*:

⁷ Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, *Dīwān*, i, 148-50.

⁸ *Dīwān*, i, 244-47.

⁹ Boudot-Lamotte, *Aḥmad Ṣauqī*, p. 77, quoting Aḥmad al-Iskandarī in *RAAD*, 13 (1933) 158.

¹⁰ *Shawqīyyāt*, i, 208-11.

¹¹ Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *al-Ayyām*, iii, t. 6, Cairo, 1982, p. 20.

¹² S. A. Khulusi in *BSOAS*, 13 (1950) 621.

¹³ And, very likely, still survives. I do not feel competent to undertake an investigation of this somewhat delicate subject.

¹⁴ Dahhān, *Hijāʿ*, p. 55.

One of the *aghrād* put to death by the critics' disapproval, by general usage and by modern life with all its civilized laws¹⁵ that punish those who attack people's reputations, is *hijāʿ*, of which nothing is left but pleasant jesting with irony, mockery and portrayal, without any reference to what is taboo (*mahārim*) and people's reputations, without vilification or obscenity... When *hijāʿ* flares up between poets it may become obscene, but they are ashamed to incorporate it in their collected works. Others transmit it by mouth, but they seem to be afraid that it may be traced to them.¹⁶

The study of the survival of old-style *hijāʿ*, the development of new types of satire in modern Arabic poetry and the changes in sensibility under Western influence is altogether beyond the scope of this work and deserves to be dealt with separately in more detail. Suffice it to remark that the role of classical *hijāʿ* was taken over, partly at least, by the press in articles, letters, caricatures; by pamphlets and novels or other media such as theatre, cabaret, radio, film and television. The term *hijāʿ* is rarely used with reference to modern poetry; apparently the opprobrious connotations of the term have prevailed in spite of the fact that classical *hijāʿ* includes much that is serious and morally unexceptionable. Very telling is, for instance, the subject index of *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, a massive and authoritative study by Salma Khadra Jayyusi, both a poetess and a scholar in the fields of classical as well as modern Arabic poetry. Although 'elegy', 'eulogy' and '*fakhr*' appear in it, 'satire', 'invective' or '*hijāʿ*' are absent (although 'satire' is used in the text).¹⁷ The place of *hijāʿ* is taken by twentieth-century poetical concepts: 'rejection', '(political) anger' and 'rebellion'. When one notices in the index the entries 'words of horrific nature' (under 'Diction') and 'excessively repellent images' (under 'Imagery') one expects the worst; but as it turns out there is nothing obscene, scurrilous or scatological.

Another interesting, and related, field of study next to that of the changing sensibilities in modern poetry is the criticism of classical *hijāʿ* in the modern period, both by Arabs and western orientalists. Attitudes have varied widely, from the purgation of text editions to studies by those who seem to relish the collecting of the nastiest examples.¹⁸ Those who take offence at classical *hijāʿ* usually object to obscenities. Fortunately,

¹⁵ *qawānīn madaniyya*: if one translates 'Civil Law', the 'punishment' that is spoken of should be taken in a loose sense.

¹⁶ Dasūqī, *Fī 'l-adab al-hadīth*, ii, 288, in a chapter on al-Bārūdī. See also Bichr Farēs in *EL*, *Ergänzungsband*, s.v. 'hidjā': 'Heutezutage ist infolge der grossen Veränderungen im gesellschaftlichen Leben der klassische Hidjā verschwunden.'

¹⁷ e.g. pp. 33, 38, 39, 79.

¹⁸ Of the latter type is, for instance, Īliyā Hāwī's *Fann al-hijāʿ*, which appeared in Beirut in 1970; see his chapter on Jarīr. Strangely, the words *ayr* and *kuss* are apparently unprintable (cf. pp. 353, 412, 452 f.) although other anatomical terms such as *baṣr*, 'ijān, 'unbul, *uskutān*, *faysha* are freely printed—perhaps because they are less well known.

editorial policy was, and is, on the whole liberal: whereas obscenities are mostly still impossible in modern prose and poetry, in classical tests they are tolerated to a far greater extent. Scholarly editions are rarely bowdlerized. Sometimes only a word, easily supplied from the context, is suppressed, at other times the editor is content with adding a footnote in order to vent his surprise, grief or indignation.¹⁹

