

AL-MAQĀMĀT AL-LUZŪMĪYAH

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AL-MAQĀMĀT AL-LUZŪMĪYAH

BY

ABŪ L-ṬĀHIR MUḤAMMAD IBN YŪSUF AL-TAMĪMĪ
AL-SARAQUSṬĪ IBN AL-AŠTARKŪWĪ (d. 538/1143)

TRANSLATED, WITH A PRELIMINARY STUDY

BY

JAMES T. MONROE



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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

For Juliane, Benjamin, and Cameron

إن الحكمة نزلت من السماء على ثلاثة أعضاء من أهل
الأرض : على أدمغة اليونان وأيدي أهل الصين وللسنة
العرب.

Wisdom descended from heaven upon three organs of the inhabitants of
the earth: upon the brains of the Greeks, the hands of the Chinese, and
the tongues of the Arabs.

(Arabic proverb)

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>C.I.T.M.</i>	A. J. Wensinck, et al., <i>Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane</i> (Leiden, 1936-1988).
Ḍ	al-Saraqustī, <i>al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah li-l-Saraqustī</i> , ed. Ibrāhīm Badr Aḥmad Ḍayf (Alexandria, 1982).
<i>E.I. 1</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 1st ed. (Leiden, 1913-1934).
<i>E.I. 2</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> . New Edition (in progress), (Leiden and London, 1980—).
<i>I.K.B.D.</i>	Ibn Khallikān, <i>Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary (Wafayāt al-A'yān)</i> , trans. Baron MacGuckin de Slane (Paris, 1843).
<i>J.G.W.</i>	Yāqūt, <i>Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch (Mu'jam al-buldān)</i> , ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866-1871).
<i>M.A.</i>	al-Maydānī, <i>Majma' al-amṭāl</i> , ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977-1979).
W	al-Saraqustī, <i>al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah: ta'līf Abī l-Tāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī</i> , <i>al-Saraqustī</i> (Rabat, 1995), ed. Ḥasan al-Warāgli.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 1967, as I was writing my doctoral dissertation, I came across a slender tome, buried among the treasures housed within Harvard's Widener Library, compiled by an Aragonese jurist named Ignacio Jordán de Asso del Río, entitled *Bibliotheca Arabico-Aragonensis*, and published in Amsterdam in 1782. Upon further investigation, I discovered that its author was one of a generation of young eighteenth-century Spaniards trained by Miguel Casiri (Mihā'il al-Ġazīrī), a Lebanese Maronite scholar invited to Spain by the enlightened Bourbon monarch Carlos III for the express purpose of raising Arabic studies to modern levels in that country. The volume itself turned out to be a collection of Arabic texts authored by Aragonese Andalusis, all carefully translated into Latin for a world that was far more cultured than it is today. It was from that book that I first learned about al-Saraqusṭī and his *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*—a major example of the *maqāmah* genre, and one written by an author from the Iberian Peninsula to boot. Alas, aside from the pair of all too brief *maqāmahs* included in Asso del Río's anthology, it was not long before I discovered that there was no complete edition of al-Saraqusṭī's work in Arabic, and so my hopes of studying it were dashed. Short of editing the text myself, I would have to wait for years before an edition was produced. Prudence being the better part of valor, I decided to wait.

Later, in 1971, during a visit to Cambridge University, where I went to deliver a lecture, I met a graduate student from Qatar, who had gathered together some of the MSS of al-Saraqusṭī and was, at the time, engaged in preparing an edition and study of the text as his doctoral dissertation. He and I had a number of fascinating discussions about his project but, after leaving Cambridge, I never heard anything further from him on the subject, nor did the promised edition ever materialize. Once again my hopes were disappointed.

In 1980, Professor Iḥsān 'Abbās, the doyen of Andalusī studies, invited me to read a paper, in the middle of then war-ravaged

Lebanon, at a conference sponsored by the American University of Beirut. The general subject suggested to me was: "The Influence of Arabic on European Literature During the Middle Ages: Fact or Fable?" I initially chose as my topic the question of whether the Arabic *maqāmah* had or had not influenced the rise of European picaresque literature but, despite considerable research, I was unable to find any definitive evidence for or against this otherwise reasonable and very persuasive hypothesis. Moreover, I vaguely remembered having been told, at some particularly low point in my career, that scholars were usually expected to be honest in their conclusions . . . at least to the extent that this was possible. I therefore abandoned my initial topic, and concentrated my efforts instead, on the nature and literary value of the *Maqāmāt* of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, the inventor of the *maqāmah* genre. From the very first moments of my investigation I found myself as delighted by that author himself, as I was appalled by the overwhelmingly negative view of his work unanimously adopted by his modern critics. In Beirut, the paper drew mixed reactions; some favorable, and others outspokenly unfavorable. Professor 'Abbās himself made it clear that he was neither pleased with, nor convinced by, my views, despite which, he objectively and dispassionately offered to publish an expanded version of my study, which appeared in 1983, under the auspices of the American University of Beirut. Much later, in 1995, Professor Ḥalīl Abū Raḥmah of Yarmuk University honored me by translating my monograph on al-Hamaḍānī into Arabic. He even further honored me by prefacing his translation of my study with an introduction of his own authorship, in which he refuted the central thesis of my study, thereby cutting out its heart, and demonstrating to me, without any room for doubt, the overwhelming error of my views. This was my second encounter with the *maqāmah* genre.

In 1984, when I was in Cairo for a week, attending another conference, this time on Andalusī literature, I learned that an edition of al-Saraquṣṭī's *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah* had finally appeared in print just two years earlier. None of my numerous visits to bookstores, however, succeeded in turning up a copy, so that I returned to the United States with nothing but the tantalizing information that the book was now finally in existence.

Thereafter, other concerns kept me away from my lifelong pursuit of al-Saraqṣṭī for at least a decade. Ten years later, after I had written many an article on a different subject, in response to my critics, I finally found the time to check the 1982 Egyptian edition of *al-Maqāmāt al-luẓūmīyah* out of Doe Library. I took one look at it, and decided that a graduate seminar on that author was definitely in order. That seminar lasted from 1994 to 1999. If only because they are so thorough, as our Administration will be pleased to note, Berkeley seminars in Arabic literature are slow-paced, despite which, they do lead to publication . . . eventually. During this time, my students, whose patience has earned them a rightful place in their respective heavens, if they believe in one, read and discussed most of the text with me in detail. These students constitute several generations, and are far too numerous to list, but among those who stand out in my mind, largely for having been repeat offenders, are Gil Anidjar, Miles Becker, Iman Elsayed, Professor Teresa Garulo, Michelle Hamilton, Matthew Herreras, Mustapha Kamal, David Larsen, Jennifer Larson, Danica Milosevic, Seham Obegi, Mark Pettigrew, Adriana Valencia, David Wacks, and Douglas Young. Of these, the last deserves a special prize for brilliance and endurance, insofar as he not only sat through the entire six-year seminar (during the course of which others enrolled, fell in love, married, had babies, divorced, graduated, and accepted academic positions around the country), but he also gave birth to an important doctoral dissertation on the subject of the Arabic *maqāmah* and its relationship to the Spanish picaresque novel.

There were at least two major crises during the course of that memorable seminar, not to speak of one that arose after its completion. The first occurred in 1995 when, upon arriving home from class, as I fumbled with my keys, in order to open the door and run into the house to answer an insistently ringing telephone that turned out to be a wrong number, I placed my briefcase (containing the borrowed Doe Library copy of the text we were reading) on my front doorstep. By the time I emerged, only a few seconds later, to retrieve the briefcase, disaster had struck, for Doe Library's and my property had been stolen. The thief, seen sprinting down Russell Street with a briefcase identical to my own, was described by our son Cameron, who witnessed the theft from an upstairs window, as

“a street-person of the sort not normally seen carrying a briefcase.” Subsequent investigations, including offers of a reward, conducted that very evening at local bookstores, among notables of the homeless community in People’s Park, and in certain key dumpsters around the city, to which we were directed by those same very sympathetic notables, failed to turn up any sign of the missing briefcase or volume which, to this very day, has failed to surface. As news of the theft spread, I shall be eternally grateful for the fact that, without my having requested it, a loyal and international rescue operation was launched in order to permit the seminar in Arabic literature to proceed. Professor Elliott Colla, then in Cairo, learned of the theft through the process of oral transmission (it would seem that ballads on the theft of the book were composed, sung, translated, and sung again, from Berkeley to Cairo). He immediately contacted Professors Omaina Abou-Bakr and Mustafa Gouda. They managed to procure a copy of the book, which Professor Colla personally brought back to me from Egypt. In the meantime, Dr. Hamid Mahamedi, Doe Library’s very efficient Middle Eastern Librarian, borrowed a copy of al-Saraqustī’s work from the Library of the University of Arizona, from which he made a photocopy that was, in many ways, far more legible than the original, thereby making the priceless volume once again available in Berkeley.

In the middle of this turmoil, Professor Teresa Garulo put me in touch with her colleague, Professor María Isabel Fierro Bello who, with the generosity that characterizes her, immediately made available to me the impressive information recorded in her computerized data-base on Andalusi authors, *Historia de los autores y transmisores andalusíes (H.A.T.A.)*, without the aid of which, I would have been unable to compile the biography of al-Saraqustī.

The second crisis in the seminar, also with far-flung international repercussions, occurred in 1995, when a new edition of al-Saraqustī’s text, this time by a different editor, was published in Morocco. From Spain, Professor Teresa Garulo sent me one copy, while Professor Mustapha Kamal simultaneously had another purchased for me in Morocco. When I examined this new edition, I discovered, to my dismay that, being based on different manuscripts, it was substantially different from the Egyptian text, as a

consequence of which, I realized that I would have to revise every single one of the translations I had so painstakingly completed.

The third crisis in my labors occurred in 1999, just when I thought I was finally nearing the light at the end of the tunnel, for Professor Ignacio Ferrando Frutos kindly sent me a copy of his newly published Spanish translation of al-Saraquṣṭī's *Maqāmāt*. As soon as I saw it, I realized that, in the process of preparing my own MS for publication, I would not only have to revise and check my English version against the Arabic original, but that I would now also have to revise and check it against his distinguished and far more polished Spanish translation. For all the extra work and trouble he caused me, I am indeed most grateful. I hope it will save me much future embarrassment at the hands of my critics who, as I write these very words are, according to reliable sources of information, poised and waiting to tear both my study as well as my translation to pieces, and otherwise expose and revile the present publication's numerous and obvious defects, as is the genetically programmed wont of scholarly critics. Professor Ferrando's translation was published by Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, in the very same town in which al-Saraquṣṭī was brought up, and from which his name derives. It is thus only fair that Professor Ferrando should have been singled out by fate as the second scholar to introduce the great Zaragozaan Arab writer to the West, this time in complete form. In this respect, he has followed in the footsteps of his eighteenth-century predecessor Asso del Río. There seems to be a complicated Aragonese conspiracy here, requiring further investigation, and the ultimate implications of which I hope to expose in a future article.

In the year 2000, during a sabbatical leave granted to me by the University of California, I underwent a moment of hallucination during which I foolishly assumed that I had completed my arduous labors and had finally prepared a MS suitable for publication. At that juncture, I asked my student and younger colleague, Mr. Mark Pettigrew, to take a look at it and to offer me any suggestions for improvement he might wish to make. Much to my dismay and delight, he did exactly that, entering into all sorts of subtle and important details. Every single one of his suggestions has been gratefully accepted and incorporated, and mere words cannot express my gratitude for the pains he has taken. The same must be said for

my colleague Dr. John Hayes who, over the years, has read parts of my MS when they were being prepared as lectures for delivery here and there around the country, and who meticulously corrected them with his remorselessly accurate red pen. Subsequently, he went to even greater efforts in copy-editing this volume, in the process of which, he succeeded in greatly improving it, in accordance with the high standards he set for me. For his generous efforts, I shall always be grateful. Persons who heard some of these lectures, including Professors Nabil Abd al-Fattah, Margaret Larkin, Pierre Mackay, Laurence Michalak, George Shipley, Jaroslav Stetkevych, Terri De Young, and Farhat Ziadeh, likewise offered many a valuable suggestion for improvement that has been religiously heeded, and shamelessly adopted.

In the course of this long saga, I am afraid that I endlessly bored, if I did not forever alienate, two very dear friends and colleagues, namely Professors Samuel Armistead and Alain Renoir, as I tried out my more outlandish notions about the *maqāmah* on them (what are friends for, if not to persecute them with one's ravings?). To the former, I am deeply grateful for the valuable and incredibly rich bibliographical information he provided me whenever it was requested, and which, at one crucial point, proved to be so copious that it almost succeeded in turning this book into a treatise on the Vikings instead of a study on the *maqāmah*. To the latter, I am forever indebted for his perceptive insights and thoughtful suggestions, including some highly pertinent comments about the novel and its antecedents, the difference between scientific and literary prose, and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, all of which are carefully footnoted in this volume. To both, I am grateful for their endless generosity and patience during those moments when I persistently nagged them, and otherwise exceeded the normal limits of friendship.

It is an unusual pleasure to thank Professor Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, who originally suggested that I submit my MS to E. J. Brill for publication; who, with the unbelievable energy that characterizes her, managed to read it at a time when she was overwhelmed by other duties, and who then kindly delivered her verdict and recommendation to the effect that it be included in the distinguished series, *Studies in Arabic Literature*, directed by her. Her

intellectual hospitality leaves me speechless. I am also grateful to Professor Roger Allen, who read the MS, offered many valuable suggestions for its improvement, all of which have been addressed, and whose insights into Arabic literature have always been an inspiration to me, given the strongly philological orientation of this field in which, unlike him, few scholars can claim literary training, be it practical or theoretical.

With unbridled optimism and unheard of enthusiasm, my editor, Ms. Trudy Kamperveen of E. J. Brill, waved a tempting carrot before my nose, to the effect that she wished to publish my MS before the end of the year. If this deadline was to be met, however, she graciously warned me (and this was her gentle if effective stick), then it would have to be in her hands in finished form by April. On the one hand, this treatment makes me out to be some species of quadruped, possibly the proverbial Qur'ānic "donkey bearing books." On the other, it is, indeed, a pleasure to be blessed with a keen and sympathetic editor. Off and on, I have only worked at this project for a mere thirty-four years. To be made known within those hyperboreal regions of the earth where English is spoken, al-Saraqusṭī has waited for close to nine hundred. Ms. Kamperveen chose to have him out before the year was over, under the cultured and protective shield of Pallas Athena, for which he and I thank her from the bottom of our hearts. There must be a lesson to be learned from all this. Insofar as al-Saraqusṭī was first made known to the West by Asso del Río, in a book published in Holland, whereas a complete translation of his work into English now appears in that same country, that lesson seems to be that certain mysterious but literary forces must be in control of the universe, possibly the Principles of Ring Composition.

This work has been partially funded by a grant from the Al-Falah Program of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley, which allowed me to prepare my MS for publication. It is a great privilege to thank both the Al-Falah Program for its enlightened support of a project involving the study of Arabic literature, and Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, for kindly encouraging me to apply for the grant in the first place.

Let me conclude by bowing my head in remembrance of my

unforgettable and dearly beloved *maestro*, Don Américo Castro, who changed the course of my life by infecting me with his extremely contagious love of literature, of Spain, of the remarkable contribution the Arabs made to all things Hispanic and, through Spain, to Europe.

After having sat at Don Américo's feet for three inspiring undergraduate years, during the course of which I seem to have ended up majoring in *castrismo*, and after having heard his many spellbinding lectures extolling the influence of the Arabs on Spain, I found myself in France where, at the Université de Toulouse, I immediately began to study the Arabic language. When I wrote to my mentor to announce this fact to him, the imperative dimension of his personality took over, for he responded by disapproving of my decision, by advising me to take no such extreme and drastic action, and by warning me that the study of Arabic was a bottomless pit—nay, a vortex that would swallow me up, so that I would never again emerge from it alive. With the heedless nonchalance of youth, I ignored his advice, only to discover, in later years, that he had been right all along for, in Toulouse, where I had gone to study French literature, not the Arabic language, I succumbed to the temptation offered by a course entitled “L'arabe pour les hispanisants.” During the first meeting of that class, there were sixty students present. Professor Stanislas de Benda then proceeded to inquire how many of us knew Spanish. Sixty hands were raised. He then asked how many of us knew Arabic. This time, only a single hand went up. Thereupon, he explained that, since his course was designed to illustrate the influence of Arabic on Spanish, since it was essential for us to be familiar with both languages if we were to reach any sound conclusions in our studies, and since we all knew Spanish, but not Arabic, he had no choice but to teach us the latter. This he proceeded to do for the remainder of the year. By its end, there were only three students left in the class, myself included.

With only a single, obviously insufficient, but fascinating year of Arabic behind me, I then enrolled in the Department of Romance Languages at Harvard University. I soon discovered that Sir Hamilton Gibb was offering an advanced graduate seminar on Arabic poetry under the auspices of the Middle Eastern Center, and im-

mediately decided to play intellectual hooky. Hat in hand, as behooves an aspiring graduate student, I knocked at his door in order to request his permission to attend the course. When he learned that I had only studied the Arabic language for one year, he politely but firmly suggested that I audit his seminar rather than enrolling in it for credit, no doubt thereby expecting to see the last of me. He added that, when he and I both felt that I was adequately prepared in the Arabic language, he would allow me to enroll in his seminar on a regular basis. It proved to be one of the more difficult courses I have ever taken but, a few weeks into its beginning, a kind and sympathetic classmate with considerably more experience in the subtleties of Arabic than myself, named Jaroslav Stetkevych, took me under his wing, suggested that I come to class half an hour early, and patiently went over the reading assignments with me until, thanks to his expert tutoring, by the end of the second semester, Sir Hamilton informed me that, in his opinion, I was henceforth free to enroll officially in his seminar, which I proceeded to do for the next four years. It was not until many years later, that Professor Stetkevych confided to me as follows: "By the way, I never told you that Sir Hamilton called me into his office one day, and said: 'There is a student from the Department of Romance Languages in our seminar, who needs some help with his Arabic. Why don't you give him a hand?'"

There can be little doubt that, if I had only listened to Américo Castro, today I would be a productive individual and one useful to society; possibly a lawyer, a banker, a captain of industry, or even a politician. To Don Américo Castro, Stanislas de Benda, Sir Hamilton Gibb, Jaroslav Stetkevych, and all those other persons and institutions mentioned above (not to speak of many others left unmentioned for lack of space) I therefore express my heartfelt gratitude for having preserved me from the fate of usefulness. Let me end by saying that every single one of them bears a grave share of responsibility for my ruin.

James T. Monroe
Berkeley, California
May 10, 2001

PRELIMINARY STUDY¹

What is a Maqāmah?

The Arabic genre of the *maqāmah* (pl. *maqāmāt*) was invented by Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn Abū l-Faḍl al-Hamaḍānī (358/969-398/1008),² a man who claimed Arab ancestry, but who, as his name indicates, was from the Persian city of Hamadhan. So successful was this new genre, that its author came to be known as Badīʿ al-Zamān ('The Wonder of the Age'). His work, as it has come down to us, consists of a total of fifty-two *maqāmāt*, the authenticity of a few of which has been challenged. Not all MSS of Badīʿ al-Zamān's work contain the same *maqāmāt*, and they are not all arranged in the same order. Hence, modern editions of the text contain the sum total of what has come down to us, but arranged in an order determined by the modern editor, not the eleventh-century author.³

¹ Sections of this study have been published separately in article form as: (1) "Al-Saraqustī, ibn al-Aštarkūwī: Andalusī Lexicographer, Poet, and Author of *al-Maqāmāt al-luḏūmiya*," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXVIII (1997), 1-37; (2) "Al-Saraqustī, ibn al-Aštarkūwī (Part II)," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXXIX (1998), 31-58; (3) "Misinterpreting False Dreams: Al-Saraqustī's '*Maqāma* of Ṭarīf,'" *Jewish Culture and the Hispanic World: Essays in Memory of Joseph Silverman*, ed. Samuel G. Armistead, *et al.* (Newark, Delaware, 2001), pp. 415-435. Here, they have been revised, corrected, and updated, while further material has been added. All translations from the Arabic are mine.

² On whom, see *E.I.* 2, III, 106-107. Over the past thirty years, several important studies have appeared, all attempting, in one way or another, to identify sources or antecedents to al-Hamaḍānī's *Maqāmāt*. See for example: A. F. L. Beeston, "The Genesis of the *Maqāmāt* Genre," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, II (1971), 1-12; J. N. Mattock, "The Early History of the *Maqāma*," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXV (1989), 1-18; Julia Ashtiany Bray, "*Isnāds* and Models of Heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Ṭāʾī, Tanūkhī's sundered lovers and Abū l-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymarī," *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, I (1998), 7-30. While the sources cited in the above articles provide us with a valuable insight into al-Hamaḍānī's creative methods, all of them are anecdotes lacking the essential picaresque ingredient added by him and characterizing the *maqāmah* genre. Thus, until true *maqāmāt* composed prior to al-Hamaḍānī are discovered, we can only assume, as the author's contemporaries appear to have done, that he *invented* the genre. To do otherwise, would be to confuse a genre with its antecedents.

³ On this point, see James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamaḍhānī*

Another century went by before a second Arab writer, namely Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī (445/1054-515/1122),⁴ from the Iraqi city of Basra, succeeded in composing a major work in emulation of his august predecessor. In this instance, al-Ḥarīrī's autograph MS, signed and corrected by him, has survived, hence we can be reasonably certain of the authenticity, reliability, and order of its contents.⁵ It contains fifty *maqāmāt*, a number that, as time went by, came to be viewed as canonical, in the sense that, whereas a lightweight might try his hand at composing a *maqāmah* or two, serious writers in the *maqāmah* field were expected to compose at least fifty, if not more of them, in order to show that they were, at the very least, up to al-Ḥarīrī's standards.

In the month of Šawwāl 504/April 1111, al-Ḥarīrī read his *maqāmāt* out loud to a group of scholars and men of letters, so that the latter could either take them down by dictation, or correct any errors in their personal MSS of the work, this being the way literary works were published and disseminated in the medieval Arab world. In attendance at that session was an indefatigable Andalusī traveler named Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn 'Alī al-Quḍā'ī⁶ who, soon after, returned to al-Andalus with his corrected copy of the MS, which he introduced to a new set of readers. There, our author, al-Saraqustī, must have heard the recitation of the work, whether directly from al-Quḍā'ī's lips, or from those of some other authorized transmitter is not known, and was then inspired to compose the collection translated in this volume.

While the *maqāmah* genre exhibits many features that are specific to Arabic literature, it also shares a number of characteristics with other literatures. For the sake of convenience, it may be regarded as one branch, and a very important one at that, of the picaresque genre. In this respect, it constitutes a counter-genre to noble liter-

as *Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut, 1983), pp. 109-132. See too, D. S. Richards, "The *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī: General Remarks and a Consideration of the Manuscripts," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XX (1991), 89-99.

⁴ See *E.I.* 2, III, 221-222.

⁵ See Pierre A. Mackay, *Certificates of Transmission on a Manuscript of the Maqāmāt of Ḥarīrī (MS Cairo, Adab 105)*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, series 2, Vol. LXI, part 4 (Philadelphia, 1971).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, n. 5; 30.

ary genres such as epics, romances of chivalry, sermons, holy scriptures, etc. In these, the reader is offered an idealistic and positive view of heroic and morally superior individuals at work battling *against* the forces of evil. In contrast, in the picaresque genre, the terms are inverted, for the reader is offered an equally idealistic, if negative portrait of anti-heroic and morally inferior individuals who *succumb* to the forces of evil, as they attempt to persuade one another and the reader that their course of action is the right one. At the same time, the text is riddled with contradictions in logic deliberately designed to permit the perceptive reader to conclude that the anti-hero's arguments are basically flawed and, thus, to reject them. The picaresque genre is, therefore, ultimately moral, but, unlike works such as the romances of chivalry, it teaches by negative example; i.e., it offers the reader an example of what *not* to be or do.

A favorite argument of *maqāmah* anti-heroes is to claim that, because times are difficult, the protagonist has no alternative but to misappropriate the belongings of others. "Times are difficult, therefore I steal. Don't blame me; blame the times" is an appeal heard over and over again in this corpus of literature, and it forces the reader to confront a major ethical problem, namely that of personal responsibility for human acts. In Islam (and the *maqāmah* genre is, after all, the product of authors living in an Islamic society), this problem had been deeply explored by theologians before al-Hamaḍānī began writing. In the early 'Abbāsid period (132/750-334/945), a theological school known as the Mu'tazilah⁷ taught that God was primarily *just*. As a result, He was constrained to uphold a strict system of rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked in the Hereafter. A consequence of this doctrine is that if God were to force humans to commit evil deeds and then punish them for committing them, He would not be just. Hence, according to the Mu'tazilah, human beings enjoyed Free Will and were entirely responsible for their own acts. The theology of the Mu'tazilah, complete with its doctrine of Free Will, was adopted by the Šī'i confession of Islam, where it prevails to this day.⁸

⁷ See *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793.