Among contemporary Arab literary critics one may discern some uneasy feelings when classical *hijāʿ* is discussed. Pride in the literary heritage of great poets such as Jarīr or Ibn al-Rūmī mixes with embarrassment on account of their unethical and indecorous invective. It will not do to say, as does al-Dahhān, that 'Arab taste was corrupted when, in the Abbasid era, the stain of the non-Arabs (*lawthāt al-aʿājim*) spread'.²⁰ Others are less occupied with morals and the purity of the Arab heritage. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, for instance, admires the *hijāʿ* by Abū Nuwās, for al its scurrility, and makes it plain that only editorial policy in his day prevents him from devoting a lengthy chapter to it.²¹

A vindication of classical *hijāʿ* is often based on arguments derived from western literary taste. Thus *hijāʿ* can only be truly great, it is argued, when it transcends the personal into the general, the human; or when it is 'sincere'. Political or social commitment in poetry ranks above the personal; modern committed poets are therefore closer to the pre-Islamic tribal poet whose *hijāʿ*, even if personal, was in fact directed against a group, than to the urban poets of later periods.²² The production of classical *hijāʿ* is often explained in terms of the psychological and physiological characteristics of the poet, or his social background: Jarīr came from a poor family, was puny, born prematurely etc.; al-Ḥuṭayʿa was ugly, pock-marked, short and bald; al-Akhṭal belonged to a religious minority, was neglected as a child; al-Ḥakam Ibn ʿAbdal was lame; al-Mughīra Ibn Ḥabnāʿ was leprous and of low origins.²³ The exercises of ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād in reducing everything in a poetic oeuvre to

¹⁹ Unlike authors writing in other languages they cannot revert to translating in a veiled manner: compare Nicholson's ambiguous '... When my dishonouring shaft has pierced thy sire' (*Literary History*, p. 245) with the plainness of the original: *idhā mā 'l-ayru fī 'sti abīka ghābā*, *Aghānī*, viii, 20, 30, *Naqāʿid Jarīr wa-'l-Farazdaq*, p. 429. Misled by Nicholson, Elliott speaks of the 'metaphor' in this line (*The Power of Satire*, p. 18).

²⁰ Dahhān, *Hijāʿ*, p. 17. In the *hijāʿ* of Jarīr and his contemporaries there was some obscenity (*fuhsh*), admits Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr (Bashshār, *Dīwān*, introd., i, 69), but most of it was merely vilification (*iqdhāʿ*) and foulness of speech (*badhāʿa*): obscenity only appeared truly, he thinks, in early Abbasid times, as a result of the habits of those non-Arab aliens in whose territory the Arabs settled.

²¹ Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-arbiʿāʿ*, ii, 134, 137.

²² Ḍayf, *al-Adab al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir fī Miṣr*, p. 50.

²³ M. Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *al-Hijāʿ wa-'l-hajjāʿūn fī ṣadr al-Islām*, pp. 123-25.

a dominant character-trait or ruling passion closely connected with the poet's physique are well known.

Like the Arab critics, western arabists have mixed feelings about *hijāʿ*. Although its sordidness and obscenity are often deplored, to many it has redeeming qualities: 'its literary excellence and (...) the marvellous skill which the satirists display in manipulating all the vituperative resources of the Arabic language'.²⁴ Above all, humour and wit are its redeeming virtues. It is obvious that much *hijāʿ* is plain doggerel, displaying neither linguistic virtuosity nor refined humour. To some this makes it unworthy of serious study, especially when its themes are morally or aesthetically repellent. But such considerations should be irrelevant if one's aim is a true understanding of Arabic poetry, its practice and function in the eyes of all those who have made, heard, quoted or judged it. It is only logical and right that good poetry should receive far more attention than doggerel; but one's appreciation of poetry will be enhanced by studying all of it: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

²⁴ Nicholson, *Literary History*, p. 239, on the *naqāʿid* of al-Farazdaq and Jarīr.

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INDEX OF PERSONS

(Names merely mentioned in references are not included in the index, as a rule)

- Abān al-Lāhiqī, 39 52
 ʿAbbād Ibn Ziyād, 29
 ʿAbbās, Ihsān, 67, 102n, 126
 Abbott, Nabia, 35, 41n, 43n
 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Judʿān, 131n
 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Rawḥa, 22
 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmar, 34
 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, 15, 27
 ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Marwān, 31, 35, 44n, 64
 ʿAbd Qays Ibn Khufāf, 20
 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Ḥakam, 29
 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ḥassān, 29, 49
 ʿAbda Ibn al-Ṭabīb, 17
 Abū ʿAfak, 21
 Abū 'l-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī, 2, 46, 72, 88n, 120
 Abū ʿAlī al-Baṣīr, 77n, 97
 Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAlā', 41, 43-4, 48n, 87, 124, 130
 Abū 'l-ʿAynā', 23
 Abū Bakr, 22
 Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus, 96-7, 99
 Abū Dulāma, 33
 Abū Lahab, 23-4
 Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī, 52, 130
 Abū 'l-Muhawwish, 36
 Abū 'l-Najm al-ʿIjlī, 35n
 Abū Nukhayla, 35n, 38
 Abū Nuwās, 19n, 38-9, 52, 59, 76, 87-8, 113, 119, 137
 Abū Saʿd al-Makhzūmī, 38-9, 45n
 Abū 'l-Shamaqmaq, 33, 38
 Abū Tammām, 38, 52-6, 71
 Abū ʿUbayda, 9, 41, 46n, 122
 al-Abyaḍ, 92
 Addison, 70n
 ʿAdī Ibn al-Riqāʿ, 31n
 al-Aghlab al-ʿIjlī, 48
 Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, 29n
 Aḥmad Ibn Rawḥ, 51
 al-Aḥnaf Ibn Qays, 18
 al-Aḥwaṣ, 30, 52
 ʿĀ'isha, 57n
 al-ʿAjāj, 35, 38, 47, 55, 91
 al-Akhfash al-Aṣghar (al-Ṣaghīr), 82, 87
 al-Akḥṭal, 22, 29, 30-1, 37, 41, 44n, 48, 52, 79, 88, 119, 137
 ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, 8, 67n
 ʿAlī Ibn Ḥamza, 54n
 ʿAlī Yūsuf, 135
 al-ʿAmidī, 71-2, 118
 ʿĀmir Ibn Mālik, 19n
 ʿĀmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl, 18-9
 ʿAmr Ibn Kulthūm, 19
 ʿAmr Ibn ʿUbayd al-Ḥazīn, 33
 al-Anbūṭī, ʿĀmir, 133
 al-Anṣār, 8, 27, 29-30
 ʿAqīl Ibn Abī Ṭālib, 8
 ʿAqīl Ibn ʿUllafa, 36, 48n
 al-ʿAqqād, ʿAbbās Maḥmud, 137
 Aristotle, 1n, 67, 69n, 70, 74, 77, 96-9, 116n
 Arṭāh Ibn Suhayya, 50, 52
 al-Aʿshā, 16, 43, 113
 al-ʿAskarī, Abū Hilāl, 36, 70, 78-80, 101n, 112
 ʿAṣmā' Bint Marwān, 21
 al-Aṣmaʿī, 21-2, 36, 41-4, 82, 97, 101n
 al-ʿAttābī, 101n
 Averroes *see* Ibn Rushd
 Avicenna *see* Ibn Sīnā
 Aws Ibn Maghrā', 49
 Ayman Ibn Khuraym, 67n
 Badawi, M. M., 30n
 Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī, 2
 al-Baʿīth, 48, 78
 al-Bākhzarī, 83
 Banū 'l-ʿAjlān, 25
 Banū 'l-Mughīra, 22
 Banū 'l-Muḥallab, 30
 al-Bārūdī, Maḥmūd Sāmī, 134, 136n
 Bashshār Ibn Burd, 20, 38, 52, 87, 131n
 al-Bayhaqī, 55, 85n
 al-Bazzāz, 84n
 Blachère, Régis, 8n, 28
 Bonebakker, S. A., 1-2n, 7n, 24, 26n, 41n, 54n, 67
 Boustany, Said, 39
 Bouyahia, Ch., 84n
 Bräu, H. H., 8n
 Brockelmann, C., 5n
 Bücher, K., 5n
 al-Buḥturī, 71, 79, 80n
 Bürgel, J.-C., 33n, 35n
 Colin, G. S., 126