⁸ For more on this subject, see William Montgomery Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London, 1948).

But, if man enjoys Free Will, how can God know what His creature is going to do next? If God can have no knowledge of particulars within the universe He Himself created, what does this state of affairs say about His omniscience? And if God is straitjacketed within a strict system of rewards and punishments, where does this leave His omnipotence? A new Islamic theological school, the Aš'arīyah⁹ attempted to grapple with these problems. It taught, as a fundamental principle, that God was *omnipotent*. This being so, He could, if He so wished, exercise leniency by pardoning the wicked, and could, if He so desired, even punish the righteous. A doctrine of "last acts" was developed by the Aš'arīyah, and became essential to its system. According to this doctrine, even a saintly individual, if his last act before death was an irreligious one, could be condemned to Hell, whereas a hardened sinner, if he repented on his deathbed, could be forgiven by God and rewarded with Paradise. According to this school, every human act is predetermined by the divinity. Thus God can, if He so pleases, cause us to sin all our lives, and then forgive us for our sins, if we offer Him a final act of repentance. The catch here is that, since every human act is predetermined, we cannot repent unless God wills us to do so. The Aš'ari doctrine of Predestination, along with its corollary, Repentance, was adopted and incorporated into the Sunni confession of Islam.

In sum, on the one hand, we have the Mu'tazili theological school that upholds a belief in the *justice* of God, and teaches that human beings enjoy Free Will, and are thus responsible for their acts, which will be scrupulously rewarded or strictly punished by the divinity. This doctrine came to be adopted by the minority Šī'i confession of Islam. On the other, we have the Aš'ari theological school that upholds a belief in the *omnipotence* of God, and teaches that human beings live under the constraint of Predestination, and are thus not responsible for their acts, of which the evil ones may be pardoned by the divinity. This doctrine came to be adopted by the majority Sunni confession of Islam.

The *maqāmah* genre explores this theological contradiction in depth. Time and again the anti-heroic protagonist argues that, because

⁹ See *E.I.* 2, I, 696.

times are difficult, he steals, adding “Don’t blame me; blame the times.” This argument implies that in his view, the protagonist is not responsible for his acts, but that all blame should be placed squarely with Time, Fate, and, ultimately, with God. The anti-hero of the *maqāmah* genre is, thus, a believer in Predestination, but, like the clever rhetorician that he is, he uses this belief perversely, as a justification for his misdeeds. In the meantime, the text itself is at some pains to deconstruct his argument by showing us that it is based on false logic and, in many cases, on false facts, that is to say, on outright lies. The protagonist is thus an unreliable narrator and, as such, he defends a questionable version of morality.

In al-Hamaḍānī’s “*Maqāmah* 26 (The Exhortation),”¹⁰ that author has his protagonist appear in a street of the Iraqi city of Basra, when he is an old man, and where he is preaching a sermon in which he exhorts his listeners to repent before it is too late. The sermon, however, is based on Mu‘tazili principles and authorities, according to which a deathbed repentance is a futile act. Since the speaker is now old, it becomes clear that, according to the doctrine he is currently promoting, and which constitutes the intellectual basis for his sermon, his words, moving though they may be, are hardly applicable to his own situation. Therefore, it becomes clear that the preacher is being portrayed as a man who does not practice what he preaches. Put differently, he is a hypocrite, and his sermon is no more than a ruse designed to extract monetary donations from a crowd of gullible sympathizers.

Similarly, in al-Ḥarīrī’s “*Maqāmah* 50 (Basra),”¹¹ that author’s protagonist appears, once again in Basra, but this time in its mosque, to announce to the assembled worshippers that, for once, he is not after their money. Instead, he assures them, he has heard the voice of God offering him the chance to repent (an Aṣ‘ari doctrine), which he has gratefully accepted. The assembly is overjoyed at his good fortune, and donations come pouring in, which the protagonist,

¹⁰ Badr al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, Abū l-Faḍl, *Maqāmāt*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abduh (repr. Cairo, 1988), pp. 128-136; English trans. W. J. Prendergast, *The Maqāmāt of Badr al-Zamān al-Hamaḍhānī* (London, 1915), pp. 104-110.

¹¹ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt* (Beirut, 1965), pp. 442-455; English trans. Thomas Chenery and F. Steingass, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī: Translated from the Arabic with Notes Historical and Grammatical* (London, 1867-1898), II, 175-185.

despite his earlier protestations to the contrary, now allows himself to be persuaded to accept. With this loot in hand, he retires from his underworld activities to spend his remaining years in prayer. The text thus shows us that, contrary to what the protagonist claims, his repentance is a questionable one.

To sum up, in al-Hamaḍānī, within the context of a Muʿtazili-based sermon that does not allow for repentance, a preacher recommends repentance, whereas, in al-Ḥarīrī, within the context of an Aṣʿari-based sermon, which allows for repentance, the protagonist, while making an outward show of repentance, actually remains inwardly impenitent. A final repentance seems to be *de rigueur* in the *maqāmah* genre, but its sincerity is always cast into doubt, thereby allowing the reader to reject the arguments of the anti-heroic protagonist.

In contrast to the epic and the romances of chivalry, which are narrated in the third person, the *maqāmah* employs first-person narration. This approach has an important function, insofar as it allows the protagonist to tell his tale, while simultaneously allowing the reader to judge its veracity. It also allows the protagonist to express sentiments such as the following: “I truly hated So-and-So, but I greeted him with a smile on my face.” The chasm existing between appearance and reality is thus made manifest. Ironically, the words of the protagonist are highly embellished rhetorically, but they are false morally. Thus, rhetoric serves, on the one hand, as a means of obfuscation and, on the other, as an invitation to the reader to penetrate its convolutions in order to get at the simple, underlying reality of what is being said (“My fingers went foraging for a prize” = “I attempted to steal his money”). In the *maqāmah* genre, rhetoric is, therefore, entirely functional, rather than being a mere external decorative element; it is a means of highlighting the contrast between the seductively charming falsehoods the speaker promotes, and the ugly reality these falsehoods attempt to conceal; it is a way of disguising unworthy sentiments in beautiful words.

In the epic and the romances of chivalry, the characters tend to be predictable. Given the chance, the hero of a romance will inevitably rescue the maiden in distress from the villain and, generally speaking, he will attempt to right all wrongs. In contrast, the anti-heroic protagonist of the *maqāmah* is unpredictable. Given the choice,

he will normally adopt the dishonest course of action over the honest one (and then blame Fate for having done so). After reading several *maqāmāt*, a pattern begins to emerge, and the reader begins to expect that the anti-heroic protagonist will always trick his victim (who is usually the narrator of the episode) out of his property. The interest of the work appears to lie, not in *what* will happen next, but in *how* it will happen; not in *whether* the victim will be tricked by the protagonist, but in *how* he will be tricked by him. But, just as the reader is lulled into complacency, a surprise element is introduced for, in al-Hamaḍānī, it sometimes occurs that the victim turns the tables on his oppressor, while in al-Saraqṣṭī, the trickster occasionally and generously hands over all his ill-gotten gains to the same narrator who has been his victim in previous episodes. The reader thus never knows what to expect from the characters in the *maqāmah* genre, and must be ever alert, given its open-ended possibilities. In this sense, the *maqāmah* is unpredictable.

Whereas the heroes of romance and epic travel continuously around the globe in search of wrongs to right, the anti-heroes of the *maqāmah* genre keep popping up discontinuously in one place after another. Normally, we are not told from whence they came and, at the end of the episode, they ride off to an undisclosed destination. They are, therefore, characters with a questionable past that they deliberately attempt to conceal, and a future area of dubious activities to which they do not wish to be traced, all of which smacks of dishonesty and arouses suspicion in the reader. Typically, the narrator of a *maqāmah* informs us that he arrived at a given place. In al-Saraqṣṭī, that place may vary from China and India in the east, to Tarifa and Tangier in the west, ranging throughout the length and breadth of North Africa and the Middle East. Once having arrived at a specific location, the narrator often stumbles upon an individual who is addressing an enraptured gathering of listeners. Sometimes this individual is a religious preacher, sometimes an animal performer, sometimes a quack physician, and so on. After delivering an inspiring address to the gullible crowd, the speaker points to his own poverty and distress, whereupon alms are lavished upon him by his victims. Sometimes the narrator is among the duped, and sometimes he becomes the protagonist's accomplice in

duping others, thereby showing that he is no better than the protagonist, only more gullible.

Geographic space is discontinuous in the *maqāmah*, insofar as the narrator may be in China in one *maqāmah*, and in Qayrawan in the next. How he got from the one to the other is not spelled out in the text. Time is also discontinuous: In one *maqāmah* the narrator may state that, in the days when he was *young*, he met an *old* man (who turns out to be the protagonist, who then proceeds to trick him), yet in the very next *maqāmah*, he may state that, in the days when he reached *old age*, he met a *young* man (who turns out to be the same protagonist, and who again proceeds to trick him). In this respect, the *maqāmah* genre is pre-novelistic, for in the novel the reader is allowed to follow the adventures of the protagonist from a specific moment in his life (e.g., from birth), to a moment when the hurdles life offers in that specific novel are eventually overcome (e.g., marriage and living happily ever after), all in chronological and spatial order.¹²

The *maqāmah* is couched in rhymed prose containing within it passages of poetry, of which the latter are normally put in the mouth of the trickster. A typical example is one in which the narrator informs us that he arrived in a certain place, and met an old man who was haranguing a crowd, first stimulating it to practice virtue, in order to obtain alms from it later. All this part, which constitutes the deception, is couched in rhymed prose. After the elderly speaker has obtained the contributions he desires from his listeners, he recognizes the narrator in the audience and, once the two are together in private, the trickster offers the narrator some worldly advice, largely cynical in nature, to the effect that one must deceive one's fellow man in order to earn a living, all of which is couched in verse. Such a functional distribution of prose and verse in the *maqāmah* raises interesting questions for, if the deceit perpe-

¹² For more on the *maqāmah* genre, see Mahmoud Tarchouna, *Les marginaux dans les récits picaresques arabes et espagnols* (Tunis, 1982); Abdelfattah Kilito, *Les séances: récits et codes culturelles chez Hamadhani et Hariri* (Paris, 1983); James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī' az-Ẓamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut, 1983); Arabic translation: Ḥalīl Abū Raḥmah, *Maqāmāt Badī' al-Ẓamān al-Hamaḏānī wa-qīṣaṣ al-bīkārīsk* (Yarmuk, 1995); Carl Brockelmann and Charles Pellat, "Maḳāma," *E.I.* 2, VI, 107-115.

trated in the text is couched in prose, and the cynical advice it offers is couched in verse, this means that falsehood is associated with prose, whereas truth is associated with poetry. In turn, this set of equivalences is the exact opposite of what we find in the Qur'ān, for the holy book of Islam, which is couched in prose, predominantly rhymed, claims to represent absolute truth and, in doing so, it views most poets as being spokesmen for untruth: "As for the poets, the erring follow them. Do you not see that they wander in every valley and say what they do not do?"¹³ The holy text does, however, provide one exception to its general condemnation of poets: "those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked,"¹⁴ none of which are the attributes of a trickster. Thus we can establish the following inverse set of correlations:

Qur'ān:	prose = truth,	poetry = untruth.
Maqāmah:	prose = untruth,	poetry = truth.

The above indicates, once again, that the *maqāmah* genre is an inversion of the noble genres; in this case, of holy scripture. But, since the truth conveyed in the poetry of the *maqāmah* is cynical in nature, not to say entirely unethical ("earn your living by stealing"), it is clear that it is a false truth, as a result of which, the Qur'ān is ultimately validated, and we find ourselves once again being taught by negative example.¹⁵

¹³ Qur'ān, 26:224-226

¹⁴ Qur'ān, 26:227.

¹⁵ From the point of view of faith, Muslim commentators on the Qur'ān hold the view that the latter is neither poetry nor prose, but rather, an inimitable work transcending genre itself. This is the orthodox view maintained in al-Mubarrad's "Epistle on Poetry and Prose" (see below, Appendix 2). Nonetheless, from a purely rational point of view, the work is, in fact, couched in a form of prose that is predominantly rhymed, rather than being in verse. Such, at least, is the irreverent view expressed in al-Saraqṣī's "*Maqāmah* 40 (On Poetry and Prose)," where the speaker declares: "Prose constitutes one of the inimitable miracles of the best man in creation [i. e., the Prophet Muḥammad]—and how honorable that is as an indication of superiority in rank and as a rank indicating superiority. If there were high rank to be acquired, or glory to be considered through poetry, noble status would not have been denied to him, his august tongue would not have been prevented from using poetry" (W40, p. 374, n. 31). Furthermore, within the text of the Qur'ān, poetry, not prose is viewed as untruth. I wish to thank Miss Jen-

The *maqāmah* is highly repetitive and stylized insofar as plot is concerned. In it, the same two characters, namely the trickster and his victim, meet over and over again and, with rare exceptions, the one always manages to outwit the other. Neither of the two ever seems to learn much from his experiences, whereas we, as readers, soon learn to become wary of certain situations and, when we find the victim using formulaic expressions such as *wa-idā bi-šayhin* ('and lo, I beheld an old man'), we know that this old man is the trickster, and we know that the victim is in for trouble, a fact of which he seems blissfully unaware. In this respect, the characters never learn from their misfortunes and thereby remind us of those encountered in contemporary situation comedies.

As long as an Arab caliphate was firmly in control of the Islamic Empire, it would seem that the literary genre enjoying the greatest prestige in Arabic was the *qaṣīdah*, a type of poetry that could be either panegyric, invective, or elegaic. By its very nature, the *qaṣīdah* is a courtly genre, and its delivery constitutes an important courtly ritual. Its function is to uphold a specific ideal of rulership, and it (1) Either praises the ruler for living up to that ideal, while simultaneously reminding him of the ideal itself, (2) Chastizes him for not living up to the ideal, or (3) Mourns his death, while simultaneously reminding us of the ideal up to which he lived. Without a ruler and a court to sustain it, both the ritual itself, along with its vehicle, the *qaṣīdah*, become meaningless.¹⁶

Al-Hamaḍānī, the inventor of the *maqāmah* genre, lived at a time when the Buwayhids, a Šī'i and Persian dynasty (r. 320/932-454/1062), held effective military *power* over major areas of the Middle East, including Baghdad, the seat of the former Arab Empire, yet they ruled in the name of the Sunni and Arab 'Abbāsīd caliphs, from whom they derived their spiritual *authority*. It would appear that the *maqāmah* genre filled a much needed gap produced when the *qaṣīdah* was no longer viable, because military-based courts no longer enjoyed the sublime prestige formerly enjoyed by religious-based ones, and foreign rulers lacked the command of the Arabic

nifer Larson, who first alerted me to this important problem and who, in a forthcoming article, will explore it in greater depth.

¹⁶ See James T. Monroe, "The Underside of Arabic Panegyric: Ibn Quzmān's (Unfinished?) 'Zajal No. 84,'" *al-Qanṭara*, XVII (1996), 79-115.

language necessary to appreciate the *qaṣīdah*. How could poets continue to eulogize mere military leaders in the same terms in which they had formerly praised august caliphs, and how would foreign rulers have understood them, had they attempted to do so? The *qaṣīdah* did not entirely die out; it merely suffered a sea change. In the case of al-Andalus alone, let us note that al-Saraqusṭī was writing during the Almoravid age (448/1056-541/1147). The Almoravids were Berbers with little understanding either of the Arabic language or of the subtleties of its poetry. During their rule, the two greatest Andalusī poets were Ibn Ḥafājah (450/1058-533/1138),¹⁷ who abandoned the panegyric *qaṣīdah* and adapted it to praise the beauties and mysteries of nature,¹⁸ and Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160),¹⁹ who abandoned the Classical Arabic language altogether, to write mock panegyrics, not of sublime rulers, but of his everyday fellow citizens, in Colloquial Andalusī Arabic,²⁰ and in a native, Ibero-Romance form, the *zajal*.²¹ What this seems to indicate is that the panegyric *qaṣīdah* had ceased to become viable in al-Andalus, for lack of a courtly environment to nourish it.

¹⁷ See *E.I.* 2, III, 822-823.

¹⁸ See James T. Monroe, "Hispano-Arabic Poetry During the Almoravid Period: Theory and Practice," *Viator*, IV (1973), 65-98; Magda M. al-Nowaihi, *The Poetry of Ibn Khafājah: A Literary Analysis*, Studies in Arabic Literature, Vol. XVI (Leiden and New York, 1993); Nadia Yaqub, "Some of Us Must Depart: An Intertextual Reading of the Mountain Poem by Ibn Khafājah," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXX (1999), 240-255; Teresa Garulo, "En torno a Granada: reflexiones sobre la poesía en la época almorávide," *Qurtuba*, IV (1999), 73-96.

¹⁹ See *E.I.* 2, III, 849-852.

²⁰ The language of Ibn Quzmān, far from being a mere manifestation of "Middle Arabic" that incorporates lexical items and structures from the colloquial register, actually exhibits a morphology, syntax, and lexicon that are entirely colloquial, as the author proudly points out in the introduction to his *Dīwān*. See James T. Monroe, "Ibn Quzmān on *I'rāb*: A *zējel* de *juglaría* In Arab Spain?" *Hispanic Studies in Honor of Joseph H. Silverman*, ed. Joseph V. Ricipito (Newark, Delaware, 1988), pp. 45-56. Middle Arabic is a form of the language in which writers are attempting to compose in the classical register but, for lack of sufficient education, commit mistakes in it. In contrast, Ibn Quzmān's Arabic is that of a man who, while fully capable of writing in the classical register (see the introduction to his *Dīwān*, which is couched in this form of the language), deliberately chooses, for literary reasons, not to do so, but to compose in the colloquial register instead.

²¹ See James T. Monroe, "*Zajal* and *Muwašṣaha*: Hispano-Arabic Poetry and the Romance Tradition," *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Vol. XII (Leiden, 1992), pp. 398-419.

As will be explained below, al-Saraqusṭī was not only a *maqāmāh* writer, but also a poet. It is significant, however, that of the ten poems by him, not included in his *maqāmāt*, that have survived, five are love songs, while the remaining five, which are panegyrics, are all dedicated to princes from the pre-Almoravid period of the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* (ca. 400/1010-483/1090). From the period after the Almoravid conquest of al-Andalus (484/1091) we have only al-Saraqusṭī's *maqāmāt*, of which the poetry is rarely panegyric.

The *maqāmāh* does not deal primarily with rulers in their courts (when it does so, it is often hypocritical, and not sincerely encomiastic); instead, it deals with society at large, which it views with a jaundiced eye, providing us with a negative portrait of its pretensions, activities, and aspirations. If the *qaṣīdah* is a genre for the consumption of insiders privy to royal courts, the *maqāmāh* may be viewed as the literature of outsiders no longer welcome at those courts. Add that, although the *maqāmāh* is one of the major genres of Arabic literature, having been cultivated off and on by many writers, from al-Hamaḍānī to the present, it is usual in the West to be familiar only with al-Hamaḍānī and al-Ḥarīrī, if only because most of the subsequent writers of *maqāmāt* still exist only in MS form. Consequently, our view of the genre is woefully deficient, for we operate under the delusion that this major genre is represented by only two works. The publication of the Arabic text of al-Saraqusṭī, about which more will be said below, opens up new horizons and perspectives. Nor is al-Saraqusṭī's the only *maqāmāt* collection to have benefitted from recent publication; among others, let us cite the fifty *maqāmāt* by the Baghdadi author Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Jazarī, who died in 701/1302.²² They are entitled *al-Maqāmāt al-ḡaynīyah*, and their editor, in his introduction to the text, lists numerous other authors of substantial collections of *maqāmāt* who have flourished in every century, right down to the present.²³ Thus, our study of the genre is only in its infancy, and there still remains a very long tunnel beyond the modest patch of new light shed on it by al-Saraqusṭī.

²² See *E.I.* 2, VIII, 805b.

²³ Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Jazarī, *al-Maqāmāt al-ḡaynīyah*, ed. ʿAbbās Muṣṭafā al-Ṣāliḥī (Beirut, 1980), pp. 13-16. See too Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 71, 268-356.

Throughout the long centuries when Arabs were ruled by foreign Muslims, the *maqāmah* genre seems to have been as ubiquitous as it was critical of society. But its criticism was always individual, not institutional. Thus, we are offered, by the *maqāmah* genre, a parade of individuals including corrupt judges, false religious preachers, quack physicians, foolish rulers, and, above all, hypocritical scholars who, being repositories of the written tradition, preach those very virtues that they fail to practice. It is never implied, at least not in the few texts that have been studied so far, that these corrupt individuals are so abusive of the institutions they embody, that those institutions should themselves be reformed, changed, or abolished. In this respect, the *maqāmah* is an entirely pre-modern genre for, there being few entirely civil institutions in the divinely ordained pre-modern Arab world, any more than there were many civil institutions in the divinely ordained pre-modern European world (divine right of kings, etc.), it was unthinkable to criticise the institution, but only those individuals who failed to live up to the sanctity of their office.

Before the seventeenth century, literature provided the reader with an array of characters portrayed in the act of performing either good or bad deeds. Such characters were, therefore, circumscribed within a strictly moral universe. As Américo Castro, with the keen incisiveness that always characterized him, was able to demonstrate, the invention of the novel by Cervantes changed all that.²⁴ The opening lines of *Don Quijote* state: "En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo . . ." ²⁵ If the identity of the *hidalgo*'s town is vague, his name is no less so, for, a few lines further down, doubt is registered as to whether it was actually Quijada, Quesada, Quijana²⁶ while, by the end of the book, it has become Alonso Quijano.²⁷

²⁴ See especially, *Cervantes y los casticismos españoles* (Madrid and Barcelona, 1966), pp. 167-183.

²⁵ 'In a certain place in La Mancha, the name of which I do not wish to remember, not long ago, there lived an *hidalgo* . . .' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 1:1, in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Obras completas*, ed. Ángel Valbuena Prat (Madrid, 1960), p. 1037a.

²⁶ *Loc. cit.*, col. b.

²⁷ P. 1521b.

As Castro shows, there was a prominent family of Quijadas, all notorious *conversos* (i.e., Christian converts from Judaism), in the town of Esquivias, which was not in La Mancha, but in the province of Toledo instead.²⁸ Furthermore, the province of Toledo was *converso* country *par excellence*. In turn, Catalina de Palacios Salazar y Vozmediano, Cervantes' wife (who was also of *converso* extraction), was related to this family and, indeed, had an uncle named Alonso Quijada,²⁹ after whom Don Quijote (alias Alonso Quijano) was modeled. Thus, the Knight of La Mancha, who is also portrayed as eating "duelos y quebrantos" (literally 'sorrows and afflictions', a specifically Hispano-Jewish term for 'ham and eggs') on no less than the Sabbath itself,³⁰ is being portrayed by Cervantes as a New Christian of specifically Jewish ancestry. In turn, this knight-errant is in love with a peasant girl named Aldonza Lorenzo, whom he renames Dulcinea, from the town of El Toboso (also in the province of Toledo), notorious for its population of *moriscos* (i.e., Christian converts from Islam), about whose ancestry questions are also raised within the work.³¹ Finally, Don Quijote takes, as his squire,

²⁸ See Pascual Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y sus posesiones de ultramar* (Madrid, 1847), VII, 585a-586a. In Cervantes' *La cueva de Salamanca* (*Obras completas*, p. 592b) Esquivias, where Cervantes resided on several occasions, is invoked for its fine wines, as also in his *El coloquio de los perros* (*Obras completas*, p. 1013b). But in the prologue to his *Persiles y Segismunda*, (*Obras completas*, p. 1528a) the author states: "viniendo otros dos amigos y yo del famoso lugar de Esquivias, por mil causas famoso, una por sus *ilustres* linajes, y otra por sus *ilustrísimos* vinos . . ." ('as two other friends and I were coming from the famous town of Esquivias, famous for a thousand reasons, one of them being its *illustrious* lineages, and another, its *even more illustrious* wines . . .' [emphasis mine]). In other words, the wines of Esquivias are seen as being more illustrious than its lineages, which were *converso* and, therefore, dishonorable by official seventeenth-century Spanish standards.