Cromer, 135

Dābi³ Ibn al-Hārith al-Burjumī, 28

Daghfal Ibn Ḥanzala, 9

al-Dahhān, Muḥammad Sāmī, 44n, 135, 137

Dahiyat, I. M., 97-8n, 99

Dawkins, R., 6n

Dhū 'l-Rumma, 36, 42, 49, 97

Di³bil, 1, 31, 38-9, 50-2, 56, 59, 86

Diem, W., 4n

Ḍirār Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 27

Durayd Ibn al-Ṣimma, 131n

Elisha, 38

Elliott, R. C., 4n, 137n

al-Fārābī, 69, 75, 92, 96, 100, 102

al-Farazdaq, 20, 30-1, 33-7, 45, 48-9, 59, 66n, 79, 114, 122, 138n

Farès, B. (E.), 4, 136n

al-Farrā³, 122

Fartanā, 21

Fātik, 32

Fowler, A., 1n

Galen, 67, 69

Geertz, C., 58

al-Ghazālī, 55, 129

Goldziher, I., 4, 5n, 8n, 27

Grunebaum, G. E. von, 5n

Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, 134-5

al-Ḥajjāj, 31

al-Ḥakam Ibn 'Abdal, 33, 108n, 137

al-Ḥamdūnī, 54n

Ḥammād Ibn 'Ajrād, 52

Ḥammād Ibn Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, 43

Hamori, A., 32

Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, 76-7, 120n

al-Ḥarīrī, 54n

al-Ḥārith Ibn Hishām, 101n

al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī al-Dharawī, 123n

Hāshim, 18

Ḥassān Ibn Thābit, 21-2, 24-9, 42-3, 60, 64n, 66n, 130n

al-Hātimī, 83

Hawāzin, 22, 64n

Ḥāwī, Ḍiyā, 136n

al-Haytham Ibn 'Adī, 9

Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, 73, 96, 101-11, 116

al-Ḥazīn al-Dīlī, 52

Highet, G., 3n

al-Hijāzī, Ḥasan al-Badrī, 134

al-Hillī, Ṣafī al-Dīn, 54n, 123, 126-7

Hind Bint 'Utba, 22

Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 9, 31

Hishām Ibn al-Kalbī, 9

Hishām al-Mara³ī, 49

Horace, 2, 32, 33n

Ḥusayn, Ṭahā, 67n, 135, 137

al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Dahhāk, 38

al-Ḥuṣrī, 55, 71, 82, 84

al-Ḥuṭay'a, 24-8, 33, 43, 64n, 89n, 92, 137

Ibn 'Abbās, 28-9, 80, 118

Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, 55

Ibn Abī 'Awn, 60-1, 93-3

Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, 57

Ibn Abī 'l-Iṣba³, 24, 104n, 122-5

Ibn Abī 'Uyayna, 51

Ibn Aflah, 65n, 112-3, 119

Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyā³ al-Dīn, 53, 112-3

Ibn al-Athīr, Ismā'īl Ibn Aḥmad, 73, 117

Ibn al-Athīr, Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad, 117-21

Ibn Bassām al-'Abartā³ī, 33

Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī, 92-3

Ibn al-Dabbāgh, 126

Ibn Dāra, 82

Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣbahānī, 57-9

Ibn al-Fanshakh, 75

Ibn Fāris, 122

Ibn Faswa *see* 'Utayba Ibn Mirdās

Ibn Gabirol, 95

Ibn al-Habbāriyya, 83, 119, 132

Ibn al-Ḥaddād, 93

Ibn (al-)Ḥajjāj, 81-2, 110, 119n, 124, 131

Ibn Ḥamdīs, 91

Ibn Harma, 52

Ibn al-Haytham, 96n

Ibn Ḥazm, 54n, 90-1

Ibn Ḥazmūn, Abū 'l-Ḥasan, 126, 131

Ibn Hija al-Ḥamawī, 123

Ibn Iyās, 132-4

Ibn al-Jarrāh, 61

Ibn al-Kattānī, 93

Ibn Khafāja, 91

Ibn Khaldūn, 128

Ibn Khallikān, 83, 113

Ibn Mayyāda, 52

Ibn Mufarrigh, 29

Ibn Munīr al-Ṭarābulusī, 119

Ibn al-Mu'tazz, 16, 39, 54n, 60-2, 104, 115

Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, 64

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 24

Ibn Qutayba, 9, 42, 55-7, 79, 81, 122

Ibn Quzmān, 126

Ibn Rashīq, 16, 18, 71-2, 77, 84-9, 101n, 111, 117, 119n

Ibn al-Rūmī, 20, 39, 78, 82-3, 84n, 86-7, 92, 104-6, 115, 119, 124, 132n, 137

Ibn Rushd, 96, 99-100, 102, 108n

- Ibn Sahl, Abū 'Umar, 94
 Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, 92
 Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī, 15, 47-50
 Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk, 125
 Ibn al-Shajarī, 54
 Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī, 84, 89
 Ibn al-Shihna, 'Abd al-Barr, 132
 Ibn Shuhayd, 2, 90, 93
 Ibn Sinā, 96-100, 102
 Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī, 72-3, 106, 109-10
 Ibn Sirīn, 34
 Ibn Sūdūn, 134n
 Ibn Sukkara, 83, 115
 Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, 61-2
 Ibn 'Unayn, 132
 Ibn Wahb, Ishāq Ibn Ibrāhīm, 76-7, 85
 Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mahdī, 83
 al-Ibshihī, 54n, 121
 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', 45n, 68, 70n
 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, 83, 113
 Imra' al-Qays, 42, 63, 84n
 'Iqāl Ibn Khālīd, 49
 al-Iṣfahānī, Abū 'l-Faraj, 61
 Ishāq Ibn Ibrāhīm *see* Ibn Wahb
 Ishāq al-Mawṣilī, 43
 Ismā'īl Ibn Jarīr, 52
 Iyās Ibn Qatāda, 17n

 al-Jabartī, 134
 al-Jabbulī, Abū Naṣr Muḥammad, 32
 Ja'far Ibn al-Zubayr, 34n
 al-Jāhīz, 2, 26, 34, 37, 41, 44-7, 55-7, 66, 79, 81
 Jahza, 78
 Jarīr, 20, 30-1, 35, 37-8, 41, 45-9, 59, 78-9, 87, 92-3, 114, 131n, 136n, 137, 138n
 Jāwīsh, 'Abd al-'Azīz, 135
 Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, 30n, 33n, 38n, 136
 Jesus, 46, 62
 Ji'thin, 48, 114
 Johnson, Samuel, 11
 Jones, G. F., 13n, 14
 al-Jurjānī, 'Abd al-Qāhir, 74, 111, 114-6
 al-Jurjānī, 'Alī Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, 34, 80-1, 88
 al-Jurjānī, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf, 69n
 Jusham Ibn al-Khazraj, 49
 Juvenal, 2

 Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf, 21
 Ka'b Ibn Ju'ayl, 30, 49
 Ka'b Ibn Mālik, 22
 Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr, 89
 Kernan, A., 4n
 Khalaf al-Aḥmar, 51, 87-8

 Khālīd Ibn Ṣafwān, 17
 Khālīd Ibn Salama, 9
 Khālīd Ibn Yazīd, 38
 al-Khālidiyyān, 83, 104n
 Khallād Ibn Muḥammad, 7
 al-Khansā', 18
 Khawla Bint 'Utayba, 66
 al-Khujaḍī, Muḥammad, 132
 al-Khushanī, 84n
 al-Kindī, 54
 al-Kisrawī, 'Alī Ibn Mahdī, 15n
 al-Kumayt Ibn Zayd, 1, 2n, 16, 47, 59
 Kuthayyir, 30, 52

 al-Laḥḥām al-Harrānī, 82n
 al-La'īn al-Minqarī, 66n
 Lane, E. W., 134
 Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, 49
 Lorenz, K., 6n
 Lyall, Ch. J., 6n, 16, 18, 20

 al-Ma'arri *see* Abū 'l-'Alā'
 Ma'bad Ibn 'Alqama, 17
 McDonald, M. V., 1n
 al-Madā'inī, 9, 14
 al-Ma'mūn, 31-2
 al-Marrākushī, 'Abd al-Wāḥid, 126
 al-Marrār Ibn Sa'd, 17
 Marwān Ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa, 38
 al-Marzubānī, 14, 70
 Maslama Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 35-6
 Mohammed, 16n, 21-3, 30, 41-2, 66n, 118, 129
 Moshe Ibn 'Ezra, 94-6
 al-Mu'adhdhal Ibn Ghaylān, 52
 al-Mu'ammil Ibn Umayl, 132n
 Mu'āwiya, 8, 18, 26n, 29, 27n
 al-Mubarrad, 41-2, 61
 al-Mufajja', 8
 al-Mughīra Ibn Ḥabnā', 109, 37
 Muḥalhil, 82, 83n, 102
 Muḥammad Ibn Ḥāzim al-Bāhilī, 37n
 Muḥammad Ibn 'Ilqa al-Taymī, 74
 Muḥammad al-Yazidī, 51
 Mu'īn al-Dīn Ibn Shams, 132
 Musaylima, 48, 49n
 Muslim Ibn al-Walīd, 51, 58n
 al-Mutanabbī, 32, 34, 80-1, 88, 98n
 al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī, 105
 al-Muthaqqib, 18
 al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Faḍl al-Ḥusaynī, 111-2
 Muzarrid, 6-7, 28n, 38n, 43n, 93n

 al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, 16, 18-9, 42, 82, 84, 104n
 al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī, 43, 49