²⁹ See Pablo Riera y Sans, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico, biográfico, postal, municipal, militar, marítimo y eclesiástico de España y sus posesiones de ultramar* (Barcelona, 1881-1887), IV, 658-659, at p. 658b.

³⁰ This would have been done to demonstrate the sincerity of his, or his ancestors', abandonment of the Jewish dietary laws. On the Inquisition's watchful eye over the dietary practices of *conversos*, see David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson, *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* (New York, 1999).

³¹ On one occasion, it is stated that "esta Dulcinea del Toboso, tantas veces en esta historia referida, dicen que tuvo la mejor mano para salar puercos que otra mujer de toda la Mancha" ('this Dulcinea del Toboso, so often mentioned

the Old Christian Sancho Panza, a man of peasant stock, who is a hater of Jews,³² and as ignorant as he is illiterate.³³ But by the end of the novel, his realistic outlook is modified by Don Quijote's idealistic one for, as his master lies before him, on his deathbed, Sancho urges him to get up, so that they can both go out and be shepherds, in order to lead a pastoral life just as they had previously led a chivalric one.³⁴ Sancho the cynical has thus been "Quixotified."

in this history, is said to have had a better hand at salting pork than any other woman in all of La Mancha'), (*Don Quijote*, 1:9, *Obras completas*, p. 1062a). When asked about her lineage, Don Quijote admits that she does not descend from any of the foremost families of ancient Rome or modern Spain and Portugal, but that she is "de los del Toboso de la Mancha, linaje, aunque moderno, tal, que puede dar generoso principio a las más ilustres familias de los venideros siglos" ('of the Tobosos of La Mancha, a lineage that, although modern, is such that it can provide a noble beginning for the most illustrious families of forthcoming centuries'), (*Don Quijote*, 1:13, *Obras completas*, pp. 1074b-1075a). Elsewhere, he adds: "Y así, bástame a mí pensar y creer que la buena de Aldonza Lorenzo es hermosa y honesta; y en lo del linaje importa poco; que no han de ir a hacer la información de él para darle algún hábito, y yo me hago cuenta que es la más alta princesa del mundo" ('And thus, it is enough for me to think and believe that good Aldonza Lorenzo is beautiful and virtuous; as for her lineage, it is of small importance, for they are not about to compile a report about it, in order to clothe her in a nun's habit, and it is my impression that she is the loftiest princess in the world'), (*Don Quijote*, 1:25, *Obras completas*, p. 1133b). The point here is that New Christians were excluded from many of the religious orders.

³² Sancho declares: "Y cuando otra cosa no tuviese sino el creer, como siempre creo, firme y verdaderamente en Dios y en todo aquello que tiene y cree la santa Iglesia Católica Romana, y el ser enemigo mortal, como lo soy, de los judíos . . ." ('And even if I had nothing but my belief, for I always believe, firmly and truly, in God and in everything that the Holy Roman Catholic Church affirms and believes, and even if I had nothing but my being a mortal enemy, which I am, of the Jews . . .'), (*Don Quijote*, 2:8, *Obras completas*, p. 1298a).

³³ "—Letras—respondió Sancho—, pocas tengo, porque aún no sé el abecé; pero bástame tener el *Christus* en la memoria para ser buen gobernador . . ." ('As for letters,' Sancho replied, "I have few, for I still don't know the ABC, but it is enough for me to retain the *Christus* in my memory to be a good governor" . . .'), (*Don Quijote*, 2:42, *Obras completas*, p. 1415b).

³⁴ "—¡Ay!—respondió Sancho, llorando—. No se muera vuesa merced, señor mío, sino tome mi consejo, y viva muchos años; porque la mayor locura que puede hacer un hombre en esta vida es dejarse morir, sin más ni más, sin que nadie le mate, ni otras manos le acaben que las de la melancolía. Mire, no sea perezoso, sino levántese de esa cama, y vámonos al campo vestidos de pastores, como teníamos concertado: quizá tras de alguna mata hallaremos a la señora doña Dulcinea, desencantada . . ." ('"Oh!" replied Sancho, weeping, "Don't die,

By making the name and place of origin of his protagonist vague, Cervantes is deliberately sowing suspicion, in the seventeenth-century reader's mind, concerning the "purity" of the knight-errant's blood-lines. Those in the know would presumably have been well aware that the Quijadas were a notorious family of *conversos*, and that they resided in Esquivias (Province of Toledo), not in La Mancha. Such readers would also have known that El Toboso was a town of *moriscos*. By allying this pair of New Christians lovers with the lovable Old Christian squire Sancho, Cervantes is doing two things: (1) He is imagining and suggesting the possibility of a Spain that might have been, but failed to be, in which people could have continued to coexist, despite religious and ethnic differences, as they had coexisted in medieval times. (2) He is showing that individuals are not good or bad by nature, but that it is bad laws and bad institutions that turn men bad. More specifically, he is indirectly denouncing the unjust and discriminatory *estatutos de limpieza de sangre* ('statutes of purity of blood'), a set of laws that barred Christian descendants of Jews and Muslims from holding public office throughout the Spanish Empire. Moreover, he is doing so by showing that, left to their own devices, three individuals, from three different religious backgrounds, are able to interact in a positive way. With Cervantes, for the first time in the history of literature, criticism was aimed away from the individual, where it had been placed squarely in genres such as the picaresque and its Arabic manifestation, the *maqāmāh*, and was directed instead toward unjust institutions and laws by which the individual may be persecuted and oppressed. Ultimately, Cervantes showed that the individual should not be limited by his birth or social circumstances, but that he had a right to be whatever he chose to be. Change the system, and you will change the individual, seems to be his dictum. That is what Dickens, Balzac, Galdós, Dostoyevsky, and other creators of the modern

your lordship, my master, but take my advice, and live for many years, for the act of greatest madness a man can commit in this life is to let himself die for no reason, when there is nobody to kill him, nor are there any hands but those of melancholy to put an end to him. Look, don't be lazy, but rather, get out of that bed, and let's go out to the countryside dressed as shepherds, as we had agreed to do. Perhaps behind some shrub we will find Lady Dulcinea, now freed from enchantment" . . .'), (*Don Quijote*, 2:74, *Obras completas*, p. 1522b).

novel saw in Cervantes; that is what allowed Dickens, for example, to expose the unjust institutions that were creating the appalling social conditions of the Industrial Revolution (child labor, debtors' prisons, etc.).

As is well known, the American, French, and Russian revolutions radically changed the pre-modern way of looking at things. The divine right of kings was dealt a terminal blow when kings were abolished and republics, along with civil institutions, were declared in their stead. The now thinkable possibility of replacing, changing, or even tinkering with institutions allowed for the appearance of a new genre, namely the modern novel which, unlike the *maqāmah*, is critical, not so much of individuals, as it is of the civil institutions by which they are governed. In a government of laws, not of men, the corrupt judge need no longer be removed from office. Instead, the requirements of the office can be modified so as to neutralize his tendency toward corruption and, in fact, circumscribe him to such an extent that he will be encouraged to modify his behavior and, thus, to change. In the same manner, absolute monarchs can be turned into constitutional sovereigns who enjoy only the power to wave from palace balconies, inaugurate museums, and christen ships. The characters of the *maqāmah* are stock figures. In essence, they are sinners in need of repentance, which they practice over and over again, with no amen. In contrast, the characters of the modern novel can change; sinners can see the light and be re-deemed. It is significant that a work considered to be one of the earliest Arabic novels, namely Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's³⁵ *Hadīṭ 'Īsā ibn Hishām*³⁶ looks back toward the *maqāmah* genre (the name 'Īsā ibn Hishām is that of al-Hamaḍḍānī's fictional narrator), while it simultaneously looks forward in the direction of the modern novel in its criticism of those governmental institutions that, under British rule, have now become civil, rather than remaining religious.

Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* in response to the deeply pessimistic picaresque novel *Guzmán de Alfarache*, authored by Mateo Alemán (1547-ca.1617), who was himself of Jewish ancestry on both sides of

³⁵ See *E.I.* 2, VII, 814-815.

³⁶ Published in 1907. See Roger M. A. Allen, *A Period of Time: A Study and Translation of Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's "Hadīṭ 'Īsā ibn Hishām"* (Reading, 1992).

his family.³⁷ If the Spanish picaresque novel is genetically related in any way to the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāmah* genre, as has been often postulated but never definitively proven,³⁸ it could further be affirmed that the modern, Cervantine novel arose, in response to the picaresque novel, out of the specific conditions that obtained in Spain as a result of the coexistence (or lack thereof) between the peoples of the three faiths, namely Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and it would be necessary to acknowledge that the Semitic component in the birth of the modern novel is a crucial one. If such were the case, it would be a pleasure to conclude that, when modern Arab writers adopted the European novel, they were accepting payment, along with accrued interest, for a loan they had originally made to Europe in the first place. To borrow a Qur'ānic expression, the modern novel would then be "their own merchandise returned to them" in modified form. Be that as it may, *qaṣīdah*, *maqāmah*, and novel are three major genres that have reflected, at the same time that they have sustained, three major forms of social organization either created or borrowed (if not borrowed back) by the Arab people.

Life of the Author

Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Māzinī, al-Saraqustī, al-Andalusī, ibn al-Aštarkūnī/Aštarkūwī³⁹ (d. 538/1143) was a distinguished Andalusī prose writer, poet, and scholar who, possibly by virtue of being a scholar, led a rather obscure life. So obscure was it, in fact, that it is usual to begin any account of his works by regretting how little is known about him, thereby implying that the paucity of our biographical information makes it impossible to appreciate or to interpret his works adequately.⁴⁰ Actually,

³⁷ See Mateo Alemán, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, ed. Samuel Gili y Gaya (Madrid, 1953). On his *converso* status, see Ángel del Río, *Historia de la literatura española*, revised ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), I, 321.

³⁸ See the summary in James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī' az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, pp. 10-11, n. 3.

³⁹ Both forms of the name are documented. Since it derives from Aštarkūy (Estercuel), the second is probably the correct one.

⁴⁰ The two most helpful biographies of our author available to me are: (1)

I am aware of at least ten pre-modern Arab writers ranging from the sixth/twelfth to the tenth/seventeenth centuries who mention him in their writings.⁴¹ According to a time-honored Arab scholarly

That contained in the introduction to al-Saraqusṭī, *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah li-l-Saraqusṭī*, ed. Ibrāhīm Badr Aḥmad Ḍayf (Alexandria, 1982), pp. 7-45. (2) The comments included in Ignacio Ferrando Frutos, "La Maqāma barbariyya de al-Saraqusṭī," *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*, II (1991), 119-129. The latter corrects several mistaken assumptions made by previous scholars. I have relied on both of these studies in my own exposition, while adding some new material and approaching the figure of the author with a focus different from that of my predecessors.

⁴¹ The eleventh writer, al-Baḡdādī (d. 1339/1920), must be counted as modern, although he relies on medieval sources. The traditional Arabic sources that mention al-Saraqusṭī are: (1) Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Bassām al-Šantarīnī, *al-Daḥīrah fī maḥāsīn ahl al-Jazīrah*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1979), part 3, II, 909-912. Ibn Bassām fled Santarem when it was taken by Alfonso VI of Castile, and went to Córdoba in 493/1100. Later, in Seville, he compiled his *al-Daḥīrah*. He died in 543/1147. He wrote largely about his contemporaries, but on many occasions, he goes as far back as the beginning of the eleventh century. See *E.I.* 2, III, 734. In the printed edition of Ibn Bassām's *al-Daḥīrah* our author's name appears in the corrupted form Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Aškūrī, while the editor notes that one manuscript even records the form al-Aškadīrī. See, however, source (6), below. (2) Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr, *Faḥrasah*, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (repr. Baghdad, 1963), pp. 387, 450. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ḥayr ibn 'Umar ibn Ḥalīfah al-Lamtūnī al-Amawī was a philologist and traditionist of Seville. His *Faḥrasah* is a catalogue of the works he read and of the teachers who gave him their *ijāzāt*. He was born in Seville in 502/1108, became *imām* of the Mosque of Córdoba, and died in that city in 575/1179. See *E.I.* 2, III, 837. (3) Ibn Baškuwāl, *Kitāb al-ṣilah*, al-Maktabah al-Andalusīyah, nos 4-5 (Cairo 1966), II, 588a, biogr. 1291. Ibn Baškuwāl was born in Córdoba in 495/1101 and died there in 578/1183. He finished the *Kitāb al-ṣilah* in 534/1139. See *E.I.* 2, III, 733-734. (4) Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Āmirah, al-Ḍabbī, *Kitāb buḡyat al-multamis fī ta'riḥ rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (Madrid, 1885), p. 517, biogr. 1552. Al-Ḍabbī was born in Vélez, west of Lorca, and spent most of his life in Murcia. He died in 599/1203. See *E.I.* 2, II, 72. (5) Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu'jam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī l-imām Abī 'Alī al-Šadafī*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1886), pp. 140-141, biogr. 124; *Kitāb al-takmilah li-kitāb al-ṣilah*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1887), II, 618-619, biogr. 1722; *Kitāb al-ḥullah al-siyarā'*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu'nis, *Daḥā'ir al-'Arab*, no. 58 (2d ed., Cairo, 1985), I, 204-205; II, 132, 134, 137-138, 142, 165, biogr. 133 ('Ibn 'Ammār'). Ibn al-Abbār was born in Valencia, in 595/1199, and died in 658/1260. The beginning of the *Takmilah* (letters *alif* to *jīm*), which is unavailable to me, was published by Bel and Ben Cheneb, Algiers, 1920. See *E.I.* 2, III, 673. Another work by Ibn al-Abbār is the *Durar al-sim' fī ḥabar al-sibt*, on the family of the Prophet and the 'Alids, ed. A. Ghedira (see *Andalus*, XX:1 [1957], 31-54). Also ed. 'Izz al-Dīn 'Umar Mūsā (Beirut, 1987). In this work, Ibn al-Abbār expresses violent hostility to the Umayyads and gives clear signs of his Šrī sympathies (see *E.I.* 2, III, 673). Spanish translation: Santiago Martínez de Francisco, *Epopeya*

tradition, some of these authors, especially the later ones, rely on earlier sources which they paraphrase or reproduce verbatim. This practice allows us to add six further sources,⁴² and to rearrange our list, chronologically, as follows:

de los alíes: los enfrentamientos entre shī'itas y sunnitas relatados por un andalusí del S. XIII/ Ibn al-Abbār (Madrid, 1990). (6) Ibn Sa'īd al-Mağribī, *al-Muğrib fī ḥulā l-Mağrib*, ed. Šawqī Dayf, *Daḥā'ir al-'Arab*, no. 10 (Cairo, 1964), II, 447-448, biogr. 634. This biography is included in Book 5 of that part of the *Muğrib* dealing with the east of al-Andalus, entitled *Kitāb ibtisām al-tağr fī ḥulā jihāt al-tağr* ('The Book of the Smiling Mouth on the Ornaments of the Regions of the Frontier'). The specific section in which the biography is found is entitled *Kitāb al-bastah fī ḥulā madīnat Saraquṣṭah* ('The Book of Extension on the Ornaments of the City of Zaragoza'). In this section, the name of our author appears corrupted, in the form of Abū l-Ṭāhir Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Uškūrī. The *nisbah* form al-Uškūrī would imply a place-name Uškurkah, that does not exist. In this biography we are informed that that place lies in the east of al-Andalus and is associated with Zaragoza. Elsewhere in the *Muğrib* (II, 433), that same place appears transliterated as Uškurtah. Since some of the poems attributed to Abū l-Ṭāhir *Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad* (incorrect sequence) al-Uškūrī/Uškurtī are the same as those attributed by Ibn Bassām (*al-Daḥīrah*, Part 3, II, 909-912) to Abū l-Ṭāhir *Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf* (correct sequence) al-Aškūrī/Aškādīrī (see source [1], above), since al-Uškūrī/Uškurtī is presented as being a native from the region of Zaragoza, and since the poems attributed to him are in praise of the Banū Šumādīh, it seems not unreasonable to assume that we are dealing with one and the same person, the variant spellings of whose name are scribal corruptions for the name al-Aštarkūwī. (7) Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *al-Iḥālah fī aḥbār Ġarnāṭah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abdallāh 'Inān (Cairo, 1974), II, 521-522. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb was of Yemenī Arab descent. He was born in Loja in 713/1313, and educated in Granada. Late in life, he was accused of heresy and died, in Granada, strangled in prison, in 776/1375. See *E.I.* 2, III, 835-837. (8) Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Buḡyat al-wu'āt fī ṭabaqāt al-luḡawiyyīn wa-l-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut, 1964), I, 279, biogr. 514. Al-Suyūṭī was the most prolific Egyptian writer in the Mamlūk period. He lived between 849/1445 and 911/1505. See *E.I.* 1, VII, 573-575. (9) 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Aḥmad al-'Abbāsī, who died in 963/1556, and who, in his work on poetics entitled *Ma'āhid al-tanṣīṣ 'alā šawāhid al-talḥīṣ* (ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd [Beirut, 1980], III, 306), quotes two poems from al-Saraquṣṭī's *al-Maqāmāt al-luḏūmīyah* as examples of artistic excellence. (10) Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Naṣṣ al-ṭib min ḡuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1968), I, 291. Al-Maqqarī was born in Tlemcen in 986/1577, and died in Cairo in 1041/1632. See *E.I.* 2, VI, 187-188. (11) Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad Amīn Pāšā, al-Baḡdādī (Baḡdādli) (1255/1839-1339/1920), *Hadīyat al-'arīfīn: asmā' al-mu'allifīn wa-'āṭār al-muṣannifīn*, ed. Rifat Bilge and Ibnülemin Mahmud Kemal Inal (Istanbul, 1951-1955), II, 89a. See *E.I.* 2, IV, 193, and 'Supplement'.

⁴² They are: (11) Al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, who died at some time between 528/1134 and 55/1160, most probably in 529/1134. He was the author of two works on poetry: *Qalā'id al-'iqyān* and *Matmaḥ al-anfus*. The latter existed in three versions,

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|--|---|
| 1. Al-Faṭḥ [ibn Ḥāqān] (d. ca. 529/1134) | Cited by al-Ḍabbī |
| 2. Al-Ḥijārī (wrote 530/1135) | Cited by Ibn Saʿīd |
| 3. Ibn Bassām (d. 543/1147) | Contemporary |
| 4. Al-Šilbī (d. 550/1155) | Cited by Ibn Saʿīd |
| 5. Ibn Ġālib (left al-Andalus in 565/1169) | Cited by al-Maqqarī |
| 6. Ibn Ḥayr (d. 574/1179) | Personal acquaintance of the author |
| 7. Ibn Baškuwāl (d. 578/1183) | Personal acquaintance of the author |
| 8. Ibn Maḍāʾ (d. 592/1195) | Cited by Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, al-Suyūṭī |
| 9. Al-Ḍabbī (d. 599/1203) | Based on al-Faṭḥ [ibn Ḥāqān] |
| 10. Ibn Saʿīd (wrote 641/1243) | Based on al-Ḥijārī, al-Šilbī |
| 11. Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658/1260) | Based on Ibn Ḥayr, et al. |
| 12. Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 708/1308) | Based on Ibn al-Abbār; cited by al-Suyūṭī |
| 13. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb (d. 776/1375) | Based on Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn Maḍāʾ |
| 14. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) | Based on Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn Maḍāʾ |
| 15. Al-ʿAbbāsī (d. 963/1556) | Based on <i>al-Maḡāmāt al-luzūmiyah</i> |
| 16. Al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1631-1632) | Based on Ibn Ġālib |

large, medium, and small, of which only the last has survived. See *E.I.* 2, II, 838. (12) Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥijārī who, in 530/1135 finished his lost *Kitāb al-muṣhib fī ḡarāʾib al-Maḡrib*, accounting for events in al-Andalus between the conquest of 93/711 and the year 530/1135. This work was added to by several generations of members of the Banū Saʿīd family, and was finished in Egypt, in 641/1243, by Ibn Saʿīd al-Maḡribī, with the title of *al-Muḡrib fī ḥulā l-Maḡrib*. See *E.I.* 2, III, 926. (13) ʿUṭmān ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿUṭmān, Abū ʿAmr, ibn al-Imām al-Šilbī (d. 550/1155), author of *Simṭ al-jumān wa-siṭt al-laʿālī wa-siqṭ al-murjān*. See María Isabel Fierro Bello, *Historia de los autores y transmisores andalusíes (H.A.T.A.)*, (forthcoming). (14) Ibn Maḍāʾ, an Andalusī *faqīh* and grammarian born into a famous Cordovan family in 513/1119. He studied grammar in Seville and *ḥadīṭ* in Ceuta. The Almohad Caliph Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿmin appointed him *qāḍī al-jamāʿah*. He simplified the study of Arabic grammar, and was the most notable grammarian of his age. He died in 592/1195. See E. García Gómez, *Andalus*, XIII:1 (1948), 238-240 (*E.I.* 2, III, 855-856). (15) Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Garnāṭī, ibn Ġālib, lived in Granada in the sixth/twelfth century. He served the Almohad Abū Saʿīd ʿUṭmān ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿmin, and left al-Andalus in 565/1169-1170. He wrote the lost *Farḥat al-anfus fī taʾrīḥ al-Andalus*, which is extremely detailed in its account of the Arab tribal settlement of the Iberian Peninsula, and which is quoted by al-Maqqarī. See *E.I.* 2, III, 771-772. (16) Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Zubayr was born in Jaén in 627/1230 and died in Granada in 708/1308. He is described as “the *muhaddīṭ* of al-Andalus and the Maḡrib.” He left a *Šilat al-šilah*, which is a continuation of Ibn Baškuwāl’s *Kitāb al-šilah*. It is his only surviving work. See *E.I.* 2, III, 976 (where Ibn Baškuwāl’s *Kitāb al-šilah* is wrongly referred to as a *Takmilah*).

17. Al-Baġdādī (d. 1339/1920) Based on al-Suyūfī

The following are some of the few known highlights of our author's career: Al-Saraqusṭī was born, at a date unspecified by our sources, into a family from the Arab tribe of the Banū Tamīm, of which there were numerous members settled in al-Andalus, dating back to the period of the conquest.⁴³ His family had, at one time, been associated with the now abandoned fortress town of Estercuel de Ribaforada, in the province of Navarre, in the judicial district of Tudela, whence his name al-Aštarkūwī derives.⁴⁴ Let us further note that the word *estercuel* is an Aragonese form of which the Castilian cognate is *estiércol* (Lat. *stercoris* 'manure'). If we are to judge the town on the basis of its name's malodorous etymology, it must not have been a particularly important one. We do not know when al-Saraqusṭī's ancestors moved to Zaragoza. We can only surmise that our author must have been brought up, and received his early

⁴³ Al-Maqqarī, I, 291: "As for [the clan] of Tamīm ibn Murr ibn Udd ibn Ṭābiḥa ibn Ilyās ibn Muḍar, Ibn Ġālīb also mentioned that they are a numerous people in al-Andalus, and from them descended Abū l-Ṭāhir, the author of *al-Maḡāmāt al-luḏūmiyah*."

⁴⁴ Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḡīrah*, part 3, II, 909: "[He was] so named after a village of his in the province of Zaragoza." Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmilah*, p. 140: "[He was] called al-Aštarkūwī, because Aštarkūy is a fortress, in one of the districts of Tudela, where his ancestors originated." Compare, "ESTERCUEL: desp. en la prov. de Navarra, part. jud. de Tudela: SIT, á la der. del canal de Aragon sobre un barranco que lo separaba del pueblo de Ribaforada, al que fué agregado hace muchos años perdiendo su ant. nombre; su pobl. al tiempo de incorporarse, constaba de 30 vec. poco mas ó menos. Fué comprendido el ant. l. entre los que se concedió el fuero de Sobrarbe. El l. de Estercuel, que estuvo fundado junto a Ribaforada, fué uno de los que en 1117 se donaron por D. Alonso el Batallador á la c. de Tudela. La mezquita que en aquella pobl. tenían los moros, se adjudicó á la igl. cated. en 1121" (ESTERCUEL: A ghost-town in the province of Navarre, judicial district of Tudela, located to the right of the canal of Aragón overlooking a ravine that separated it from the town of Ribaforada, to which it was incorporated many years ago, thereby losing its original name. At the time when it was incorporated, it had more or less thirty inhabitants. The old town of Estercuel was among those to which the municipal charter of Sobrarbe was granted. The town of Estercuel, which was founded next to Ribaforada was one of those granted in 1117 by Don Alfonso el Batallador to the city of Tudela. The mosque that the Moors had in that town was awarded to the cathedral in 1121), Pascual Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y sus posesiones de ultramar*, VII, p. 615b. If we are to believe Ibn al-Abbār, who specifies that al-Saraqusṭī's ancestral village is located in the district of Tudela, that village should not be confused with another Estercuel in the district of Teruel (see, Madoz, *loc. cit.*).

education, in that city⁴⁵ where, one source assures us, “he enjoyed honor and status among the kings of the frontier, namely the Banū Hūd.”⁴⁶ These kings would have been the Arab dynasty of Zaragoza whose major rulers, al-Muqtadir, al-Mu’tamin, and al-Musta’in, reigned in orderly succession from 438/1046 to 503/1109.⁴⁷ The same source goes on to add that our author also had connections with other *mulūk al-tawā’if* “and that most of his panegyrics were devoted to al-Mu’tašim ibn Šumādiḥ, king of Almería” (r. 443/1052-484/1091),⁴⁸ a sovereign of illustrious Tujibi-Arab descent, who was himself related to the Zaragozaan dynasty. We thus begin to discern the profile of a young Arab poet who associated with and eulogized sovereigns of the politically privileged Arab ethnicity.