- al-Nābulusī, 'Abd al-Ghanī, 123
 Naḍr Ibn Shumayl, 9
 al-Nahshalī, 'Abd al-Karīm, 84-5, 90
 al-Najāshī, 25-6, 49, 104n, 122n
 al-Nāshī' al-Akbar, 70, 81, 88
 al-Nawājī, 54n
 Niẓām al-Mulk, 132
 Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī, 101n
 al-Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr, 29
 al-Nu'mān Ibn al-Mundhir, 19
 Nuṣayb, 36, 43, 47, 86, 91, 130
 al-Nuwayrī, 121
- Pellat, Ch., 1n, 4n, 28, 35n, 66
 Pitt-Rivers, J., 4n, 17n, 130n
 Plato, 75, 101n
 Pollard, A., 3n
 Preuss, K. Th., 5n
- Qānshawh al-Ghawrī, 132
 al-Qazwīnī, al-Khaṭīb, 111
 Qudāma Ibn Ja'far, 53-4, 62-76, 78, 84, 88, 108-9, 117-8
 Quraysh, 8, 15, 21, 27, 66n
 Qurayṭ Ibn Unayf, 122n
- al-Rabī' Ibn Qa'nab, 52
 Rabī'a Ibn Maqrūm, 16-7
 al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, 81, 83, 121
 al-Rā'ī, 44n, 49
 Rāshid Ibn Ishāq, 82
 al-Rashīdī, 'Alī 'Antar, 134
 Riyāḍ Bāshā, 135
 Rosenthal, F., 35n, 54n, 81n
 Ru'ba Ibn al-'Ajjāj, 35, 47
 al-Rundī, Abū 'l-Baqā', 111
 al-Ruṣāfi, Ma'rūf, 135
 al-Rustamī, Abū 'Alī, 62
 Rutbīl, 101n
- al-Ṣafadī, 91
 Sajāh, 48-9
 Ṣakhr Ibn 'Amr, 18
 al-Sakkākī, 111, 123
 Saladin, 132
 Salm al-Khāsir, 52
 al-Salmūnī, 132-3
 Sāra, 21
 Schoeler, G., 48n, 54n, 77n, 103n, 104, 106
 al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, 83
 al-Sharimsāhī, Aḥmad, 131
 Shawqī, Aḥmad, 134-5
- Sulaymān Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 31
 al-Ṣulī, 54n, 61
 al-Sumaysir, Abū 'l-Qāsim, 92-3
 Suwayd Ibn Abī Kāhīl, 19
 Swift, Jonathan, 65n, 88n
- Tāhir Ibn al-Ḥusayn, 52
 Tamīm Ibn Muqbil, 25, 49
 Ṭarafa, 16
 al-Tawḥīdī, 2, 73, 80
 al-Tha'alībī, 82-3, 85n, 93-4
 Tha'lab, 48n, 60
 Tolstoy, 1
- 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Utba, 46
 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Ziyād, 29
 'Ulayya Bint al-Mahdī, 131
 Ullmann, M., 49
 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, 31
 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 7, 24-8 34, 64, 105, 111n, 129-30n, 133
 'Umar Ibn Laja', 31, 41
 Umm Jamīl, 23-4
 al-'Uqbānī, 130
 Usāma Ibn Munqidh, 70, 83, 121
 al-Usaydī, 48
 'Utayba Ibn Mirdās, 28, 33, 66
 al-'Utbi, Muḥammad, 93
 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, 28
- al-Walīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 31
 al-Wāsānī, 83, 94
 Welsh, A., 4-5n
 Wilson, E. B., 6n
- Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī, 69
 Yaḥyā Ibn Nawfal, 86
 al-Yakkī, 92
 Yāqūt, 83, 132
 Yazīd, Ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 30
 Yazīd Ibn Mu'āwiya, 26n, 29-30, 52
 Yazīd Ibn al-Muhallab, 30
 Yūnus Ibn al-Ḥabīb, 26n, 34n
- Zaghlūl, Sa'd, 135
 al-Zahūrī, Ismā'il, 134
 al-Zamaksharī, 122
 al-Zawzanī al-Baḥḥāthī, Abū Ja'far, 131
 al-Zibriqān, 24-5
 Ziyād al-A'jam, 109
 Ziyād Ibn Abīh, 8, 29
 Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā, 15-6, 42, 64