Beginning at a time again left unspecified in our sources, we find al-Saraqusṭī traversing the Iberian Peninsula in search of knowledge. He appears to have attended the classes of the great teachers of his age, at Córdoba, Granada, Játiva, Murcia, and Seville. In the course of his career, occasional sightings are made, as our author, for all the world like a character in one of his own *Maqāmāt*, pops up in one city after another, only to vanish, just as mysteriously as he had appeared. The following are some excerpts from his *curriculum vitae*:

(1) While composing an ode in praise of Raḥ al-Dawlah, himself a poet, as well as the son and vizier of al-Mu’tašim ibn Šumādiḥ, our author was observed on the road, traveling on his trusty camel, across the vast (if merely literary) deserts that stretch between Granada and Almería, on his way to visit Raḥ al-Dawlah in the latter city.⁴⁹ Since al-Mu’tašim died in 484/1091, and Raḥ al-Dawlah was not the son who succeeded him shortly before the Banū Šumādiḥ were

⁴⁵ Ibn Baškuwāl, II, 588: “Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Tamīmī was an inhabitant of Zaragoza who settled in Córdoba, was called Abū l-Ṭāhir, and was our friend.” Al-Ḍabbī, 517: “Al-Faṭḥ [Ibn Ḥāqān] referred to him as being “Zaragozaan with regard to his [physical] place of origin; Iraqī with regard to his [intellectual] homeland.” Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, II, 521: “He was one of the inhabitants of Zaragoza who visited Granada.”

⁴⁶ Ibn Sa‘īd, II, 447, citing the lost *Mushib* of al-Ḥijārī.

⁴⁷ See C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (New York, 1996), pp. 19-20.

⁴⁸ Ibn Sa‘īd, II, 447.

⁴⁹ Ibn Bassām, *vol. cit.*, pp. 911-912.

deposed by the Almoravids that same year, the camel-journey across the endless wastelands of Granada's literary landscape must have taken place, at very latest, before the death of Rafī' al-Dawlah's father.

(2) Al-Saraqusṭī corresponded with, and may even have met, Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī (468/1075-543/1148), an individual who had personally met the great philosopher and mystic al-Ġazālī (451/1059-504/1111) in Baghdad.⁵⁰ In the fields of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl* Ibn al-ʿArabī was a distinguished scholar in his own right, who wrote a book entitled *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*. In all likelihood, our author's correspondence with him took place not too long after Ibn al-ʿArabī returned from the Middle East and settled in Seville, which occurred in 493/1099.

(3) At an unspecified date, al-Saraqusṭī studied in Valencia with the grammarian and philosopher ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd of Badajoz (444/1052-521/1127),⁵¹ among whose lost works a *Commentary* of the *Saqt al-zand* by the skeptic poet al-Maʿarrī (362/973-449/1057) was criticized by Ibn al-ʿArabī, and provoked a surviving counterblast by Ibn al-Sīd. Al-Saraqusṭī also learned two lines of poetry from Ibn al-Sīd in Córdoba, where that teacher was sighted around the year 500/1106.⁵² It is important to note that Ibn al-Sīd had himself been a pupil of al-Maʿarrī, hence al-Saraqusṭī may be presumed to have enjoyed personal information about the great man whom he was later to emulate.⁵³

(4) During the years 508/1114 and 509/1115 al-Saraqusṭī surfaces in Murcia, attending the lectures of Abū ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī, also known as Ḥusayn ibn Firruh (Fierro) ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Saraqusṭī (444/1052-510/1120).⁵⁴ This scholar had spent nine years studying in the Middle East and, after his return to al-Andalus, taught *ḥadīth* in Murcia and Almería. His lectures seem to have been so popular

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Abbār, *Muʿjam*, vol. cit., p. 140.

⁵¹ Ibn Baṣkuwāl, vol. cit., p. 588; Ibn al-Abbār, *Muʿjam*, vol. cit., p. 140; Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, vol. cit., p. 521; al-Suyūṭī, vol. cit., p. 279.

⁵² See al-Saraqusṭī, *al-Maḡāmāt al-luṣūmīyah li-l-Saraqusṭī*, ed. Ibrāhīm Badr Aḥmad Dayf (Alexandria, 1982), p. 16.

⁵³ See *E.I.* 2, V, 927-935, at p. 929b.

⁵⁴ Ibn Baṣkuwāl, vol. cit., p. 588; Ibn al-Abbār, *Muʿjam*, vol. cit., p. 140; Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, vol. cit., p. 521; al-Suyūṭī, vol. cit., p. 279.

that he went on record as having trained at least 324 students.⁵⁵ We are even told that al-Saraqusṭī, who must have been a most devoted student, often took this teacher's courses over again "because of the length of time he remained attached to Abū 'Alī, and his extreme care in learning everything the latter transmitted."⁵⁶

(5) Between the years 514/1120 and 517/1123, a certain Ayyūb ibn Muḥammad ibn Wahb ibn Muḥammad ibn Wahb ibn Bakr ibn Sahl ibn Ayyūb of Zaragoza (d. 576/1180), who had fled his native city when the Christians captured it in 512/1118, found himself in Granada, where he claims to have met and studied with al-Saraqusṭī.⁵⁷

(6) In Córdoba, Aḥmad ibn 'Ubayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḍā' (513/1119-592/1195), the greatest grammarian of the Almohad age, "acquired knowledge from [al-Saraqusṭī]; he learned from him the *Kāmil* of al-Mubarrad."⁵⁸ Al-Saraqusṭī "died in Córdoba at noon on <Wednesday>, on the 21st of Jumādā I, in the year 538 [December 8, 1143], as a result of a chronic illness that troubled him for close to three years."⁵⁹ If we assume that, with the onset of his fatal malady, he took early retirement from his teaching duties roughly three years before his death, that is to say, around the year 535/1140, this would mean that the teacher-student relationship between him and Ibn Maḍā' could not have existed after the latter's twenty-second birthday, and that it probably flourished before then. Ibn Maḍā' was al-Saraqusṭī's most brilliant stu-

⁵⁵ Ḥusayn ibn Firruh ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Ṣadafī, Abū 'Alī was born in Zaragoza in 444/1052. He studied in Valencia and Almería. In 481/1088 he traveled to the East, where he spent nine years studying in Mecca, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. After returning to al-Andalus in 490/1096, he taught *ḥadīṭ* in Murcia and Almería, where he also served as judge. He died in the battle of Cutanda, near Daroca, in 514/1120. See Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'jam*, pp. v-x. He was a student of Abū 'Alī al-Ḡassānī, and a major Andalusī representative of *ḥadīṭ* studies in his period. He taught the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Buḥārī and Muslim, and the *Jāmi'* of Tirmidī. The *Mu'jam* lists 315 of his students. See María Jesús Viguera Molins, et al., *Los reinos de taifas: al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, Historia de España Menéndez Pidal, Vol. VIII (Madrid, 1994), p. 515.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'jam*, vol. cit., p. 140.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmilah*, I, 199, biogr. 532.

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, vol. cit., p. 521.

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, vol. cit., p. 521. Compare Ibn al-Abbār, *Mu'jam*, vol. cit., p. 141; *Takmilah*, vol. cit., p. 619.

dent, who gratefully declares: "It was upon [al-Saraqustī] that I relied in the *Commentary* [or: commentary?] to al-Mubarrad's *Kāmil*, because of his thorough familiarity with philology and the Arabic language."⁶⁰

(7) Ibn Maḍā's precociousness pales in comparison with that of the Cordovan scholar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥalaṣah al-Ḥimyarī, known as Abū Ja'far (524/1129-610/1213). This individual was a preacher in the Grand Mosque of Córdoba, where he taught for many years, and where he died at his pulpit, after collapsing in the middle of a sermon he was delivering, that had to be completed by his son. He lived to the age of eighty-six, and was the last surviving transmitter of al-Saraqustī's works to have heard them actually dictated by their author in person. According to any reasonable calculations, he could hardly have learned said works from his teacher after the age of eleven, when the latter became ill and, as I have assumed above, withdrew from his teaching activities. Therefore, Abū Ja'far must have been a child prodigy. Mere youth did not, however, prevent this octogenarian from transmitting al-Saraqustī's *al-Maqāmāt al-luḏūmīyah* and his *Kitāb al-musalsal*, about both of which I will have more to say below, to another Abū Ja'far, named Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī of Córdoba (d. 646/1248) who, in turn, transmitted them to his friend, the Valencian writer famous for his scholarship, and notorious for his Šī'i sympathies, namely, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Abbār (595/1199-658/1260). The transmission of at least part of one of these two difficult works took place in Tunis, on Thursday, 21 of Rabī' II, 646 (August 20, 1248).⁶¹

From al-Saraqustī's rather sketchy *curriculum vitae*, a profile does begin to emerge, however, and can be summarized as follows: Born into an Arab family settled in Estercuel that, at some unspecified date, moved to Zaragoza, the author was brought up in that city, where he attained a certain level of prestige at the court of the Banū Hūd. After spending years traveling throughout the major cities of al-Andalus, to study with the most distinguished scholars of the period, he took up residence in Córdoba which, after the fall of

⁶⁰ Al-Suyūṭī, p. 279.

⁶¹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmilah*, I, 102, biogr. 263.

Zaragoza to the Christians (512/1118), at very latest, must have become his home base. There, he died in 538/1143, after having produced at least one exceptional student. But there is more to the matter: His teachers were interested in philosophy, mysticism, *ḥadīṭ*, *uṣūl*, and *ta'wīl*. One of them had known al-Ġazālī personally, while another had been a student of the sceptic al-Ma'arrī.⁶² What all this seems to add up to, is that, within the generally conservative, Mālikī dominated, intellectual panorama of al-Andalus, our author studied primarily with scholars whom, today, we would describe as being progressive, that is to say, he studied with individuals who were eager to explore the latest developments in their field and discipline, rather than closing their minds to all innovations.⁶³ Witness the alacrity with which our author got in touch with Ibn al-ʿArabī, who had just arrived from the Middle East, bearing with him the most recent developments in the Ġazālīan revival of the religious sciences. Another point needs to be made: None of our sources allow us to conclude that al-Saraqūṣṭī ever held an official post, religious or administrative, of any kind whatsoever and, therefore, we are not justified in making such an assumption.⁶⁴ Indeed, the author gives the impression of having been a private citizen without a government position, who supported himself through his teaching, if not his inherited wealth.

Works by the Author

At this point, let us discuss al-Saraqūṣṭī's works, in order to determine what the meager information we have gleaned about his life

⁶² In whose direction al-Saraqūṣṭī bows when he entitles one of his works *al-Maqāmāt al-luṣūmīyah*, after the collection of poems by Abū l-ʿAlā' al-Ma'arrī entitled *Luzūm mā lā yalzam*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo, 1982).

⁶³ On the Mālikī resistance to innovation in al-Andalus, see María Isabel Fierro Bello, *La heterodoxia en al-Andalus durante el periodo omeya* (Madrid, 1987).

⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥayr, who claims to have learned *al-Maqāmāt al-luṣūmīyah* directly from the author, does, however, refer to him as a secretary (*kātib*), as does Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, one of his later biographers. Neither author specifies who the author's employer may have been. All his other biographers refer to him as a grammarian, man of letters, philologist, poet, and lexicographer. Insofar as the last discipline is concerned, he features as an oft-cited authority in the great medieval Arabic lexica.

and thought can shed on them, and vice-versa. Here are some of the works listed in his bibliography:

(1) Two of our sources quote Ibn Maḍā' in association with a *Commentary* of al-Mubarrad's *adab* work entitled *al-Kāmil fī l-luḡah*, which Ibn Maḍā' claims to have studied with al-Saraqusṭī. In fact, the text of the two sources is ambiguous on this point, and could be taken to mean no more than that Ibn Maḍā' studied the *Kāmil* with al-Saraqusṭī who, in turn, commented on, or explained its subtleties to him.⁶⁵ By the time we get to the very late source represented by al-Baḡdādī (d. 1339/1920), these references have been understood unambiguously to mean "[al-Saraqusṭī] composed the *Commentary* to the *Kāmil fī l-luḡah* by al-Mubarrad,"⁶⁶ but this statement is modern, and no more than one scholar's interpretation of an essentially ambiguous text. If such a *Commentary* was composed by our author, it has not survived or, at least, it has not been identified. Therefore, the existence and attribution of this work to him must remain in the limbo of conjecture.⁶⁷

(2) Aside from the poetry contained in al-Saraqusṭī's *al-Maḡāmāt al-luḏūmīyah*, which is largely cynical in the ethics it expresses, and presents a special problem of interpretation, insofar as it is imbedded within a picaresque context, several of his biographers quote excerpts from other poems by him. Some biographers even overlap with one another in quoting more or less extensive passages from the same poems, while one of them states that "his poetry is abun-

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb: "The judge Abū l-'Abbās ibn Maḍā' acquired knowledge from him; he learned from him the *Kāmil* of al-Mubarrad. [Ibn Maḍā'] said: 'I relied on [al-Saraqusṭī] in writing it down'." Al-Suyūṭī: "Abū l-'Abbās ibn Maḍā' acquired knowledge from him. He said: 'It was upon him that I relied in the *Commentary* [or: commentary?] to al-Mubarrad's *Kāmil*, because of his thorough familiarity with philology and the Arabic language'." Al-Mubarrad was a famous eastern philologist. Born in Basra in 210/826, he studied there, and refers repeatedly to the famous Basran Mu'tazilite, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), whom he met in person. After 246/860, al-Mubarrad settled in Baghdad, where he died in 286/900. He was the leader of the Basran, as opposed to Kufan, school of philologists. His *Kāmil* is a major *adab* work. See *E.I.* 2, VII, 279-282.

⁶⁶ Al-Baḡdādī, II, 89a.

⁶⁷ There exist some "glosses and critical remarks by an anonymous author, following Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawṣī (d. 494/1101) [with whom al-Saraqusṭī studied], and Abū l-Walīd al-Waqqāṣī (d. 489/1096) see H. Ritter in *Oriens*, ii (1949), 275-6 . . ." (*E.I.*, 2, VII, 280). Could this anonymous author be al-Saraqusṭī?

dant and has been collected into a *ḍiwwān*.⁶⁸ In total, I have been able to gather ten fragments.⁶⁹ Five of these are love-songs to which the theme of wine-drinking is sometimes attached, whereas the other five are panegyrics to Raḥī al-Dawlah and must, therefore, have been composed before 484/1091.⁷⁰ The love-songs range in type from the 'Uḍrī to that of the 'Abbāsīd Moderns, while both types are characterized by the delicacy of workmanship typical of the fifth/eleventh-century Andalusī poetic style. The panegyrics are heavily influenced by the work of the 'Abbāsīd forerunners in the genre.⁷¹ Judging from the few surviving fragments, it is clear that al-Saraqusṭī must have been a poet of some distinction. Let me discuss one particularly telling example of his poetic achievements:

Our sources inform us of the existence of an earlier poet named Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥalīfah al-Qurṭubī, known as al-Ḥakīm al-Miṣrī (d. 496/1102), who flourished at the Toledan court of the Banū Dī l-Nūn until the fall of Toledo to Alfonso VI of León and Castile in 478/1085, after which he moved to Seville.⁷² This poet composed the following poem [*basīt*, *-ātū*]:

tawrīdu ḥaddi-ki li-l-aḥḍāqī laddātu / 'alay-hi min 'anbari l-aṣḍāgi
lāmātu

nīrānu hajri-ki li-l-'uṣṣāqī nāru laẓān / lākinna waṣla-ki 'in wāṣalti
jannātu

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, p. 521.

⁶⁹ See James T. Monroe, "Al-Saraqusṭī, ibn al-Aṣṭarkūwī: Andalusī Lexicographer, Poet, and Author of *al-Maqāmāt al-luẓūmiyya*," pp. 31-37 where they are all translated.

⁷⁰ Abū Yahyā Raḥī al-Dawlah was a son and vizier of al-Mu'taṣim ibn Ṣumādīh, king of Almería. He was a poet in his own right. For examples of his poetry, see al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus wa-masrah al-ta'annus fī mulah ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣawābikah (Beirut, 1983), pp. 222-225.

⁷¹ For the latter, see the seminal work by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych: *Abū Tammām & the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden, 1991).

⁷² He was an Andalusī vizier, physician, and poet known as al-Ḥakīm al-Miṣrī ('the Egyptian physician') because of his profession, and because of an unusually protracted sojourn in Egypt. Upon his return to al-Andalus, he attended the Toledan court of al-Ma'mūn ibn Dī l-Nūn (r. 435/1043-467/1075). When the dynasty of the Banū Dī l-Nūn came to an end with the fall of Toledo, al-Miṣrī moved to the court of al-Mu'tamid of Seville (r. 461/1069-484/1091), and eventually died in 496/1102. See Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḥīrah*, part 4, I, 342-359; Al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus*, p. 187; Ibn Sa'īd al-Maḡribī, *al-Muḡrib fī hulā l-Maḡrib*, I, 128-131.

ka-anna-mā l-rāḥu wa-l-rāḥātu taḥmilu-hā / budūru timmin wa-'aydi
l-šarbi hālātu

ḥuṣāṣatun mā taraknā l-mā'a yaqtulu-hā / 'illā li-taḥyā bi-hā min-nā
ḥuṣāṣātu

qad kāna fī kā'si-hā min qabli-hā tiqlun / fa-ḥaffa 'id muli'at min-hā
zujājātu⁷³

The blushing of your cheek is a pleasure to the glances. / Upon it lie
lāms from the ambergris of your temples.

The flames of your avoidance are a hellfire to lovers, / but your
union, when you grant one, is a paradise.

It is as if the wine that palms bear forth, / were full moons of per-
fection, and the hands of the drinkers were halos.

It is a last drop of wine that we allowed water to kill,⁷⁴ / only that
the last sparks of our lives might revive through its influence.

There was a heaviness in its *krater* before then, / but it lost weight as
glasses were filled with it.

The poem combines the themes of love and winedrinking. It is based on several *topoi* well-known to Arabic poetry of this genre, that are handled with unusual skill and rhetorical embellishment. On the most elementary level, let us note that, since the wine is actually consumed and the beloved is of the available variety, both the drinking and the lovemaking are largely of the fulfilled type. The poem is externally celebrative and descriptive. Private human feelings do not enter into it directly. In the same meter and rhyme, a second poet, named Abū l-Faḍl Ḥasdāy ibn Yūsuf ibn Ḥasdāy al-Isrā'īlī (*fl. ca.* 438/1046-503/1110) composed an imitation. Abū l-Faḍl was a secretary and minister to the Banū Hūd of Zaragoza,

⁷³ Source: al-Faḥr ibn Ḥāqān, *Qalā'id al-'iqyān*, ed. Muḥammad al-'Itābī (Tunis, 1966), p. 210. Here, the poem is conflated with the one immediately following below, composed by Abū l-Faḍl Ḥasdāy, and the entire composite is attributed to the latter. In Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḥīrah*, part 3, I, 492, however, '*ahdun li-lubnā* . . . is described as an independent poem in its own right, composed by Abū l-Faḍl Ḥasdāy in imitation of *tawrīdu ḥaddi-ki* . . . , while the latter is attributed independently to al-Ḥakīm al-Miṣrī.

⁷⁴ I.e., "to dilute." I retain the basic meaning of *qatala* in order to convey the elegant word-antithesis (*tibāq*) between *kill* and *revive*.

and an older contemporary of al-Saraqustī. It is entirely possible that they knew each other personally. He was of Jewish origin and converted to Islam, so the story goes, because he fell in love with a Muslim girl.⁷⁵ His imitation of the previous poem is the following:

‘ahdun li-lubnā taqāḍat-hu l-amānātu / bānat wa-mā quḍiyat min-
hā⁷⁶ lubānātu

yudnī l-tawahhumu li-l-muštāqi mumtazijan / min al-wiṣālī⁷⁷ wa-fi l-
awhāmi rāḥātu

tuqḍā ‘idātun idā habba⁷⁸ l-karā wa-’idā / habba n-nasīmu fa-qad
tuhdā taḥīyātu

[zawrun yu‘allilu qalba l-mustahāmi bi-hi / dahran wa-qad baqiyat
fi l-nafsi ḥājātu]⁷⁹

la‘alla ‘atba l-layālī ‘an ya’ūda ‘ilā / ‘utbā fa-tublaḡa ‘awṭārun wa-
laddātu

⁷⁵ He served al-Muqtadir (r. 438/1046-474/1081), al-Mu’tamin (r. 474/1081-478/1085), and al-Musta’in (r. 478/1085-503/1110). Concerning his conversion to Islam, it has been suggested more cynically, in modern times, that he is more likely to have undergone it in order to qualify for the vizierate, a position that non-Muslims were sometimes barred from holding. He was a boon companion of al-Muqtadir, whom he eulogized, and was appointed to write to all the most illustrious Andalusis, inviting them to the lavish marriage-of-the-century that took place, in Ramaḍān, 477/January, 1085, between the future al-Musta’in and a daughter of Abū Bakr of Valencia. See Henri Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en arabe classique au XI^e siècle: ses aspects généraux, ses principaux thèmes, et sa valeur documentaire*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1953), p. 487, and *passim*. At this time, the Cid was banished from Castile in 474/1081. During the last year of his reign, al-Muqtadir, who also built the Aljafería, hired him as a mercenary. Later, the Christian champion served al-Mu’tamin and, in 487/1094, entered Valencia, which was retaken from him by the Almoravids in 495/1102. See María Jesús Viguera Molins, et al., *Los reinos de taifas: al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, pp. 72-80. Zaragoza was conquered by Alfonso I el Batallador and Ramiro II of Aragón in 512/1118, thereby allowing for devastating Christian inroads into Muslim territory, reaching as far as Granada and Seville.

⁷⁶ *Al-Ḍaḥīrah*: min-hu.

⁷⁷ *Qalā’id*: muntazijān min al-umūr (‘fleeing from matters’); *al-Ḍaḥīrah*: mumtazijan min al-wiṣāl (‘communicating [news] about the love-union’). See R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 3d ed. (Leiden, 1967), II, 587a: “mumtazij communicatif, Bc.”

⁷⁸ *Qalā’id*: ‘āda (‘returns’); *al-Ḍaḥīrah*: habba (‘awakens, bestirs itself’).

⁷⁹ This line is found only in *Qalā’id*.

bušrā taḥaqququ mā zāra l-ḥayālu bi-hi⁸⁰ / fa-rubba-mā ṣadaqat tilka l-manāmātu⁸¹

Lubnā made a vow, the fulfillment of which, commitments required.
/ She departed without fulfilling any of my desires.

Delusion draws near to the pining lover, communicating news about
the love-union, / and comfort may be taken in delusions.

Promises are fulfilled when slumber bestirs itself, / and when the
breeze bestirs itself, greetings are sent.

[A dream-visit comforts the heart of the spellbound lover for some
time, / while longings have remained unfulfilled within his soul.]

Perhaps Time's reproof will turn into a gracious favor, / so that
desires and pleasures may be attained.

Let good news confirm what the dream-image brought on its visit, /
for sometimes such dreams come true.

It is striking that this poem, on a thematic level, has nothing in common with the poem it purports to imitate. The kind of love expressed here is of the unfulfilled, 'Udri variety. The Lady has promised to satisfy the poet's desires, but has departed without doing so. As a result, the poet is in a state of deep despair, and finds comfort in delusions produced by visions of the beloved seen in dreams. He is not in control of the situation, knows nothing about the true whereabouts of the Lady, and can only hope that his dreams will come true. He is portrayed, in short, as a plaything of Fate; as one lacking any kind of control over his own destiny.

Finally, al-Saraqūṭī composed an imitation of Abū l-Faḍl's poem, once again, in the same rhyme and meter:⁸²

wa'dun li-'ilwata 'an tuqḍā lubānātu / 'alwat bi-hā yawma waški l-bayni 'allātu

⁸⁰ *Qalā'id*: ḥattā nafūza bi-mā jāda l-ḥayālu bi-hi ('Until we obtain what the dream image has lavished on us'); *al-Daḥīrah*: bušrā taḥaqququ mā zāra l-ḥayālu bi-hi ('Let good news confirm what the dream-image brought on its visit').

⁸¹ Sources: Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḥīrah*, part 3, I, 492; al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, *Qalā'id*, p. 210. See R. Dozy, "manāmāh, pl. āt et manāyim, rêve, songe, Voc., Alc. (sueño lo que soñamos)," *Supplément*, II, 740b.

⁸² Source: Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḥīrah*, part 3, II, 912.

lam turđi-hā min-ka 'anfāsun muqaṭṭa'atun / ḥattā tuqaṭṭa'a 'aṭwāqun
wa-labbātu

qālat wa-qad abšarat min bayni-hā jaza'ī / lā tay'asanna fa-'inna d-
dahra ḥālātu

wa-fi sabīli l-hawā wa-š-šawqī mā šana'at / rawā'i'u l-bayni lā taḥzun-
ka raw'ātu

'awwiḍ rajā'a-ka min ya'sin [wa-min taraḥin] / fa-li-l-layālī wa-'in
bā'adna karrātu

baynī wa-bayna-ka 'ahdun sawfa 'aḥfaẓu-hu / wa-rubba-mā ḍuyyi'at
yawman amānātu

'Ilwāh made a promise that desires would be fulfilled. / Misfortunes
distracted her, on the day of impending departure.

Your rending sighs did not satisfy her, / until your collar and breast
were rent asunder.

She said, when she saw my anguish at parting from her: / "Despair
not, for Fate is variable,

And, for the sake of love and passion that the terrors of separation
produce, / be not grieved by any further fears.

Replace your despair [and distress] with hope because, / although
the nights may well depart, they can experience reversals.

Between you and me there is a vow I pledge to keep, / even though
commitments are sometimes broken."

In this example, the imitation goes far beyond the mere metricality of the two previous poems; it exploits the same theme of parting, uses the same vocabulary and syntactic constructions in alluding to the swearing of oaths and fulfillment of promises as does that of Abū l-Faḍl. Both poems deal with unfulfilled love. Yet the two situations are entirely different. Here, the Lady has sworn to fulfill the poet's desires, but Fate has taken her from him before she has been able to do so. Unlike the case of Abū l-Faḍl's poem, this one shows us the Lady actually reassuring the poet. The entire second half of the poem contains her message to him. Fate, she is saying, takes me away from you. There is nothing we can do about that. But Fate is variable and, just as it takes me away, it can bring

me back to you. There is no way in which we can control the vicissitudes of Fate, but we can control our faithfulness to one another in the interim. The ending of the poem is remarkable: "Between you and me there is a vow I pledge to keep, even though commitments are sometimes broken." In other words, in opposition to the blind fatalism of the previous poem, and without denying that there are certain areas of our lives in which we are, indeed, under the control of Fate, our author seems to be exploring other areas of the human experience in which we do exert control over our lives. The poet is, to put matters differently, exploring the interplay between steadfast love and a fate-controlled, mutable world, and suggesting that there are certain areas of life in which we are capable of making choices based on Free Will.

Classical Arabic love poetry may be read (albeit anachronistically) with Romantic eyes, as if it revealed the personal, subjective emotions of the poet. It may also be read as a tradition that is strongly rooted in fixed conventions that often serve as a metaphor or model for other areas of life, including the religious and the political.⁸³ The 'Udri poetry of the early Umayyad period, portrays an ideal lover, whose love is eternal, predestined, and frustratingly unconsummated. He is faithful to a single Lady who, in turn, is as arbitrary in her behavior as she is indifferent to his plight. Such a conception of love departs considerably from the one that prevailed in pre-Islamic poetry, and it would not have been possible without the rise of Islam, since the concept of eternal love would have been unthinkable without the concept of eternal life, on which 'Udri poetry rests, and which Islam introduced to the Arabs. Furthermore, the relationship of the submissive lover to his Lady is, in some respects, a metaphor and a model for the relationship of the submissive Muslim to his deity. This is why the mystics of Islam, who were quick to see the religious possibilities inherent in 'Udri poetry, swiftly appropriated it for purposes having nothing to do with human love. 'Udri poetry may even be a metaphor and a model for the relationship between subject and ruler during the reign of the Umayyad dynasty, insofar as the latter came to power in somewhat controversial circumstances

⁸³ This argument is made, for Elizabethan literature, in Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton, 1978).

and, consequently, promoted the doctrine of predestination in order to justify its reign in the eyes of its opponents.⁸⁴

(3) In several passages, Ibn al-Abbār informs us that al-Saraqustī edited the *Dīwān* of Ibn ‘Ammār (422/1031-476/1083), whom he may well have met, either at the court of al-Muqtadir ibn Hūd of Zaragoza, or at that of his successor, al-Mu’tamin, during one of Ibn ‘Ammār’s various appearances in that city.⁸⁵ Ibn al-Abbār writes: “[al-Saraqustī] compiled Ibn ‘Ammār’s poetry, and arranged it alphabetically, by rhymes. There is no question that he searched for it in all the right places and exhausted every effort in gathering it, but it would not have been possible for him to do so, had Ibn ‘Ammār not panegyricized al-Mu’taḍid. Yet I believe al-Saraqustī did it all as a service to al-Mu’taḍid’s son al-Mu’tamid.”⁸⁶ Let me summarize the well-known tragedy underlying these words: Ibn ‘Ammār was a poet of humble birth whose talent was noticed and appreciated by al-Mu’taḍid of Seville (r. 433/1042-461/1069). The latter became his patron and introduced his newfound panegyrist to his son, the future poet-king al-Mu’tamid. The two poets became inseparable friends and, were we to take one satirical poem by Ibn ‘Ammār at face value, they were even lovers. Eventually, after al-Mu’tamid succeeded to his father’s throne, that poem about the new king, written in his friend’s handwriting, reached al-Mu’tamid. The two quarreled, and the monarch first imprisoned, and then killed his former friend by repeatedly striking him with an axe.⁸⁷ In light of these circumstances, what our source is telling us is that, in collecting the scattered poems by Ibn ‘Ammār into a *dīwān*, al-Saraqustī needed the cooperation of al-Mu’tamid, which he would not have been able to obtain, had it not been for the fact that Ibn ‘Ammār had eulogized al-Mu’tamid’s father, thereby showering prestige upon an otherwise lackluster lineage. This implies that the *Dīwān* must have been compiled, at the very earliest, after the poet’s

⁸⁴ It goes without saying that the love poetry under discussion is the product of a male-dominated society insofar as it portrays women, not as they are, but as men would have them be.

⁸⁵ For a biography of Ibn ‘Ammār, see A. R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and its Relations with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (Baltimore, 1946), pp. 154-163.

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Abbār, *Kitāb al-ḥullāh al-siyarā*, II, 134, biogr. 133 (‘Ibn ‘Ammār’).

⁸⁷ Nykl, *loc. cit.*

death, which took place in 476/1083, and at the very latest, before al-Mu'tamid was deposed by the Almoravids in 484/1091, after which time his cooperation and involvement in the project would not have been possible, since he was banished to Aghmat in Morocco, where he died.

The *Dīwān* of Ibn 'Ammār existed in two Andalusi recensions: One by al-Saraqustī, and another, now lost, by Abū l-Qāsim al-Šilbī (from Silves, in modern Portugal). Aside from these two recensions, Ibn Bassām selected what he considered to be Ibn 'Ammār's best poems, and included them in his *Nuḥbat al-iḥtiyār fī aṣ'ār Dī l-wizāratayn Ibn 'Ammār*. Although this collection is also lost, it is not unlikely that those of Ibn 'Ammār's poems included in Ibn Bassām's *al-Daḥīrah*, which has survived, are the same as those that were included in his *Nuḥbat al-iḥtiyār*.⁸⁸ In the process of reconstructing the poet's *Dīwān* from surviving sources, Professor Ṣalāḥ Ḥālīṣ identified, in the library of the Qarawīyīn Mosque in Fez, fourteen pages from a *Dīwān* of Ibn 'Ammār, containing a number of *qaṣīdahs* and short poems written in the Andalusi script and arranged alphabetically by rhymes. However, these pages were in such a ruinous state of deterioration, that they proved difficult for him to read. They had been recovered from the rubble of a collapsed library in the Mosque. Although they were in too poor a state of preservation to allow the editor to extract whole poems from them, they did prove useful to him in emending and completing a number of texts found in other sources. Because the poems contained in the fourteen pages are arranged alphabetically by rhymes, thereby suggesting that they derive from a *dīwān*, and because they differ from those contained in Ibn Bassām's *al-Daḥīrah*, Professor Ḥālīṣ is inclined to think, with all due caution, that the fourteen pages from the library of the Qarawīyīn Mosque may be all that survives, or has so far been discovered, of al-Saraqustī's recension of the poetry of Ibn 'Ammār.⁸⁹

(4) One work by al-Saraqustī that has survived in its entirety is his *Kitāb al-musalsal fī ḡarīb luḡat al-'Arab* ('The Book of Concatenation,

⁸⁸ See *E.I.* 2, III, 705-706, at p. 706b.

⁸⁹ See Ṣalāḥ Ḥālīṣ, *Muḥammad ibn 'Ammār al-Andalusī* (Baghdād, 1957), pp. 175-180.

on Rare Words in the Language of the Arabs').⁹⁰ It comprises fifty chapters, each of which begins with a poetic quotation containing a rare word. For that word, the author then provides a synonym with a double meaning, the second of which is then defined by another word with a double meaning, and so on. In English, the process could be illustrated as follows: a fish of the genus *soleidae* is a *sole*, which also means *single*, which also means *bachelor*, which also means *graduate*, which also means *vessel*, which also means *ship*, which also means *fortune*, which also means *wealth*, which also means *money*, which also means *evil* . . . etc. Following the above pattern, the Arabic sequence stretches out over the entire chapter, and the last word in the chain is then illustrated, in context, with an example provided by another poetic quotation.

Al-Saraqusṭī wrote this (seemingly) bizarre work to improve upon another of its kind, possibly the first example of the genre, which had been compiled almost two centuries earlier, by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid Abū 'Umar al-Muṭarriz, al-Zāhid (261/874-345/956) of Baghdad, who had, in turn, been a student of the Kufan philologist Ṭa'lab (d. 292/904).⁹¹ Al-Muṭarriz composed a book entitled *Kitāb al-mudāḥal fī l-luḡah* ('The Book of Interconnectedness in Language'),⁹² the raw material for which seems to have been drawn largely from Ṭa'lab's lecture notes, which raises a side-issue, that I shall not address, concerning whose this work actually is. Be that as it may, the book disseminated under al-Muṭarriz's name incurred al-Saraqusṭī's disapproval on the grounds that its author failed to treat the subject with the exhaustiveness it deserved.⁹³ Al-

⁹⁰ Ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jawād and Ibrāhīm al-Dusūqī l-Bassāṭī (Cairo, 1981).

⁹¹ He was a professional *adīb*, a philologist from Kufa, and a rival of al-Mubarrad (d. 291/904). See *E.I.* 2, I, 590.

⁹² Ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jawād (Cairo, 1956).

⁹³ "Among the works taught by me was the *Kitāb al-mudāḥal fī l-luḡah* by [the late] Abū 'Umar al-Muṭarriz—may God have mercy on him. Nonetheless, I considered him to be of little value, nor was I able to grasp either his minimum or his maximum from [the book], for I considered that [the author] had presented an opinion the fullness of which had not been treated exhaustively, and a target which his arrows had failed to hit. Perhaps he merely improvised [his book]; [perhaps] his riding-camels sped too swiftly in [composing] it, and he failed to smooth its rough spots, to correct its meter, to treat its main points thoroughly, or to exhaust its bounteous supplies of milk, so that the hastiness of

Muṭarriz's work, as it has come down to us, lacks a prologue in which the author might have explained the reasons why he composed his book. Fortunately, he had a student, who followed in his footsteps, and who wrote a work of his own, on the same subject. His name was Abū l-Ṭayyib 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn 'Alī (d. 351/962), and his book was entitled *Šajar al-durr fī tadāḥul al-kalām bi-l-mā'ānī l-muḥtalifah* ("The Tree of Pearls, on the Relationship of Words Having Different Meanings").⁹⁴ In contrast to his more reticent teacher, Abū l-Ṭayyib does preface his book with some introductory remarks. He begins:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Praise be to God, with the praise of one requesting His increase, believing in His unity [*tawḥīd*], and giving credence to His promise of reward [*wa'd*] and threat of punishment [*wa'id*]. May God bless Muḥammad, the seal of the prophets and true guide to the straightest of paths, and his family, the keys to the true religion and lamps in the dark.⁹⁵

The above doxology points in two directions: (1) By invoking God's Unity (*tawḥīd*) and Justice (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*, the doctrine of "the promise of reward for good deeds, and the threat of retribution for evildoing"), the author is implying that the system of belief

his milking prevented [the full flow of those supplies], and his large buckets fell short of pouring forth their true abundance. Therefore, [the author's shortcomings] inspired me to continue what he had begun, and to strengthen that part of [the project] which he had outlined and initiated, so I summarized the subject in fifty chapters, beginning each of [my own] chapters with [a quotation from] Arabic poetry. After that, I concluded each chapter with another quotation, and furnished whatever *locus probans* it was possible to provide [in order to explain the meaning] of the [rare] words [contained in my quotations]. In doing so, I did not rely upon agreement [with my predecessor's views], nor did I make any attempt to compete [with him], for I freely acknowledge the superiority of my predecessor, I recognize the indebtedness of a runaway slave [to his master], I laud, in [the author], his having begun from scratch, and I pray that he will enjoy the light showers and heavy downpours [of gratitude that he deserves]," al-Saraquṣṭī, *Kitāb al-musalsal fī ḡarīb luḡat al-'Arab*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jawād and Ibrāhīm al-Dusūqī l-Bassāṭī (Cairo, 1981), pp. 34-36.

⁹⁴ Ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jawād, *Daḥā'ir al-'Arab*, no. 21 (Cairo, 1957). Abū l-Ṭayyib 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn 'Alī al-'Askarī, al-Ḥalabī was born in 'Askar Mukarram, grew up there, traveled to Baghdad, then moved to Aleppo where he settled down, until he was killed when the Byzantines entered Aleppo in 351/962. He studied with Abū 'Umar Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Zāhid, al-Muṭarriz, al-Baḡdādī (261/874-345/956), (*Šajar al-durr*, pp. 16, 20).

⁹⁵ *Šajar al-durr*, p. 57.

he espouses is specifically that of the theological school known as the Mu'tazilah, although it should be indicated that he was writing a century after the Mu'tazilah had been removed from their former position of political power in the 'Abbāsid empire.⁹⁶ (2) By refraining from invoking the Companions and Supporters of the Prophet, while at the same time calling down blessings on the latter's family, he may even be indicating Šrī leanings. He goes on to say:

Knowledge is both easy and difficult, tractable and intractable, one cannot grasp the easy part of it without knowing the difficult. On the contrary, a thorough investigation of its tractable part can only be reached by uncovering its intractable part. The one who really understands the two and penetrates them deeply can lavish upon the seeker of its easy part what the latter has sought, and upon the one who desires to reach its difficult part, the way to be in contact with it. It is God Himself whom I ask to include us among those who reveal the tractable part of what knowledge He has granted, to him who desires it, while I seek the satisfaction of Him who grants it as a favor and benefaction. And [I also ask Him to include us] among those who make apparent the intractable, taking as a model His words—may His glory be exalted—: “As for the blessing of your Lord, declare it.” and to reconcile us in words and deeds with what brings us near and close to Him, draws us close to His satisfaction, and helps us to do so. He is indeed Magnanimous, Generous, Close-at-hand, Responsive, Answering. God alone suffices us, and what an excellent Manager He is!⁹⁷

The distinction between the easy and the difficult aspects of knowledge is based upon the distinction between the exoteric (*ḥaqīqī*, *zāhir*) and the esoteric (*majāzī*, *bāṭin*) meanings of the holy text, introduced into theological discussions by the Mu'tazilah, in their attempt to interpret the Qur'ān allegorically, a procedure known in Arabic as *ta'wīl*. Since it was essential, in the view of the Mu'tazilah, to defend the principle of God's Justice, it followed that, if God was just, He could not punish humans for committing sins He Himself had forced them to commit. Therefore, the Mu'tazilah were constrained to uphold the doctrine of Free Will against the traditional

⁹⁶ See D. Gimaret, “Mu'tazila,” *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793.

⁹⁷ *Šajar al-durr*, pp. 57-58.

believers in Predestination. In so doing, the main problem the Mu'tazilah had to face was the fact that the Qur'ān did not particularly favor the doctrine of Free Will; on the contrary, most of the Qur'ānic passages that touch upon this issue favor the doctrine of Predestination. Consequently, the Mu'tazilah resorted to allegorical interpretation of such passages, in order to make them yield a hidden meaning that was (a) at variance with the apparent, surface meaning, which was considered false and (b), presumed to be the true meaning. This explains the interest of the Mu'tazilah in the ambiguity of meaning inherent in all language.⁹⁸ It also explains the existence of books exploring the subject of semantic interconnect-edness. The latter are hardly a parlor game or an amusement for the idle; instead, they are training manuals essential to the successful mastery of the science of allegorical interpretation. The above is exactly what al-Saraquṣṭī tells us in the prologue to his *Kitāb al-musalsal*:

When this religious community began, knowledge of the Arabic language enjoyed prestige and demand, as well as consensus and agreement on its being accorded precedence, so that superior, righteous people, virtuous, distinguished, and pure, devoted themselves exclusively to recording and registering it, sparing no effort in their concern over it, and spending much time in gathering and recording it, until they attained a high degree in it, and hoisted aloft a banner and pennant in honor of its prestige. [They did so] when they perceived that [Arabic] was the language of the Religious Sciences, and the true guide to original and derivative meanings, through which access could be gained to their literal meanings [*ḥaqīqatu ma'ānī-hā*], by which the stairs of their structures could be ascended, and from which allegorical interpretation [*ta'wīl*] and statements originate and derive.⁹⁹

The passages quoted above suggest that the genre of books linking together identical words with different meanings and different words with the same meaning, in long chains, was not the frivolous enterprise it might appear at first sight. Instead, it was an essential feature of allegorical interpretation, as introduced to Islamic theo-

⁹⁸ This point is cogently explained by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych in "Toward a Definition of 'Badī' Poetry", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XII (1981), 1-29, and in *Abū Tammām & the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age*, chap. 1, pp. 5-37.

⁹⁹ *Kitāb al-musalsal*, pp. 30-32.

logy by the Mu'tazilah. The genre provided a device whereby scholars could memorize the multiple meanings of the Arabic words they needed to know in order to interpret the holy text allegorically. These considerations lead us to the conclusion that al-Saraqusṭī was indebted, intellectually, to Mu'tazilī methods.

(5) Al-Saraqusṭī's *Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyyah* were written, as the author himself informs his readers, in imitation of those composed by al-Ḥarīrī of Basra (446/1054-516/1122). They are a major achievement of Classical Arabic literature, and make their author the principal exponent of the Arabic *maqāmah* genre in al-Andalus. They also constitute the only major *literary* work by al-Saraqusṭī that has come down to us in its entirety. The existence of his work has been known in the West since 1782, when the Aragonese jurist Ignacio Jordán de Asso del Río edited the Arabic text of two of its *maqāmahs* (Nos 5 and 6) accompanied by translations composed in Latin, for the sake of greater European dissemination.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, and despite its importance, it took exactly two centuries for the entire work to be published critically. The first edition of the text was published by Ibrāhīm Badr Aḥmad Ḍayf, whose work appeared in 1982,¹⁰¹ and was based on four manuscripts; one from the Vatican Library, two from the Turkish Laleli Library, and one from the Ambrosiana Library in Milan. Ḍayf's version of the text, while sound and scholarly is, unfortunately, poorly printed and difficult to read. In 1995, however, Ḥasan al-Warāglī brought out a typographically and critically superior edition¹⁰² originally prepared as his doctoral dissertation for the Universidad Complutense in Madrid.¹⁰³ This edition is based on seven manuscripts; one from the Fayḍallāh Efendī Library in Istanbul, the two manuscripts from the Laleli Library, the Vatican manuscript, a manuscript from Berlin, another belonging to the Library of the Qarawīyīn Mosque in Fez, and a fragmentary text found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in

¹⁰⁰ *Bibliotheca Arabico-Aragonensis* (Amsterdam, 1782), pp. 18-59.

¹⁰¹ *Al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyyah li-l-Saraqusṭī* (Alexandria, 1982). Hereafter abbreviated D.

¹⁰² *Al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyyah: ta'līf Abī l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī, al-Saraqusṭī* (Rabat, 1995). Hereafter abbreviated W.

¹⁰³ "*Al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*" *de Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Saraqusṭī: edición crítica y estudio* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1980).

Paris. Al-Warāghī's edition is generally more readable than Ḍayf's. Unlike the latter, however, it is fully vowelized, and there is thus a greater opportunity for misprints to occur in it. It therefore needs, on occasion, to be corrected.

Based on Ḍayf's edition, Ignacio Ferrando Frutos produced an elegant Spanish translation and study of the "*Maqāmah* of the Berbers."¹⁰⁴ Earlier on, Iḥsān 'Abbās¹⁰⁵ and H. Nemah¹⁰⁶ had studied the work in manuscript form, giving an overall description of its contents. 1999 was a watershed year for in it, Ignacio Ferrando Frutos published a Spanish translation (the first into a European language) of the entire *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah*.¹⁰⁷ Otherwise, the occasional references to al-Saraqusṭī and to his *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah* that appear here and there in other works on Arabic literature give the impression of being based largely on hearsay scholarship. It goes without saying that there have been no published attempts, as of this writing, to apply contemporary techniques of literary criticism to al-Saraqusṭī's masterpiece. All in all, the situation is illustrative of the remarkable state of Arabic literary studies, in which unknown works of major significance are continually being recovered and made available, only to remain unread and unstudied, often for years on end. The above considerations have encouraged me to produce an English translation of the entire work. My translation was begun in 1994. By the time I had completed a preliminary version of it, Professor Ignacio Ferrando's distinguished Spanish translation appeared in print. This has allowed me to benefit from my colleague's efforts and to correct a number of my own earlier mistakes, thereby greatly improving my own translation. My resulting English version, nevertheless, still differs considerably from that of Professor Ferrando on specific details of interpretation, so that the reader is urged and invited to take both translations into account

¹⁰⁴ "La Maqāma barbariyya de al-Saraqusṭī," *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*, II (1991), 119-129.

¹⁰⁵ *Ta'riḥ al-adab al-Andalusī: 'aṣr al-Tawā'if wa-l-Murābiṭīn*, al-Maktabah al-Andalusīyah, Vol. III, (Beirut, 1962), pp. 303-305, 317-324.

¹⁰⁶ "Andalusian Maqāmāt," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, V (1974), 83-92.

¹⁰⁷ *Las sesiones del Zaragocí: relatos picarescos (maqāmāt) del siglo XII, Abū ṭ-Tāhir, el Zaragozano*. Trans. Ignacio Ferrando Frutos (Zaragoza, 1999).

when studying what amounts to an Arabic text that is riddled with punning and ambiguity.