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

Where the index does not offer sufficient space for a translation or explanation of a term,
the reader is referred to the pages of the text.

adab, 3, 48, 54-5, 57, 83, 101, 121, 128
aghrād see *gharad*
ʿatb see *ʿitāb*

blackmail, 28, 33, 38
 blame see *dhamm*, *lawm*, *mathālib*
bullayq, 126-7

charm, 4-5
 children, 5n, 38-9, 131, 134n
 comedy, 67, 76-7, 96-7, 100, 102
 contest, verbal (see also flyting, *munāfara*,
naqāʿid), 9, 27, 30, 35n, 38-9, 49-50, 103
 curse, 4-5, 23

dhamm, *madhamma* 'blame', 23-4, 51, 53,
 73, 76-7, 85, 94, 97-8, 104, 106, 111-3,
 117, 120, 134

elegy see *rithāʿ*
 expurgation, 10-1, 53, 78n, 79, 136-7

fakhr 'self-praise', 1-2, 16, 35n, 39, 48, 53,
 70, 103, 112, 118, 120n
 flyting, 4, 6, 27, 30, 61
fuḥsh 'obscenity', 15, 18, 45, 52, 57, 77,
 80, 83-4, 90, 98n, 137n

ghalab 'to be victorious', 38, 49
gharad 'aim', 'mode', 1-2, 64, 74, 101,
 103-4, 111-12, 114, 116-7, 121, 124
ghazal 'love poetry', 1, 24, 47-8, 91
ghiba 'calumny', 121n, 129

ḥammāq, 127
hamz, 112-3
hazl 'jesting', 51, 56, 60, 80, 83, 87, 101-3,
 106, 110, 122-3
ḥidāʿ, *ḥudāʿ*, 5, 47
hijāʿ
 etymology of —, 8n, 36
 its variety, 1-2
 origin of —, 4-5
 — and aggression, 6-7, 17, 26, 42, 44
 collection of —, 7-10
 repentance of one's —, 14-6, 79-80

poets disliking —, 15-22, 35-6, 57, 86,
 91-2
 poets not proficient in —, 35-6, 42, 97
 — and religion, 2, 13-6, 22-8, 34-5,
 41-4, 81, 90-1, 119, 120, 129-31
 punishment for —, 15-6, 21-2, 25-33,
 119, 128-33
 rulers' tolerance of —, 26-33, 128
 — being destructive, 35-6, 47, 55, 94
 — and anger, 50-1, 94, 103
 suppressing names in —, 59, 88
 length of — poems, 1-2, 36-7, 87
 love poetry combined with —, 104-6
 tribal vs. personal —, 22, 26, 29, 53,
 58, 66, 76, 137
 on ancestors, 8-9, 64-6, 72-3
 on animals, 45
 on cadis, 120, 131-3
 on inanimate objects, 77, 115-6, 121
 on intellectual defects, 62, 69, 72-3,
 78, 121
 on misers, 37, 45, 57
 on moral defects, 57-8, 62, 64-74, 78,
 107, 117-8, 121
 on muslims, 23-4, 129
 on negroes, 36, 79, 82
 on oneself, 82, 89, 127
 on passive homosexuals, 11, 39, 56,
 86
 on physical defects, 45, 56-8, 62,
 64-6, 70-3, 78, 93, 107, 109, 117-8,
 120-1
 on physicians, 114, 120, 125
 on poets, 50, 76, 86, 131n
 on the world & the times, 77, 120
 on unbelievers, 21-3, 129n
 on women, 28, 45, 47-8, 53-5, 80, 93,
 107-8

ḥilm, 17-9, 35
 honour and dishonour, 13-5, 17, 33, 36,
 51, 115, 130
 humour (see also *hazl*) 30, 37, 50, 75, 87,
 137

ibtidhāl 'vulgarity', 82
ifrāṭ 'hyperbole', 60
ighrāʿ 'incitement', 117
ihām 'ambiguity', 119