In al-Saraqustī's very laconic prologue to his collection, he states:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, in Whom I seek help: After praising God, the Exalted, and blessing the Prophet chosen by Him, let it be known that the following are fifty *maqāmāt* composed by Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqustī, in Córdoba, one of the cities of al-Andalus, when he devoted himself to what the master Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī had composed in Basra. In composing them, Abū l-Ṭāhir exhausted his mind and kept his eye awake, while in their prose and poetry he made a requirement, beyond the call of duty, of what is normally not required by the rules of literary composition [*lazīma . . . mā lā yalzam*], so that they reached the utmost degree of excellence, yet God knows best if this is true.¹⁰⁸

As we have noted above, the author thus acknowledges his indebtedness to al-Ḥarīrī of Basra (446/1054-516/1122) whom he is imitating, in al-Andalus, only a few years after al-Ḥarīrī had composed his own work in the East. The *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī were introduced to al-Andalus by one Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn 'Alī al-Qudā'ī, who heard them directly from the author in Šawwāl 504/April 1111, before which date they could not have been known in al-Andalus.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, a passage contained in al-Saraqustī's "*Maqāmah* 49" appears to be a dedication of that *maqāmah*, if not of the entire collection, to Tāšufīn ibn 'Alī, the third Almoravid ruler to take the title of Amīr al-Muslimīn. This ruler was first appointed governor of al-Andalus in 519/1126, and then deposed in 532/1138, when his jealous brother Sīr, the heir apparent, succeeded in persuading their father, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf, to replace Tāšufīn with Sīr. After having distinguished himself for his brilliant campaigns against the Christians, Tāšufīn thus returned to live obscurely in the Almoravid capital of Marrakesh. When Sīr died unexpectedly, that very year, Tāšufīn was declared heir apparent by his father, whom he succeeded in 537/1143, the same year al-Saraqustī died, after a

¹⁰⁸ W, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ See Pierre A. Mackay, *Certificates of Transmission on a Manuscript of the Maqāmāt of Harīrī* (MS Cairo, Adab 105), pp. 8, n. 5; 30.

severe illness that lasted three years. Tāšufīn reigned until 539/1145, when the Almohads overthrew the Almoravid dynasty.¹¹⁰ Therefore, this penultimate *maqāmāh* must have been written between 519/1126 and 532/1138, when Tāšufīn, whom the author refers to as a “youth” (*ḡulām*) was still governor of al-Andalus, and not between 537/1143 and 539/1145, when he was the Almoravid Amīr al-Muslimīn, and al-Saraqusṭī was already dead. Thus, there are strong grounds to suggest that al-Saraqusṭī’s work was written between the years 519/1126 and 532/1138, and that it was dedicated to the popular young Almoravid governor of al-Andalus, the royal prince Tāšufīn ibn ‘Alī, rather than to his more famous grandfather, Yūsuf ibn Tāšufīn (r. 453/1061-500/1106), who died at least six years before al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt* could have even been known, much less imitated, in al-Andalus.

In his prologue, the author also acknowledges his indebtedness to Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (362/973-449/1057), from whose collection of poems known as *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* al-Saraqusṭī borrowed the title of his own work, as well as the technique of inserting an unrequired rhyming consonant preceding the single rhyming consonant that is required in Arabic prosody.¹¹¹ In this case, however, our author is applying al-Ma‘arrī’s innovation both to the rhymed prose as well as to the poetry contained in his own *Maqāmāt*. In his “*Maqāmāh* 30 (Poetry)” al-Saraqusṭī has his arch-rogue Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī provide a review of the major poets of Arabic literature up to the author’s time, complete with evaluations of each one of them. In discussing al-Ma‘arrī, the rogue declares:

He is an arrow of greatness and high rank; a wearer of embroidered robes and striped mantles. Verse submitted and yielded to him, but prose denied and refused itself to him, so that he died of chagrin without ever having mastered prose, and did not cease going astray within its unmarked deserts. He was a wise fool; an inhabited abandoned-encampment; he soared and plummeted; he beat and shook the tree of error, knocking down its leaves.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ See Jacinto Bosch Vilá, *Historia de Marruecos: los almorávides* (Tetuán, 1956), p. 9, n. 1, and *passim*.

¹¹¹ See Seeger A. Bonebakker, “Luzūm mā lā yalzam,” *E.I.* 2, V, 839-841.

¹¹² W30, p. 277. It should be noted that Ḍ contains fifty *maqāmāt*, whereas W includes nine extra ones in an appendix numbered one to nine. Henceforth, the

Since the *Maqāmāt* are essentially ironic works, in which the opinions of the characters do not necessarily reflect those of the author, there is, of course, no need to take the above evaluation of al-Ma'arrī's work as al-Saraqustī's own view. Nonetheless, it is true that, in his *Maqāmāt*, our author does apply the technique of *luṣūm* to his prose as strictly and systematically as he does to his poetry, which is an act of one-upmanship with regard to his predecessor, insofar as al-Ma'arrī had, in his *Risālat al-ḡufrān*, used *luṣūm* only sporadically and unsystematically in his prose, and never in the poetry he cites.

One of the many manuscripts of *al-Maqāmāt al-luṣūmīyah* contains a colophon by al-Saraqustī, in which he declares:

In the name of God—may He be exalted—we implore whoever considers and takes note of these words of ours, and strives and aspires to understand them with a critical appraisal, to be judicious and apply allegorical interpretation [*ta'wīl*] in his examination of them, to make it his practice and conclusion to judge them favorably, and to realize that the human soul can move from one situation to another, can change its condition, and can alternate between truth and falsehood . . .¹¹³

That is to say, according to the author, the surface of the work, which is deceptive, must be further interpreted, in order to arrive at its deeper and true meaning. *Ta'wīl* implies, of course, a certain duplicity of language; it implies that nothing is, in reality, what it seems to be on the surface, and that no statement in the work may be taken at face value. As I have argued above and shown elsewhere, the *maqāmāh* genre is essentially picaresque in nature; it deals with the duplicity of human behavior, and uses language simultaneously to hide and to expose duplicity, thereby also exposing social hypocrisy. In this sense, the genre is highly critical of those individual members of society who fail to live up to its institutions.¹¹⁴

The scenario of most of *al-Maqāmāt al-luṣūmīyah* is set geographi-

maqāmāt will be referred to by their numbering in W, and so ordered in the translation, while the alternate numbering in D, when there is a discrepancy, will be indicated in the footnotes to the translation.

¹¹³ W, p. 467.

¹¹⁴ James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī' az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*.

cally in the Middle East. A few *maqāmāt* take place in areas stretching from India¹¹⁵ and China¹¹⁶ in the Orient, to Qayrawan¹¹⁷ and Tangier¹¹⁸ in the Maghreb, but they are in the distinct minority. Even fewer are the pieces that refer to al-Saraqustī's Andalusī homeland.¹¹⁹ This suggests that the author was aiming at a readership located in the heartlands of Islam, rather than one narrowly restricted to the Iberian Peninsula, and that his message was pan-Islamic rather than local. Such an assumption fits well with the extremely learned, classical form and diction he adopted as his literary vehicle of expression, insofar as it stands in sharp contrast to the art of his contemporary, Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160) who, with rare genius, poeticized the familiar and the pedestrian, doing so in a popular and local poetic form (the *zajal*) and a colloquial diction (Andalusī Arabic). Nevertheless, al-Saraqustī's condition as a twelfth-century Andalusī writer, could hardly have helped but color his experiences; it may shed some light on the perspective from which he wrote and, ultimately, on what he had to say. Therefore, in what follows, I shall examine the only four *maqāmāt* by al-Saraqustī that, in one way or another, involve the author's geographic homeland.

Analysis of Four Maqāmāt

(1) "*Maqāmah 41 (The Berbers)*"

This *maqāmah* is of particular relevance to the above remarks. In it, the author has his fictional narrator al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām, who gives the impression of being an Easterner and an Arab, appear on

¹¹⁵ See for example, W42.

¹¹⁶ See for example, W36.

¹¹⁷ See for example, W29.

¹¹⁸ See for example, W41.

¹¹⁹ They are: W19, W20 ('Wine'), W41 ('The Berbers'), W43 ('Tarīf'). In W19, the narrator leaves al-Andalus on a pilgrimage to Mecca, stopping in Cairo on the way; in W20, he goes to a monastery where he meets a Christian cupbearer descended from Roderic, the last Visigothic King of Hispania, and where he gets drunk; in W41, he is on his way to, but never actually reaches al-Andalus; in W43 he is at its very margin, on the shores of the Peninsula of Tarīf (Tarifa). There is, therefore, an overall and deliberate attempt to downplay the presence of al-Andalus in the work, since it is portrayed as a place one either leaves, gets drunk in, is stranded on the shores of, or fails to reach.

the beaches near Tangier, where he is waiting for passage to al-Andalus, about which he has heard marvelous reports, and whose impressively high cultural standards he greatly admires:

I had heard of the land of al-Andalus and of its culture, its festivities, and its refinement, and I had come to long for it with the longing of a passionate lover, and would have given old and valuable possessions in exchange for it. The qualities I observed in its inhabitants used to delight me, and the virtues I came to expect from its best and finest citizens used to please me, even though I had met only its newly-weaned, rather than its experienced young camels, and merely viewed the foot of its summit. So, when I wished to attempt the crossing, and to traverse the straits preventing me from reaching al-Andalus, I came down to these shores, leaving behind the sterile land of Tangier, while saying: "With a stride one fathom long, you will leave beasts of prey, and with the flutter of a single sail, you will join valiant heroes."¹²⁰

The Arab speaker has just been in Tangier, whose Berber population, in sharp contrast, he despises with an intense prejudice reflecting that of the Andalusis of the author's own, and earlier periods:

I did not cease to wander east and west, nor to be tempted by nocturnal paths and camel trails, until summits and swollen rivers complained of me, and rising and setting stars grew bored with me when, at last, Time hurled me to the land of Tangier, whence I could survey the portals of the Frankish lands. There, I stayed among a people like cattle and ostriches, and humans like wolves or hyenas, whose speech I could not understand, and with whose minds my own did not agree. I differed from those people in the manner of my dress and speech, nor did I escape being rejected and rebuffed by them. Hence, after speaking, I became dumb, and after neighing, I became satisfied with the clatter of bells, as though I were in the company of cattle, or herding free-grazing camels that would neither obey, keep the peace, nor match my understanding and forbearance.¹²¹

While the speaker is on the beach, he sees a mysteriously veiled man who is addressing a crowd of Berbers. "He was jabbering to the natives, whom he could understand, in a language unintelligible to me. Then, he gestured toward me, and praised me to the skies before them."¹²² Yet how can the speaker know that the stranger is

¹²⁰ W41, pp. 385-386.

¹²¹ W41, p. 385.

¹²² W41, p. 386.

praising him to the skies if he cannot understand the language in which he is doing so? To this objection, I shall return later. Eventually, al-Sā'ib recognizes the mysterious stranger as his persecutor, the master-rogue Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī, also introduced as a pure-bred Arab, whom he reproves for commingling with non-Arabs: "Have you gone to all the trouble of coming west, only to join non-Arabs with Arabs in a promiscuous friendship?"¹²³ On the recommendation of Abū Ḥabīb, who has won the confidence of the Berbers, the latter welcome al-Sā'ib into their midst, and regale him with their lavish hospitality. Al-Sā'ib, in turn, grudgingly allows himself to be persuaded to accept that hospitality, particularly the splendid meals he is served while, at the same time, he constantly and ungratefully complains about the uncouth manners and barbaric customs of his Berber hosts.

One day, the Berbers get so drunk on a potent beverage called *anzīz*, that they all pass out. A marginal note in one of the MSS explains that this beverage is made of cooked grapes. The Arab geographer al-Idrīsī (d. 564/1169) confirms the truth of that observation for, in describing the people of Sūs al-Aqṣà, in south-western Morocco he writes:

It is a land of wheat, barley, and rice, all available at the lowest rates. Its prices are cheap. Roughness, coarseness of nature, and unruliness prevail among its inhabitants. They are a medley of Maṣmūdah Berbers, whose attire is a woolen garment that they wrap around themselves. On their heads they wear a lot of hair, to which they attach great importance and which they groom with much care, for they dye it every Friday with henna, and wash it twice every Friday with egg-white and Andalusī clay. They gird themselves around the waist with woolen aprons they call *āsfāqīs*. Not a man among them ever goes about without carrying two slender, short-staffed, long-pointed spears in his hand, which they fashion out of the best iron [the *nayzaq*-like spears also described in the same *maqāmah*?]. They eat a lot of fried and salted locusts. The people of Sūs are made up of two groups, for the people of the city of Tārūdant follow the Islamic Mālikī doctrine, and are members of the Ḥaṣawī sect, whereas the people of the town of Tīuyūwīn adhere to the doctrine of Mūsā ibn Ja'far. Between them

¹²³ W41, p. 386.

there is constant warfare, murder, bloodshed, and vengeance, save that they are a people leading the most comfortable of lives and blessed with the most fertile of soils. Their beverage is called *anzīz*. It is sweet and causes an extreme intoxication. It produces in its drinker an effect that wine does not produce, because of its strength and the thickness of its consistency, for they take the juice of sweet grapes and boil it over the fire until it is reduced by one third. Then it is removed from the fire, stored [to ferment?], and drunk. There is no way to drink it without mixing it with water. The people of Sūs al-Aqṣà consider its consumption to be permissible according to the Holy Law, as long as its drinker does not end up getting drunk.¹²⁴

The point to be made here, is that al-Idrīsī is describing two customs peculiar to the Berber inhabitants of the region of Sūs, in the southwest of Morocco (they bear short spears and drink *anzīz*), whereas the action being narrated in the *maqāmāh* under consideration purportedly takes place in the extreme north of that country, in Tangier. This geographic inconsistency suggests a further lack of narratorial reliability, designed to put us, as readers of the text, on our guard.

Abū Ḥabīb then proposes to al-Sā'ib that the two of them steal the Berbers' money and abscond with it. The ethnically prejudiced and ungrateful narrator tacitly agrees to go along with the plan. Abū Ḥabīb gathers all the money that he can, which he then proceeds to bury on the beach. Then he declares:

No crime is committed, as long as one does not behave so stupidly as to get caught. May you survive until we meet again. Choose a road that is not my road and leave my company and group, for I plan to return to yonder Berber people, and then hunt you down, since I have left my honor in a splendid state among them, while imposing on you a heavy burden of betrayal.¹²⁵

Let us note that, all the time the Arabs are denigrating their Berber hosts, the text is actually revealing that the Berbers exhibit

¹²⁴ See al-Idrīsī, *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne*, ed. R. Dozy and M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), Arabic text, II, 62-63; French translation, I, 72-73. I wish to thank my colleague, Professor Mustapha Kamal, for identifying this passage, alerting me to its existence, and generously providing me with a photocopy of the Arabic text.

¹²⁵ W41, pp. 388-389.

the single greatest virtue that Arab culture admires and recognizes, namely generosity and hospitality, especially when it is directed at the guest and stranger.¹²⁶ Their only defect lies in trusting their Arab guests. At the same time, the Arabs are guilty of the worst abomination recognized by Arab culture, namely the betrayal of the laws of hospitality, for it is the Arabs who are here portrayed as stealing from their hosts. Let us also note that, in this *maqāmah*, there is no honor among thieves, since Abū Ḥabīb proceeds to betray al-Sā'ib, his willing partner in theft. Furthermore, al-Sā'ib had told us, from the very outset of the *maqāmah*, that he had come down to the shores next to Tangier seeking passage to al-Andalus. These are the very shores in which his subsequent encounter with Abū Ḥabīb and the Berbers, his betrayal of Berber hospitality, and his own betrayal at the hands of Abū Ḥabīb, have taken place; these are the very shores from which al-Sā'ib has been advised by Abū Ḥabīb to escape if he would save his life from the avenging Berbers the latter threatens to unleash against him. In such circumstances, it is highly unlikely that al-Sā'ib would have remained for long in such a dangerous area, while waiting for passage to al-Andalus, thereby putting his life at risk. Hence, we have strong grounds to suspect that the story he is telling is a tall tale, told to deceive the listener into sympathizing with its teller's plight and, perhaps, even to pay for his passage to al-Andalus. The serious question thus arises, as to whether any of what the narrator has told us actually ever took place. Such a conclusion is reinforced by the earlier inconsistency in the tale, when the narrator had simultaneously informed us (a) that the mysterious stranger he encountered was speaking in an unintelligible foreign tongue and (b) that, in that same unintelligible tongue, he was praising the narrator to his Berber listeners. In other words, the narrator is trying to trick the reader, just as the master-roguer has tricked the narrator. The narrator is, to put it bluntly, a liar and, therefore, any information proceeding from him is unreliable. This being the case, what are we to make of his praise of Andalusis, and his scorn for Berbers, coming as it does from an Arab speaker?

¹²⁶ On this subject, see Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Structures of Avarice: The Bukhalā' in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden, 1985).

As we have mentioned above, al-Saraqusṭī was an Andalusī of Arab ancestry who not only served Arab kings in Zaragoza and Almería, but lived to see the twilight of Arab dominion in al-Andalus, as power passed from the Arabs to the Berber Almoravids. His narrator, who claims to be an Arab and despises Berbers, is also a liar. If we apply *taʿwīl* to the text, we might conclude that the author, as opposed to his character is, in this instance, commenting on the depravity of the times, when Arabs are utterly treacherous and without honor, and nobility can only be found among Berbers. He may also be implying that, although the Berbers may seem uncouth, barbaric, and generally uncivilized in comparison with Andalusī sophisticates, they are actually honest, generous, militarily powerful and, therefore, the only people capable of saving al-Andalus from the onslaught of the anachronistically termed Christian “Reconquista.”¹²⁷ In other words, the author is calling for a responsible national and foreign policy; he is pleading for the creation of a united front transcending narrow ethnic ties; he is calling for a strengthening of those cultural bonds provided by Islam, that unite Arabs and Berbers against their common Christian foe. Furthermore, all intelligent Arabs knew that, without the support of the Berbers, the Arabs would never have conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the first place; without the Berbers, they would never have held it for three centuries of Umayyad rule and, as we now know with the benefit of retrospect, without the Berbers, they would never have continued to hold it for three more centuries. When the chips are down, the author seems to be asking his countrymen, is it better to be “a swineherd in Castile, or a camel-driver in Africa?” In sum, one should read the “*Maqāmah* of the Berbers,” not as an illustration of Andalusī anti-Berber prejudice shared by the author, but as an

¹²⁷ This noun is a neologism; it was not recorded by the Real Academia de la Lengua Española until the nineteenth century, and certainly does not appear in medieval texts. The verb *reconquistar* was first used in the late eighteenth century by Leandro Fernández de Moratín (1760-1828) and Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811), but was not recorded by the Real Academia until 1843. It designates (retroactively) the period between AD 722 (battle of Covadonga) and 1492 (fall of Granada), as if the 770 intervening years constituted one single, long, uninterrupted war, which they never were. See Joan Corominas and José A. Pascual *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico* (Madrid, 1981), IV, 719a.

ironic critique of that same prejudice; a critique designed to exhort the author's contemporaries to rise above a divisive version of narrow ethnic solidarity that, precisely because it was not heeded, eventually proved fatal.

It has been pointed out, above, that al-Saraqus̄ī appears to have been indebted to Mu'tazili thought. In this *maqāmah*, as in many others, the speaker is presented as a fatalist. Consider the following statement:

I did not cease to wander east and west, nor *to be tempted by nocturnal paths and camel trails, until summits and swollen rivers complained of me, and rising and setting stars grew bored with me* when, at last, *Time hurled me to the land of Tangier*, whence I could survey the portals of the Frankish lands.¹²⁸

As if to underline the fatalistic outlook of the speakers in the *maqāmāt*, they often portray themselves as the passive instruments of external forces and objects, often inert or inanimate, that are, in turn, presented as being active. In this instance, the speaker is "hurled" to Tangier by Time, rather than going there of his own volition, while paths and trails "tempt" him, summits and swollen rivers "complain" of his extensive travels, and stars are "bored" with him. If we accept the suggestion made above, to the effect that the speaker in the text is unreliable and, on the author's recommendation, we apply *ta'wīl* to it, we are led to the inevitable conclusion that the work is subjecting the predestinarian doctrine to some form of scrutiny, and that it is suggesting that humans are responsible for at least some of their acts.

The theme of Free Will versus Predestination is a deeply rooted feature both of the Arabic *maqāmah* in particular, and of the picaresque genre to which it belongs, in general. In this respect, the work of al-Saraqus̄ī is no exception. It is customary for the trickster to justify his dubious activities on the grounds that times are difficult, for which reason, he proceeds to argue, he is forced to lie, cheat, or steal. He often adds that it is Fate that should be blamed for his misdeeds rather than himself. As soon as times improve, he implies, so will his own conduct. But the trickster is at the same time unreliable,

¹²⁸ W41, p. 385 (emphasis, mine).

and the text is at some pains to deconstruct his arguments by leading the reader to the diametrically opposite conclusion, namely, that the trickster is fully responsible for his own acts. The genre therefore implies a critique of the predestinarian doctrine and is didactic, insofar as it teaches by negative example. If we consider the “*Maqāmah* of the Berbers” in this context, we will see that the misdeeds performed by the characters are hardly presented in the text as having been determined by Fate, but have, instead, been made by choice. For example, both Abū Ḥabīb and al-Sā’ib have been well fed by the Berbers. There is, therefore, no pressing need for them to steal from their Berber hosts. If they do so it is only because of their greed, not their need. Yet in a poem recited by Abū Ḥabīb to al-Sā’ib to justify his duplicitous conduct, the former states:

Have you never noticed, O Fate’s brave young warrior, that Fate toys with man and makes him go about in circles?¹²⁹

According to Abū Ḥabīb’s special and personal version of morality, the fact that mortals are playthings of Fate justifies befriending anyone, be he an Arab or a non-Arab, opportunistically, regardless of his intrinsic merits, as long as he is able to provide a free meal:

Both the Arab and the non-Arab are my friend, whenever cooking-pots boil a welcoming meal for a guest.¹³⁰

It also justifies hypocrisy:

How many a companion and a friend have I, the one faithful, and the other faithless,

Yet I have befriended both, in order to please them, therefore, marvel at what human breasts are able to conceal!¹³¹

Could it be the case that al-Saraqustī’s writings also contain veiled political allusions and implications? It should be remembered that our author was a man who grew up and received his basic education during the period of the *mulūk al-ṭawā’if* (422/1031-484/1091), but who lived out his mature years under Almoravid rule (484/1091-539/1145). It is hardly far-fetched to assume that,

¹²⁹ W41, p. 387.

¹³⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹³¹ *Loc. cit.*

during his youth, he would have been deeply impressed by the inroads made against al-Andalus by the advance of the so-called Christian “Reconquista” while, as we have noted above, the very city of Zaragoza, in which he grew up, was taken by the Christians in 512/1118. The Almoravid period, as may be noted from the writings of other poets, is characterized by a deepening pessimism, perhaps most forcefully expressed in the verse of Ibn Ḥafājah of Alcira (450/1058-533/1139), who himself had to flee Valencia when Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, el Cid Campeador (ca. 435/1043-486/1099) conquered it in 487/1094.¹³² Unable to withstand the Christian onslaught, the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* were forced, by the pressure of public opinion, to call in the Almoravids to defend their rapidly dwindling territories. The Almoravids, who were Berbers, were viewed as uncouth by the sophisticated Andalusī ingrates they rescued. It could not have escaped the notice of any intelligent person, however, that the prevailing anti-Berber sentiment was prejudicial to the very survival of al-Andalus. In the depressingly pessimistic environment that saw the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* being swept away by Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar and his successors, from the north, and the Almoravids, from the south, it is not impossible that al-Saraqustī is attempting to offer his countrymen a ray of hope for the future. If the above interpretation is not entirely off track, it would appear that he is asking them to seize control over their own destiny to the best of their ability; he is asking them not to give up their resistance to external forces in the face of overwhelming odds. In this sense, the investigation of Free Will and Predestination contained in his literary works may have had far wider political implications.

(2) “*Maqāmah 43 (Ṭarīf)*”

In the “*Maqāmah* of Ṭarīf,” the gullible narrator, al-Sāʾib ibn Tammām, who is portrayed elsewhere as being a native of Arabia, tells us that, in a year of drought, he went down to the coastlands, eventually reaching the peninsula of Ṭarīf, today known as Tarifa. If we assume that he is traveling from the North African side of the

¹³² See James T. Monroe, “Hispano-Arabic Poetry During the Almoravid Period: Theory and Practice,” pp. 65-98.

Mediterranean, as an Arab would normally have had to do,¹³³ his incursion into the Iberian Peninsula barely gets beyond its southernmost border: he has gotten no farther than to an isolated pimple on the nose of Spain and, therefore, remains a marginalized “half-outsider” to its cultural scene.¹³⁴

Even the town of Tarifa is too far within the tiny peninsula for our narrator’s comfort; he must, therefore, go down to its beach in order to encounter his parasite, whom he meets in the guise of an old man surrounded by a circle of listeners to whom he is delivering a speech, the structure of which is central to our understanding of the *maqāmah* under analysis. I have subdivided the old man’s speech into the following sections according to thematic content:

- (A) The Speaker Waxes Eloquent: The Heroic Past is Gone.
- (B) The Speaker Claims to be Old, but Still Able-Bodied.
- (C) The Speaker Claims Noble Ancestry. He Begins to Tell a Story:
 - (D) Rowdy but Heroic Prince A Repels Invaders, is Restored to Father’s Favor, and Murdered by Jealous Brother B.
 - (E) Prince B Describes a Dream (he Claims to have had), to Father.
 - (F) Father Calls for a Reliable Interpreter of Dreams.
 - (F’) Interpreter Offers an Unreliable Interpretation of the Dream.
 - (E’) Prince B Implements the Dream, and Overthrows Father.
 - (D’) Pious but Hypocritical Prince B Alienates his Subjects. Angry Father is Restored, and Murders Prince B.
- (C’) The Story is Ended. The Speaker Claims Moral Authority.
- (B’) The Speaker Claims to be Old and Reduced to Helplessness.
- (A’) The Present is Miserable: The Speaker is Reduced to Silence.

The speech, as outlined above, begins with the theme of *ubi sunt*. (A) The speaker waxes eloquent in describing, through the medium

¹³³ See “*Maqāmah* 41 (The Berbers),” above, for confirmation. In it the narrator finds himself in Tangier, from whence he wishes to cross the Strait of Gibraltar to al-Andalus, where he has never been before.

¹³⁴ For the concept and significance of the picaresque anti-hero as a “half-outsider,” see Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, 1971), p. 81, and *passim*.

of resounding, doubly-rhymed prose, how the leading figures of the pre-Islamic, heroic age of the Arabs (many of whom, let it be noted in passing, are proverbial for their generosity), have vanished forever, while the vacuum they have left behind has been filled by a lesser breed of mortals. Thereafter, the speaker points (B) to his old age, doing so in an upbeat manner, by claiming that, in spite of his declining years, he is still sexually active, and even able to hold his own in battle. His claims to prowess in bed and in battle should, however, arouse disbelief in the alert reader, for the old man has informed us, just before making them, that he is one hundred and twenty years old! After this introductory statement, the speaker gets down to the central theme of his oration: (C) He lays claim to noble, heroic ancestry, stating that he is a descendant of Ṭarīf, the Berber client of Mūsà ibn Nuṣayr who, in 91/710 crossed the Straits that were later to acquire the name of Gibraltar (Jabal Ṭāriq ‘Mountain of Ṭāriq’), with a Berber expeditionary force, landed in the peninsula of Tarifa, subsequently named after him, and raided the vicinity of Algeciras, returning to Africa with a rich booty and many captives.¹³⁵ Elaborating upon his ancestry, the speaker begins to tell a story about his forefathers: (D) He claims that his grandfather had informed him that his ancestor, nine generations removed from the grandfather, had been a king who possessed a lofty fortress in Tarifa. Let us hasten to add that there is no historical evidence whatsoever for the existence of any independent line of Muslim rulers in Tarifa. We are, therefore, in the realm of fiction, if we wish to be charitable, or in that of untruth, if otherwise. Be that as it may, the king of Tarifa had two sons. The first, whom I shall designate “Prince A,” was “given to violence . . . was fond of murderers and attracted to rapists and cutthroats.” In other words, he was a scoundrel. The second, to whom I shall refer as “Prince B,” “was *considered* pious, and was singled out for his virtue and restraint.” The king disapproved of Prince A’s lifestyle until, one day, a group of Vikings appeared off the coast and proceeded to attack the inhabitants of Tarifa. Prince A immediately gathered his

¹³⁵ *E.I.* I, VIII, 665-666.

ruffianly companions and, with their support, succeeded in repelling the Viking invasion. Having thus established that there was a heroic and therefore positive side to his nature, Prince A rose in his father's esteem. This made Prince B jealous of his brother, whom he proceeded to murder in cold blood.

(E) After the murder has been committed, seemingly-pious but actually-hypocritical and scheming Prince B approaches his father and claims to have seen a terrifying dream-vision, the implications of which he cannot understand: He has first seen the moon eclipse the sun and then, after a while, he has seen the sun emerge from the shadow of the eclipse, once again shining forth in all its former splendor, only to reduce the moon to obscurity. Since the sun has always emerged from its eclipses, throughout the annals of human astronomical observation, there is, in fact, not too much that is remarkable about this dream, hence one is at a loss to understand why Prince B finds it so terrifying.

Why, one is further inclined to ask, would a son who has just covertly murdered his brother, confide such a dream to his father? Let us note, first of all, that the text does not state that Prince B actually saw a dream-vision; instead, it merely declares: "He said to his father: 'I have seen a terrifying dream-vision'." Put this way, the distinct possibility arises that Prince B who, as we shall see below, is not only a murderer, but also a liar, actually saw no vision at all, and is merely lying to his father, in order to attract his attention. If this is the case, why would he take the trouble to concoct this dream for his father's benefit? One possibility, among several that come to mind, is that Prince B has invented the dream-vision in order to arouse his father's sympathy. Let us not forget that Prince B has just murdered his brother covertly (*igtāla-hu*) and, we are entitled to assume, the father does not know who the murderer is. Having been previously supplanted in his father's favor by his now defunct brother, brave Prince A, it would help Prince B enormously, in regaining his former privileged status in the eyes of his father, if he could [mis]represent his fall from grace as a temporary situation that was the result, not of his own feats (or lack of them), but of factors beyond his control, namely, the influence of the stars—but of stars that, having brought about his momentary eclipse, have simultaneously ordained his eventual return to favor. According to

the above interpretation, the dream is provided by Prince B as a prediction of his own forthcoming rise in his father's esteem, in order to suggest indirectly to his father, that he take his son back into his favor. Furthermore, the father, now reduced to a single son, is hardly in a position to do otherwise. This, at least, seems to be Prince B's intention in revealing his dream. It provides a first interpretation of a dream that may never have taken place.

The interpretation of dreams is a major theme, both in Arabic, as well as in other medieval literatures. In the *Thousand and One Nights*, let us recall the "Tale of the Third Dervish," contained in the cycle of "The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad," in which a wealthy but childless jeweler dreams that he will have a son who will be short-lived. The very night following upon his dream, the jeweler's wife actually conceives and, in due course, gives birth to a boy. The astrologers predict that, in his fifteenth year, the child will be killed by one 'Ajīb, son of King Ḥaṣīb ('Wonderful, son of Bountiful'). When the boy's hour of doom draws near, the father hides him in an underground chamber on a desert island, in a desperate attempt to avoid the dire consequences of the prediction. But, unbeknownst to him, 'Ajīb has already been cast up on that very island, where he meets the boy, and where the two become intimate friends. One day, the boy asks 'Ajīb to cut a piece of watermelon for him. 'Ajīb reaches up to retrieve a knife from a high shelf. By accident, his foot slips, and he falls on the boy with the knife in his hand, unintentionally plunging it through his friend's heart.¹³⁶

In the Old Spanish *Libro de buen amor*, a king of the Moors named Alcáraz is given a son, whereupon he calls his astrologers to learn from them the portent of the sign and planet under which the boy has been born. The five most learned astrologers in the realm then offer their predictions. One declares that the boy will be stoned to death, a second predicts that he will be burned to death, a third claims that he will be cast down to his death from a high place, a

¹³⁶ See *Kūtāb alf laylah wa-laylah: min uṣūli-hi l-'Arabīyah l-ūlā*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Leiden, 1984-1994), I, 178-199; *The Arabian Nights, based on the Fourteenth-Century Syrian Manuscript edited by Muhsin Mahdi*, trans. Husain Haddawy (New York and London, 1990), pp. 116-120.

fourth prophesies that he will be hanged, and a fifth states that he will be drowned. When the king hears these five contradictory predictions, he is disgusted and casts the five astrologers into prison where he holds them under close guard, believing their auguries to be false. When the boy reaches a suitable age, he asks his father for permission to go on a deer hunt and, once leave has been granted, he sets off with his tutor. After a while, it begins to hail, and soon, huge hailstones begin to 'stone' him. As he is crossing a bridge, a lightning bolt strikes him and breaks the bridge. As the prince plunges through the resulting void, he is caught by his coat-tails in a tree growing by the river and, while hanging from the tree, he drowns in the river. When the king sees that all five predictions have been simultaneously fulfilled, his renewed enthusiasm for the exact science of astrology knows no bounds, he releases his astrologers from prison, and grants them many benefits.¹³⁷

Just as in the "*Maqāmah* of Ṭarīf," at the beginning of the twelfth Qur'ānic chapter, entitled "Sūrat Yūsuf," Joseph informs his father Jacob that he has had a dream-vision in which he has seen eleven stars plus the sun and moon prostrate themselves before him (12:4). At the end of the same *sūrah*, his eleven brothers and both his parents have come to dwell with him in Egypt, where he treats them with respect. When they all fall down prostrate before him, he declares: "O my father, this is the interpretation of my former dream-vision" (12:100). The *sūrah* ends with a reference to the tales of the prophets before Muḥammad, and insists that "there is, in their stories, instruction for men of understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it" (12:111). Within the story itself, after the chaste Joseph has been imprisoned for his own safety, in order to keep him out of the naughty arms of the Egyptian Prime Minister's wife (Potiphar's wife in the Bible, Zulaḥḥah in popular Arabic accounts), he meets two young men, each of whom has had a dream: One has dreamed that he was pressing wine, and the other, that he was carrying bread on his head, from which the birds were eating (12:36). Joseph correctly predicts that the former, who is Pharaoh's cupbearer, will pour wine for his

¹³⁷ Juan Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, ed. and trans. Raymond S. Willis (Princeton, 1972), pp. 44-47, stanzas 129-139.

master once again, but that the latter, whom the Bible specifies is Pharaoh's baker, will hang from the cross, as the birds peck away at his head (12:41). As in the Bible, so in the Qur'ān, Pharaoh also experiences the famous dream involving seven fat kine whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn contrasted with seven withered ones (12:43). Joseph correctly interprets this dream to mean that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine in the land of Egypt (12:47-48).

In the above examples, a dream-vision is first seen by an individual, then unambiguously interpreted by a professional oneirocritic, after which the prediction comes true. The Qur'ān further insists on the truth of the stories contained in it, adding that they are a reliable form of instruction for men of understanding. In contrast, in our *maqāmah*, the dream-vision is told by an unreliable narrator, thereby casting doubt on its ever having been seen in the first place, and arousing suspicion concerning the motives for which untrustworthy Prince B divulges its contents. In fact, as the narrator seems to be using the dream, it is not a prediction, in its entirety, but a description, in part, of his brother's past rise to esteem in his father's eyes at his own expense, followed by his own hoped-for rise in esteem after his brother's death. As Prince B wishes his father to interpret it, the dream thus provides a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The king, however, reacts quite differently and unexpectedly: (F) He forebodes his own doom, rather than his son's rise in favor, in the account of the eclipse. Therefore, at the very thematic center of the speech delivered by the old man on the beach of Tarifa, the king calls for a skillful interpreter of dreams who, (F') is brought into his presence, only to inform the king that the dream has two interpretations: one being esoteric, and the other exoteric.¹³⁸ Disturbingly, the astrologer adds: "No truthful tongue can give *reliable* information about it . . . Here is the interpretation on which you should *rely* . . ." In other words, he is saying "I am telling you the truth when I say that my interpretation is unreliable." The interpretation he is about to provide is, therefore, presented as being unworthy of trust.

¹³⁸ Literally, *bāṭin* and *zāhir*, the two terms introduced by the Mu'tazili theologians in their attempts to interpret the Qur'ān allegorically (*ta'wīl*).

The astrologer proceeds to explain first, that “the sun and moon are two kings who first rule and then perish.” Later, he modifies his story, by clarifying: “The moon is a brother or a son to the sun.” In sum, the oneirocritic’s professional interpretation is vague, contradictory, and avowedly unreliable. Up to this point, we have been treated to three different [mis]interpretations of a dream that may never have occurred in the first place. This one, in particular, is so general, that it allows for, and covers several possible scenarios, namely: (1) Two kings who first rule and then perish. (2) The sun, and its twin brother (the two princes?). (3) The sun and its son (the King and his son?).

At this central juncture of the story, dominated by the figure of the astrologer who interprets the dream previously invoked, let me indicate that the old man’s speech is strictly organized according to the principles of ring composition. We are, therefore, offered, in the thematic core of the speech, a vignette of a disturbed king calling for, and subsequently accepting an avowedly unreliable interpretation of a dubious, if not outrightly false dream-vision. This centrally placed ambiguity must, in some way, be significant.

In Section (E’), the king, who further interprets the astrologer’s interpretation to mean that his son, Prince B, will overthrow him (possibility 3, above), pounces on the latter and is about to kill him, but refrains from doing so lest he subsequently be filled with remorse over having killed an innocent son. This very human and fatherly scruple on the part of the king proves to be a near-fatal mistake, for the son actually does overthrow his father, whom he banishes from the kingdom. In this case, the father refrains from killing his son, out of choice. We should also note that the king’s initial impulse to kill his son, rather than any stellar influence, may well be what prompts the latter to overthrow his father.

In section (D’), the son first proceeds to justify his rise to power, in his subjects’ eyes, by falsely accusing his father of misconduct before them (this further establishes that Prince B is a liar and, therefore, unreliable). He then proceeds to rule unjustly and to oppress his subjects, thereby alienating their affection, with the inevitable result that they revolt against him and restore his father’s rule. Ironically, the false dream-vision does come true, but not in the way the prince, who claimed to have experienced it, would

have wished. This time around, the king *does* kill his faithless son, thereby fulfilling the vague and unreliable interpretation of a dream that seems never to have occurred in the first place. What the events of the story, which the characters within it interpret to be ostensibly about the supremacy of Fate, does show, to the contrary, is that the world is ruled by Providence rather than by blind Fate, for we are offered a comforting medieval view of a universe ruled by justice, not arbitrariness, in which the wicked are punished and the righteous rewarded.

At this point, let us remind ourselves that the old man has told this story about his ancestors in order to establish both their, and his own nobility. In fact, since all of the characters in the story are negatively portrayed as ruffians, scoundrels, rapists, hypocrites, fools, liars, parricides, filicides, and so on, exactly the opposite is established.

The fact that the entire story is a lie, containing further embroideries on truth within it, becomes apparent if we pause to ask ourselves how the speaker's grandfather can possibly descend from an ancestor who had two sons, both of whom were killed, thereby leaving their father without issue. We might also consider asking ourselves how the speaker's grandfather knew that evil Prince B murdered good Prince A, since Prince B died at his father's hands with his fratricide presumably unconfessed, thus carrying his dark secret into his grave. A more convincing conclusion is to assume that the speaker is either a liar or a fool. In either case he is an unreliable narrator of events.¹³⁹

In (C'), after having ended his story, the speaker holds it up as a "tale of warning," and derives a moral conclusion from it, namely that many an unrighteous individual is responsible for his own downfall. As readers who look beneath the surface of the text for an esoteric dimension to it, we can readily sympathize with this conclusion, insofar as it follows smoothly from the story itself, in

¹³⁹ The archetypal tale of the good and bad siblings may be traced, from the biblical legend of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:24-34), through Shakespeare's *King Lear*, as I am kindly reminded by Professors Jaroslav Stetkevych and Laurence Michalak. Here, however, the matter is further complicated because the (apparently) bad son is in reality heroic, whereas the (apparently) good son is in reality a murderer. In this case we are dealing with the interplay between appearance and reality.

which justice prevails, and in which individual freedom of choice in moral matters is implied, but the characters in the story lack the gift of seeing themselves as others see them. Remaining at the surface, exoteric level in their interpretations, they see events entirely in terms of predestination, as exemplified by the influence of the stars on human events. But even the characters' misreading of events is ironized, when the speaker, who is telling this tall tale only to win the sympathy of his audience and, thereby, to pocket their alms, declares that "property is a choice wine or nectar . . . causing old age to covet youthfulness. This world pushes deceptions to the extreme while, simultaneously, it consumes deposits."

At the end of the *maqāmāh*, it is revealed that the old man, who has delivered this inspiring oration, is not really old at all; instead, he has merely disguised himself as an old man in order to prey upon the sympathies of his gullible audience and, thereby, extract alms from them. Thus, the moral scruples espoused by the speaker are, in his case, unwarranted, since he is himself violating the very moral principles he proclaims. In other words, he does not practice what he preaches, hence his claims to moral authority, just as his claims to nobility of ancestry, are inadequate.

In contrast to section (B), where the speaker claimed to be old but still able-bodied, in (B') he portrays himself as both old and incapacitated. Therefore, he implies, he is in need of being rescued by as many charitable souls as possible. Having waxed eloquent in describing the heroic Arabian past in (A), the speaker is finally reduced to silence brought about by his weakness and exhaustion, in the unheroic Andalusī present he depicts in (A').

So eloquent has the old man's appeal been that, after his speech is over, the bystanders contend with one another in rushing forward to give him alms. But the narrator, al-Sā'ib, that most innocent of all innocents abroad, who has been stung by this very speaker before, and will be stung by him over and over again, recognizes him to be the master-rogue and picaroon, Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī; not an Andalusī at all, nor even a Berber, but an Arab from the Arabian Peninsula, and it immediately becomes clear to the victim that the claims made in the rogue's speech are all false; that they have all been motivated by a desire for undeserved gain. Upon being discovered, the rogue beats a hasty retreat, while reciting, as his parting shot at

the narrator, a cynical poem in which he recommends adapting oneself to Fate's vicissitudes and being satisfied with one's lot, modest though the latter may be. He then adds:

Do you not observe that I am merely pretending to be old, although my skin is fresh, and my bones are solid,

And that Fate is an archer whose arrows hit the mark whereas, from the outset, the arrows of its enemies miss it?¹⁴⁰

From the previous remarks, we may conclude that the rogue is presenting himself as a fatalist, insofar as he subscribes to the doctrine that Fate controls all our actions and that we are not, therefore, accountable for our misconduct. Furthermore, in his life, he perversely applies this doctrine to justify his own misconduct, never heeding the moral embedded in his own tale, which implies that the universe is ruled by justice. He is not aware that, in a providentially controlled universe, Fate will eventually hit the mark with its arrows, by shooting down tricksters such as himself. The story he tells to illustrate his case is a lie within a lie containing a truth. Therefore, his moral conclusion can hardly be reliable, and we are justified in arriving at exactly the opposite conclusion from that recommended by him; namely, that we *do* enjoy some measure of Free Will; that we *are* responsible for our acts, and that we *are* expected to struggle against obstacles in our pursuit of righteousness, rather than giving in to the temptation of wrongdoing when under duress. The entire *maqāmah* thus embodies an exoteric and an esoteric meaning, and the author is nudging us to practice *ta'wīl* and to do what his anti-hero is incapable of doing, namely to penetrate the false, exoteric level of the text, in order to reach its true, esoteric meaning. This underlying message we have attempted to reconstruct makes some sense, when we consider again, that al-Saraquṣṭī wrote his *Maqāmāt* under Almoravid rule, at a time when Christian forces were making ever deeper inroads into Islamic territory; at a time when there was a general feeling of helplessness and malaise in the land. In a broader sense, the author seems to be inspiring his countrymen to take their destiny into their own hands in order to meet the Christian challenge, rather than passively accepting defeat.

¹⁴⁰ W43, p. 406.

(3) “*Maqāmah 19*”

Al-Saraqusṭī’s “*Maqāmah 19*” begins with the narrator, al-Sā’ib ibn Tammām transmitting the information that, when he had reached old age, he determined to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In doing so, he declares: “I bade farewell to passion and youth, faced the blowing of the south and east winds, and came from the white-laned [*bayḍā’ al-darb*] city to the confines of the west.”¹⁴¹ According to the Moroccan editor of the text, a marginal note in one of the manuscripts identifies the “white-laned city” as “Zaragoza on the frontier.”¹⁴² This identification may be supported on the basis of evidence provided by several medieval geographers, who state that Zaragoza was called “the white city” [*al-madīnah al-bayḍā’*].¹⁴³ Let us also note that one traveling from Zaragoza to “the confines of the west,” i.e. Morocco, would be traveling south and, therefore, facing the south wind. We are, then, definitely dealing with another *maqāmah*, aside from that of “The Berbers” and that of “Ṭarīf,” in which there is an allusion, be it ever so indirect, to the author’s Andalusī homeland. As we shall see in what follows, this allusion is not entirely without significance.

Once the narrator reaches the confines of the west, he declares: “I devoted myself to the saddle-girth and the breast-rope of the camel, until I found myself in the land of Egypt, hoping for success and victory over my fate.”¹⁴⁴ Put in more prosaic terms, the narrator has traveled by camel-caravan, from Morocco to Egypt, this time with the east wind in his face, as stated earlier. In other words, the narrator has opted for describing his trajectory in a way that is so roundabout and evasive that it requires work on our part to unravel the meaning of his words. It is as if he does not really want us to

¹⁴¹ W19, p. 182.

¹⁴² W19, p. 182, n. 4.

¹⁴³ See for example, *La péninsule iberique au moyen-âge d’après le Kitāb ar-rawḍ al-miṭār fī ḥabar al-aḫṭār d’Ibn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Himyārī*, ed. and trans. É. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1938), Arabic text, pp. 96-98; French trans., pp. 118-120: “Saraqusṭa. Zaragoza, Saragosse: Dans la partie orientale d’al-Andalus. C’est elle qu’on appelle aussi ‘la Ville Blanche’ (*al-Madīnah al-bayḍā’*) . . . à cause de la grande quantité de plâtre et de chaux qui s’y trouve.” See too *Géographie d’Édrisi*, trans. P. Amédée Jaubert (Paris, 1840), II, 35: “Saragosse porte aussi le nom d’el-Beidha (*al-bayḍā’*), ou de ville blanche, à cause de ses fortifications revêtues de chaux.”

¹⁴⁴ W19, p. 182.

know from whence he is coming, or the route he has followed, as is often the wont of dishonest individuals.

Upon arrival in Egypt, the narrator goes on a tour of that land's ruins and monuments. In particular, he contemplates the Pyramids "in order to humble and humiliate [his] soul, thereby making it hope for and expect pardon."¹⁴⁵ In the middle of his reveries, he hears a loud voice in the direction of which people are flocking. The producer of the voice is delivering a fire-and-brimstone sermon of the kind known in Arabic as *wa'z*. Like some medieval precursor to Napoleon, the speaker is asking his assembled audience where are Pharaoh, builder of the Pyramids, and Kan'an (Canaan) who was a son of Noah, and is presented as a man of military might, according to Arab traditions.¹⁴⁶ No matter how powerful they may have been in their own time, these potentates, the preacher proceeds to remind his audience, have died and been forgotten. The crowd is further asked to consider those men of the present who visit the eloquent monuments of Antiquity, yet fail to ponder over the fate of their builders. After admonishing the members of his assembled audience for not heeding the warning implicitly embodied in the Pyramids, concerning the transitory nature of human power, the preacher reminds them that, were it not for the obedience they manifest toward the Fāṭimid and, therefore, Šrī caliphs of Egypt, with whose rule they have been blessed by God, they would hardly have prospered. The statement is followed by lavish praise of the Fāṭimid dynasty.

For the Caliph to have heard the preacher's sermon from his royal palace, we would have to assume that it stood within earshot of the Pyramids (which was actually not the case)¹⁴⁷ for at this point,

¹⁴⁵ W19, p. 182.

¹⁴⁶ On Kan'an, see *E.I.* 2, IV, 528.

¹⁴⁷ In 358/969, the Fāṭimids founded Cairo on the east bank of a now dry canal (*al-ḥalīj*) whose name lingers on in the city's toponymy. Within the walls of the city stood the Small and Large Palaces, to the west and east, respectively, divided by an area called *Bayna l-Qaṣrayn* ('Between the Two Palaces'), whose name survives, although the two Fāṭimid palaces have long since disappeared. *Al-ḥalīj* lay well to the east of the Nile, whereas the Pyramids of Giza lie well to its west, bordering on the desert. There are at least some ten miles distance between the two locations, with the Nile lying between them. See André Raymond, *Cairo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000), trans. Willard Wood, chap. 2, "Cairo, Fatimid

a summoner from the Caliph appears, and the preacher is hauled away into the latter's presence, leaving his audience to wonder whether he has committed some crime for which he is being arrested. After a prolonged absence, the preacher emerges from the royal palace "wearing a fragrant perfume, riding a splendid mount, dressed in luxurious clothes, bearing magnificent gifts, and having secured a lofty rank and an ample glory."¹⁴⁸

The narrator of the episode, namely al-Sā'ib, that not-so-innocent abroad, who has recognized that the preacher is his Nemesis, the trickster Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī, follows the latter, who likewise recognizes his victim. Al-Sadūsī then asks al-Sā'ib: "Are you a Syrian at times, and an Egyptian at others; sometimes a Kufan and sometimes a Basran?"¹⁴⁹ In other words, our narrator is being asked why he behaves like a chameleon, harboring loyalty toward no particular group, by a trickster who is otherwise known for doing exactly the same thing.