- irony *see tahakkum*
istibfāʿ, 76, 85
ʿitāb 'reproach', 10, 19, 24-5, 54, 76-7, 85,
 104, 107, 112-3, 117, 120n
- jahl* 'rudeness', 'ignorance', 15, 17, 19
jinnī 'familiar spirit', 4, 20, 22
 joking (see also *hazl*), 50-2, 89, 114, 121,
 127, 129
- kāhin*, 5
khanā 'foul speech', 18, 35n
khurūj 'transition', 60
kināya 'allusion', 60
 Koran, 19, 21, 23-4, 28, 41, 43, 45, 94,
 118, 122, 124
- lafz* 'wording', 74
lahw 'light verse', 53, 76, 85, 127
lamz, 112
lawm 'blame', 54, 112-3
 libel, 32-3, 129-30
 light verse *see lahw*
 love poetry *see ghazal, nasīb, tashbīb*
- madīh*, *madh* 'panegyric', 1, 10, 14, 30, 36,
 42, 46-8, 51, 53-5, 58, 61-2, 64-71, 73,
 76-7, 84, 87, 91-2, 96-9, 102-6, 108,
 112, 117-9, 127
 magic, 4-5, 24
ma'nā 'motif, idea', 63-4
mathālib 'occasions for blame', 8-9, 41, 48,
 55
mawāliyyā, 127
 metre, 5-6, 102-3, 119
muḥtasib, 82, 130-1
muḥākāh 'mimesis', 106
mujūn, 76-7, 80-2, 101, 110, 112, 124
mukaffir, 126
mulah 'pleasantries', 53-4, 124
munāfara 'verbal contest', 9, 49, 103
muqalladāt, 48
murāfada 'helping fellow poets, 49n
muṭābaqa 'neutral representation', 100, 116
muwashshaḥa, 125-6
- namīma* 'slander', 121n, 129
naqā'id, 10, 41, 59
nasīb 'love poetry', 1-2, 54, 65, 92, 100,
 103-6, 112
nazāha 'decency', 24, 124-5
- obscenity (see also *fuhsh, khanā, mujūn, sukhf*) 2, 11, 16, 18, 22-3, 28, 33, 35, 40,
 45-6, 48, 52-3, 56, 59, 61, 63, 66, 77-84,
 87-90, 92-4, 98n, 110, 119, 124-5, 129-
 32, 135-8
- panegyric *see madīh*
 parody, 5, 106, 126, 134
 polite literature *see adab*
 praise *see madīh*
 prose, 2, 23, 50, 90n, 91, 106n
- qadhaʿ* 'reviling', 18, 20, 26, 48, 93, 137n
qadhḥ, 30-1, 34, 58, 80, 93, 112, 129-30
qāfiya 'rhyme-word', 4, 74-5
qarīd, 4, 49
qarqī, 126-7
- rajaz*, 5, 35, 48-9, 74
 reproach *see ʿitāb*
rithāʿ 'elegy', 1-2, 1-2, 65, 102, 112
- sabb* 'abuse', 80, 93, 112
sajʿ, 4-5, 112
 self-praise *see fakhr*
shamāta 'schadenfreude', 124
 shame vs. guilt, 12-4, 33, 107n, 130
shatm 'abuse', 112, 130n
 songs, 5-6, 21, 38n, 126, 130-1, 134
sukhḥ 'silliness', 'obscenity', 16, 58, 78-9,
 101
- tafriʿ*, 86
taghāyur, 101n, 115
tahakkum, 15, 102, 104, 106, 122-3
tahrīd 'instigation', 117
taḥsīn 'beautification', 97, 100-1, 106-8,
 116
tajāhul al-ʿarīf 'aporia', 60, 122
takhyīl, 106
takrār 'repetition', 122
talattuf, 101n, 115
talwīḥ 'insinuation', 119
tamlīh, 123
tamthīl, 115
tandīr, 123
ta'nīb 'rebuke', 76
taqbīh 'uglification', 97, 100-1, 106-8, 110,
 116
ta'ṣīd 'insinuation', 60, 87-8, 90, 111,
 118-9
tashbīb 'love poetry', 24, 105
tashbīb 'comparison', 40, 60
taṣrīḥ 'explicitness', 87-8, 111, 118-9
tashwīḥ 'disfiguring', 117
tathrib 'censure', 112
ta'zīr 'discretionary punishment', 130
tazyīn 'embellishing', 117
thalb 'defamation', 126