To this question, al-Sā'ib replies that he has never seen a man so talented in inventing lies to earn his living, to which al-Sadūsī responds with a poem in which he explains that his penchant for wenching and winebibbing is so compelling that no fortune is large enough to cover the expenses incurred in the pursuit of his vices, adding praise for the generous Caliph, who has weighed him down with gifts, and whom he characterizes as a representative of Orthodoxy. When asked by al-Sā'ib what magic he has used to dupe the Fāṭimid ruler into giving him so generous a handout, al-Sadūsī recites a cynical poem in which he declares:

Never reveal a secret, even if an oath requires you to do so.

Speaking the truth is an act of piety, yet where is the man who does not lie?

Every rough stretch of road is treacherous; where is the loyal and the faithful man?¹⁵⁰

City," pp. 31-79, especially, the map on p. 32. It would, therefore, have been impossible for the preacher's sermon to have been heard from the royal palace, a point that will be discussed, below.

¹⁴⁸ W19, p. 184.

¹⁴⁹ W19, p. 184.

¹⁵⁰ W19, p. 185.

At this point in the narrative, two different manuscripts provide two alternate endings to the *maqāmah*. In one of these, al-Sadūsī explains that the Fāṭimid Caliph had first politely thanked him for his praise and exhortation to repent,¹⁵¹ and then asked him to improvise some poetry. Al-Sadūsī claims to have gladly complied with the request by reciting a poem in praise of the Caliph's 'Alid ancestry and Šrī affiliation. The poem so moved the ruler, al-Sā'ib is told, that he waxed generous and enthusiastic, while even asking for more poetry on the welcome subject of his own dynastic splendor and magnificence. After al-Sadūsī had complied with this further request to improvise verse, the grateful ruler gave his encomiast the money, servant, and fine horse now in his possession. But here we encounter another inconsistency, for al-Sadūsī specifically praises the Fāṭimid Caliph for his descent from 'Alī al-Riḍā, who was the eighth Imām of the Twelver Šrīah,¹⁵² whereas the Fāṭimids were Ismā'īlis, not Twelver Šrīs, and prided themselves in their descent from Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far al-Šādiq,¹⁵³ not from 'Alī al-Riḍā. A rough parallel to this gross confusion of Šrī sects would be to have a Lutheran praise the Pope for his zeal in upholding Bulgarian Orthodox doctrine! So we must conclude that al-Sadūsī is either lying, or he has gotten his Šrīs hopelessly muddled.

Having provided al-Sā'ib with an account of his audience with the hapless Caliph, al-Sadūsī gives his Andalusī interlocutor a cut from his ill-gotten gains, in order to buy the latter's silence in the matter, asking him to refrain from revealing that his eulogy was insincere and, therefore, merely calculated to extract money from the Caliph. Then, al-Sadūsī departs, but not before al-Sā'ib agrees to remain silent, saying, in one of the alternate endings: "So I took his words to lie somewhere between good advice and sound guidance, on the one hand, and blame and threat, on the other,"¹⁵⁴ after declaring which, he praises and blesses al-Sadūsī for his cleverness and cunning.

Here the *maqāmah* ends, with al-Sā'ib having been thoroughly

¹⁵¹ Having heard it from a distance of over ten miles?

¹⁵² See *E.I.* 2, I, 399-400.

¹⁵³ See *E.I.* 2, II, 374-375.

¹⁵⁴ W19, p. 186.

corrupted and suborned—on his way to Mecca, no less!—without our being informed, incidentally, whether he ever reached the Holy City. The pilgrimage to Mecca is, therefore, perversely presented as a journey toward sin rather than salvation.

Let us not forget that the author of *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah* was an Andalusi, nor that the Andalusi Umayyads had, during their heyday, been arch-enemies of the Fāṭimid caliphate, to whose Šīʿi ideology they opposed the Sunni set of beliefs they succeeded in implanting and nurturing on Andalusi soil, to such an extent that those beliefs survived long after the Umayyad dynasty had vanished from the Iberian Peninsula. In the meantime, and for several centuries, a veritable cold war was waged between the two rival dynasties.

One of the major accusations brought against Šīʿis by Sunnis, is that the former are hypocrites, because they resort to practicing *taqīyah*, i.e. dispensation from fulfilling the requirements of religion when under compulsion or threat of injury. Within the Andalusi context, however, this charge is hardly fair, when one pauses to consider that, after the conquest of Granada, an entire Sunni population was to adopt exactly the same practice when persecuted by Christians.¹⁵⁵ Be that as it may, in this *maqāmāh*, the tables are turned, for it is the trickster, al-Sadūsī, who hypocritically praises a Fāṭimid Caliph for representing specifically Šīʿi ideals: He is the hidden Imām,¹⁵⁶ he is a Hāšimite,¹⁵⁷ and a lineal descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad through the latter's daughter Fāṭimah¹⁵⁸ (here referred to as the "Virgin,"¹⁵⁹ and her husband ʿAlī,¹⁶⁰ etc. Nor is the praise offered by al-Sadūsī to the increasingly enthusiastic Imām by any stretch of the imagination sincere: The reader is made painfully

¹⁵⁵ See James T. Monroe, "A Curious Morisco Appeal to the Ottoman Empire," *Andalus*, XXXI (1966), 281-303.

¹⁵⁶ On the Šīʿi doctrine of the hidden Imām, see *E.I.* 2, III, 1167. This is, however, largely a Twelver-Šīʿi doctrine, whereas the Fāṭimids were Ismāʿīlis, and did not believe in it.

¹⁵⁷ I.e., a descendant of Hāšim ibn ʿAbd Manāf, great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad. See *E.I.* 2, III, 260.

¹⁵⁸ On whom, see *E.I.* 2, II, 841-850.

¹⁵⁹ On Fāṭima preserving her virginity by giving birth through her thigh, see *E.I.* 2, II, 847.

¹⁶⁰ ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib was the fourth Orthodox caliph, whose descendants are revered by the Šīʿis, as being the only legitimate successors to the Prophet Muḥammad. See *E.I.* 2, I, 381-386.

aware that it is merely calculated to tap the wellspring of the Caliph's generosity. Hence, we are treated to a remarkable, if not disgraceful spectacle, in which a Sunni believer practices *taqīyah*—not to save his life when faced with the threat of religious persecution—but to part a Šī'i Caliph, whose only fault lies in his unsuspecting generosity, from his wealth. If the Caliph is overly trusting of a stranger, to the point of imprudence, recklessness, and folly, that stranger is nothing less than a crook and is, therefore, far more reprehensible than the Caliph whom he succeeds in duping, for the stranger's wrongdoing is as premeditated as it is intentional. The text seems to imply that, if Šī'is can be fools, Sunnis can be hypocrites.

Even more disturbing, is the fact that our narrator, al-Sā'ib, has been traveling on a pilgrimage to Mecca and that, on his way there, he has stopped at the Pyramids of Egypt, in an appropriately penitential mood, "in order to humble and humiliate [his] soul, thereby making it hope for and expect pardon, and while the pearls of [his] tears were being scattered and their copious showers were being shed."¹⁶¹ According to one ending to this *maqāmah*, however, he allows his silent approval of wrongdoing (*qui tacet consentit*) to be purchased by al-Sadūsī in exchange for a share of the gifts the latter has received from the Fāṭimid Caliph: "[Al-Sadūsī] gave me a cut from the largesse he had received, and said: 'Beware lest you blow the lid; depart instead in safety and security, whether you turn left or right, if God Almighty so wills'."¹⁶² According to another of the alternate endings, al-Sā'ib says: "May you be gratified by your cunning, and blessed in the pursuit of your prey, the Sultan is an ocean of generosity; eloquence is magic, and you are preeminent in it. Therefore, let the rainclouds be generous to you, and let no promise made to you, or any right due you, remain unfulfilled."¹⁶³ At this point, al-Sadūsī turns away from the erstwhile pious, elderly, and unreliable narrator whom, in the other version, he has just bribed into refraining from reporting his own misdeeds, and he pays tribute to the aging al-Sā'ib's cowardliness by saying: "May I not lack your acute discernment, God willing."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ W19, p. 182.

¹⁶² W19, p. 185.

¹⁶³ W19, p. 186.

¹⁶⁴ W19, p. 186.

Thus, in one version at least, al-Sā'ib has tacitly agreed to maintain silence in exchange for a cut of the ill-gotten gains obtained from the Caliph. In this case, therefore, and in contrast to the "*Maqāmah* of the Berbers," there *is* honor among thieves (note that, once he has been bribed, the narrator becomes a thief by association), while al-Sadūsī actually acknowledges and pays tribute to his suborned accomplice's greed and corruption.

There are a number of conceptual oppositions, explicit or implicit, imbedded in this *maqāmah*:

Zaragoza		Mecca
Frontier		Center
Basra		Kufa
Syria		Egypt
Umayyads		Fāṭimids
Sunnism		Šī'ism
Aš'arism		Mu'tazilism
Predestination	..	Free Will

Both protagonists in the *maqāmah* under analysis are fatalists. Al-Sā'ib arrives in Egypt "hoping for success and victory over [his] fate"¹⁶⁵—a totally unrealistic and absurd expectation, incidentally, for how can one believe in Fate, yet simultaneously hope to overcome it? The speech delivered at the Pyramids by al-Sadūsī is peppered with allusions to Fate: The death of Pharaoh and Kan'an is described as "a victorious fate . . . a rapacious destiny;"¹⁶⁶ the Pyramids "were erected" for the edification of the assembled congregation, "by Time;"¹⁶⁷ the Šī'i dynasty of Egypt "averts the ravages of Time"¹⁶⁸ from its loyal subjects; "Fate watches over that caliphate,"¹⁶⁹ etc. That al-Sā'ib is being portrayed by the author as a Sunni is clear: He comes from al-Andalus, a traditional hotbed of Sunnism; when he reaches old age, he goes on a pilgrimage to Mecca and, on his way, arrives in Egypt, where he tours the Pyramids "thereby mak-

¹⁶⁵ W19, p. 182.

¹⁶⁶ W19, p. 183.

¹⁶⁷ W19, p. 183.

¹⁶⁸ W19, p. 183.

¹⁶⁹ W19, p. 183.

ing [his soul] hope for and expect pardon,”¹⁷⁰ presumably for his lifetime of sins, several of which are otherwise richly documented in the remaining fifty-eight *maqāmāt* that are included in the corpus attributed to al-Saraqustī. Let us recall that, according to the Mu‘tazili theological system (which was adopted by the Šī‘i confession), there can be no divine pardon for human sins, insofar as God is viewed as *just* and, therefore, unable to pardon the wicked or, conversely, to reward the sinner.¹⁷¹ The concept of pardon is, instead, an Aš‘ari and Sunni idea, tailored to fit an *omnipotent* rather than a *just* divinity; pardon is tailored to fit a divinity that *predetermines* all activities taking place within its creation, including human sin; pardon is tailored to fit a divinity that is merciful in forgiving those sins that it has itself caused humans to commit. In other words, pardon goes hand in hand with Predestination, in the Aš‘ari/Sunni theological system, as strict justice goes with Free Will, in that of the Mu‘tazili/Šī‘is, and we can reasonably assume that, in hoping for pardon, al-Sā‘ib is being portrayed as a Sunni.

Therefore, on a deeper level, “*Maqāmah* 19” juxtaposes two theological systems: one that adheres to the doctrine of Free Will, and another that leans toward that of Predestination. Nevertheless, “*Maqāmah* 19” shows that those who conduct their affairs according to the tenets of Predestination are morally inferior to those who espouse the doctrine of Free Will, insofar as hardened crooks are worse than softened fools. In other words, this *maqāmah* portrays Šī‘is as being morally superior to Sunnis. Coming, as this surprising conclusion does, from the pen of an Andalusī author who, by virtue of the very fact that he was an Andalusī, grew up and lived in a Sunni environment throughout his life, it is a remarkable one, indeed, and it strongly suggests, at very least, that al-Saraqustī adopted a severely critical stance toward members of his own society, for he is suggesting that certain Sunnis, in his own day and age, are morally bankrupt.

“*Maqāmah* 28” is closely related to “*Maqāmah* 19,” insofar as the

¹⁷⁰ W19, p. 182.

¹⁷¹ On the Mu‘tazilah, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793; on their teachings concerning the punishment of sinners, see p. 790; on the application of their teachings to the *maqāmah* genre, see James T. Monroe, *The Art of Bad‘ī az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, chap. 4, “The Divine Paradox,” pp. 47-63.

final section of 28 is a long and verbatim repetition of one of the two alternate endings of 19, containing the selfsame eulogy of Šī'ism that has been discussed above. This coincidence in wording raises a problem that I am unable to resolve at present: If we assume that either of these two *maqāmahs* is an imitation or part plagiarism of the other and, therefore, not the work of al-Saraqustī, then we might assume that the other *maqāmah* is to be attributed to our author. But which of the two *maqāmahs* is the work of our author, and which is not? Or was the author merely recycling his materials? In the brief prologue to his collection, al-Saraqustī specifies that he composed fifty *maqāmāt*,¹⁷² while one of his contemporaries also bears witness to the fact that the number of *maqāmāt* to be found in al-Saraqustī's *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah* is that made canonical by his model, al-Ḥarīrī, namely fifty.¹⁷³

A further problem is that Ḍ, which is based upon four manuscripts, contains fifty *maqāmāt*, whereas W, which is based upon seven manuscripts, contains fifty-nine. Ḍ32-40 are relegated, in W, to an appendix numbered 1-9, whereas W27-28, 38, 44-45, 47-50, are not to be found in Ḍ. In other words, W contains nine *maqāmāt* that exceed the canonical number of fifty claimed by the author, and described by one of his contemporaries who wrote down the work directly from its author's dictation. Since W50 (which does not appear in Ḍ) recounts the episode of the repentance and death of the anti-hero, Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī, it would seem a logical conclusion to the collection and would, therefore, appear to be authentic. Nonetheless, it will take further, stylistic investigation to weed out those nine *maqāmāt* not attributable to our author if, indeed, it will ever be possible to do so, given the fact that stylistic analysis of Classical Arabic literary texts is a technique still in its infancy, entirely aside from the fact that this technique can hardly be said

¹⁷² "The following are fifty *maqāmāt* composed by Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqustī, in Córdoba, one of the cities of al-Andalus . . ." W, p. 17.

¹⁷³ "[I studied] the book of the fifty *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, composed by the reliable master, secretary, and literary scholar Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, al-Tamīmī, al-Saraqustī—may God have mercy on him! My transmission of it was based on his authority." Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr (d. 575/1179), *Fahrasah*, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (repr. Baghdad, 1963), p. 387.

to yield very reliable results.¹⁷⁴ In the meantime, we are confronted with a textual situation in which W19 and 28 both praise Šīism verbatim, and in which one of the two may be authentically Saraqustian, whereas the other may be spurious. Having discussed “*Maqāmah* 19,” above, let us now examine “*Maqāmah* 28.”¹⁷⁵

In this piece, the narrator, al-Sā’ib ibn Tammām finds himself in a town of Oman, where he comes upon the trickster, al-Sadūsī, who is sitting at the entrance to a physician’s shop, discussing diseases with the latter. Al-Sadūsī immediately recognizes al-Sā’ib in the crowd that has gathered to witness the discussion; he silently concocts a scheme to use al-Sā’ib in order to relieve a local Šīi ruler of his possessions, and begins to flatter al-Sā’ib, by invoking every imaginable form of praise for the latter’s ancestry and virtue. Then he tells al-Sā’ib that the country the latter has reached is ruled by one of al-Sā’ib’s relatives, and leads him to the court of a powerful local dignitary, to whom the trickster speaks in private for a long time,¹⁷⁶ telling the local dignitary that he has brought him one of his relatives, whom the dignitary, who is a Hāšimi and, therefore, a direct descendant of the Prophet’s family, welcomes with open arms. At this point, al-Sā’ib, who is not a Hāšimi, is overcome with embarrassment at having had his ancestry misrepresented to the ruler, and vigorously denies any connexion to the Hāšimi clan, whereupon al-Sadūsī accuses al-Sā’ib of lying, and upbraids him for having done so. Hinting at his own relationship to the Prophet’s family, while simultaneously reaffirming al-Sā’ib’s descent from it, since the latter has, by now, been thoroughly browbeaten into silent agreement with al-Sadūsī’s plot (once again, *qui tacet consentit*), the master trickster succeeds in gaining the hospitality of the Hāšimi lord of Oman for

¹⁷⁴ The matter is discussed in Ḥasan ‘Abbās, *Fann al-maqāmah fī l-qarn al-sādis* (Alexandria? 1986), pp. 50-59, where the author inclines to the belief that the nine superfluous *maqāmāt* are imitations made by al-Saraqusī’s students that, somehow or other, made their way into the collection. It is not possible to tell, however, which nine, of the fifty-nine *maqāmāt* attributed to our author, are the spurious ones. I wish to thank my colleague, Professor Ignacio Ferrando Frutos for alerting me to the existence of this book, and for kindly providing me with a photocopy of the relevant pages.

¹⁷⁵ W28, pp. 250-255.

¹⁷⁶ If the conversation was a private one, then how could al-Sā’ib have known what was said during its course?

a prolonged period, after which, he decides to extricate himself, by guileful means, from the latter's generous and welcoming hospitality. In other words, al-Sadūsī has used al-Sā'ib to further his own and al-Sā'ib's interests, while the latter, after an initial protestation that the Omani dignitary interprets as a show of modesty, has acquiesced to the devious plan. Without telling the lord of Oman that he intends to leave him, since the latter would not have allowed him to do so, so strongly had the local lord become attached to al-Sadūsī, the latter catches the ruler in an affable mood, obtains from him all the gifts he desires, and then ungratefully abandons his benefactor. At this point, al-Sā'ib asks the trickster what passed between the latter and the lord of Oman, while al-Sadūsī's reply is a verbatim repetition of one of the two alternate final sections of "*Maqāmāh* 19," to which our previous comments are, therefore, largely applicable.

Returning to "*Maqāmāh* 19," it is further necessary to consider the problem posed by the actual location of the Fāṭimid palaces of Cairo in relation to the Pyramids of Giza, and the fact that a sermon delivered at the Pyramids could not have been heard from the palaces. One solution to our dilemma would be to dismiss the entire passage as an inaccuracy attributable to the ignorance of Cairene topography on the part of our Andalusī author. While such an interpretation of the passage is by no means impossible, an alternative interpretation, more in harmony with what is found in other *maqāmāt*, would be to consider that the text contains a deliberate inconsistency introduced by the author for, in "*Maqāmāh* 28" we are informed by the narrator, al-Sā'ib, that the trickster, al-Sadūsī, spoke in secret with the ruler of Oman, in order to trick both the ruler and the narrator, yet the narrator is fully aware of the contents of this secret conversation, from participation in which, he has been excluded. It would be illogical to argue that this passage is an illustration of the omniscient narrator technique,¹⁷⁷ for what is being said in secret is designed to trick the narrator, who then proceeds to fall for the trick. If the omniscient narrator approach is deemed unconvincing, we are left with the suspicion that the author may

¹⁷⁷ By definition, third-person narration requires an omniscient narrator, whereas first-person narration, as occurs in the *maqāmāt*, does not.

have inserted an inconsistency into his work for a deliberate reason. These two inconsistencies are comparable to yet a third, contained in "*Maqāmah* No. 41 (The Berbers)." Let us recall that, in that piece, discussed above, we first encounter the narrator as he is standing on the shores of Tangier, hoping for passage to al-Andalus. While he is waiting for a ship to arrive, he narrates how he was first tricked by al-Sadūsī, and then threatened by him with retribution from the Berbers, whom both had collaborated in wronging. The hapless narrator is warned that, if he does not immediately depart from the region, al-Sadūsī will lead a pack of Berbers to hunt him down and kill him. Since al-Sā'ib has not left the region, but is still in it, narrating his tale of woe, when we first encounter him, at the beginning of the *maqāmah*, we have yet another major contradiction calculated to underscore the unreliability of the narrator, and to suggest that the episode he is evoking may well be nothing more than a lie designed to extract money from his gullible sympathizers. Similarly, in the "*Maqāmah* of Ṭarīf," al-Sadūsī appears disguised as an old beggar who preys upon the sympathies of his benefactors by telling them that he is the impoverished descendant of the Berber conqueror Ṭarīf; that his father's ancestor, nine generations removed, had two sons, one of whom killed the other, after which the father killed his surviving son, thereby leaving himself without issue. Whereas we, as alert readers, are asked to challenge the beggar's dubious claim to descend from a man whose issue perished, his naïve benefactors are duped into offering him the alms he seeks. Inconsistencies of this sort abound in works of the picaresque genre, to which the *maqāmāt* belong; they are deliberate, rather than the product of authorial error; they are hints intended to alert the reader to the fact that nothing said in such works should be taken literally, or at face value, because everything that is said in them proceeds from an unreliable narrator.

Social criticism is an essential component of the *maqāmah* as a genre, of *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah* as a work, and of its four Andalusī *maqāmāt* in particular. Such criticism may adopt many forms. In Nos. 19 and 28, it is achieved by contrasting the relative merits of two rival sects within the nation of Islam itself, namely Sunnism and Šī'ism. In other *maqāmāt* composed by our author, similar results are achieved by using the selfsame general strategy of contrast,

but by juxtaposing a different set of specific rivals. As noted above, in the “*Maqāmah* of the Berbers,” al-Saraqusṭī brings into play two ethnic rather than sectarian groups, which he then proceeds to contrast. In that *maqāmah*, the two tricksters, who make much of their superior ethnic status (insofar as they both are, or claim to be, Arabs), are hosted by a group of Berbers who, by mere virtue of the fact that they were Berbers, would have been considered ethnically and culturally inferior by contemporary Andalus. The Berbers host their guests lavishly, thereby more than fulfilling their obligation toward hospitality, within a tradition that still considers generosity on the part of the host to be a sacrosanct duty toward the stranger. In return, the Arab guests proceed to steal from their hosts, thereby violating a basic norm of Arab ethics. In this instance, who is morally inferior if not the ethnically superior Arabs? The text appears to be saying that ethics and ethnicity do not necessarily coincide; that historically or politically superior ethnicities are not always morally superior, at the same time that it is breaking down ethnic stereotypes.

(4) “*Maqāmah* 20 (*Wine*)”

Our author’s “*Maqāmah* of Wine”¹⁷⁸ is an imitation of al-Ḥarīrī’s “*Maqāmah* 35 (of Shiraz).” In the latter,

Abū Zayd [the trickster] describes, in a company of distinguished men of literary tastes in Shiraz, where Ḥārith [the narrator] has met them, a wine-cask metaphorically under the simile of a maiden, for whom, as he tells the people, he desires to purchase wedding attire. They give him money, and it turns out that by the wedding attire is meant a flagon and a cup, which were necessary to wed as it were the wine-cask to the drinker. The allegory may have been suggested by the circumstances that the scene of the event is Shiraz, a city celebrated for its wine, or rather for the manufacture of a peculiar kind of wine-flagons, which on account of their exquisite workmanship are used in preference to others for presenting in them wines of superior quality.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ W, pp. 190-199.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas Chenery and F. Steingass, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī: Translated from the Arabic with Notes Historical and Grammatical*, II, 71-74, at p. 71. I wish to thank Dr. Douglas Young for pointing out to me the dependence of al-Saraqusṭī’s “*Maqāmah* 20” upon al-Ḥarīrī’s “*Maqāmah* 35,” on the subject of which Dr. Young is preparing a more detailed study. Al-Saraqusṭī’s “*Maqāmah* 20 (*Wine*)” may, of

In al-Saraqusṭī's treatment of the theme, the terms of comparison are inverted, for a glass of wine is described, metaphorically, as a beautiful woman. Furthermore, the same technique of juxtaposing and unfavorably contrasting two rival groups, that we have encountered in the *maqāmāt* by al-Saraqusṭī previously analyzed, also occurs in this one, this time, outside the pale of Islam. Here, al-Sā'ib first gives up winedrinking, becoming an unsufferably virtuous teetotaler. Finding a life of sobriety to be too much for him, he relapses into his old habits and visits a Christian monastery, where the monks are conducting a profitable business by providing their customers not only with wine, but also with women and boys, in the best Nuwāsian tradition.¹⁸⁰ In our monastic tavern-brothel, our narrator encounters al-Sadūsī, who has become a permanent fixture in the locale where, despite his lack of funds, he has so managed to mesmerize the other clients of the establishment with his literary talents, that they have volunteered to pay all his bills and expenses. He has also been smitten by a young Christian cupbearer descended from Roderic, the last Visigothic king of Hispania, to whom the trickster expresses his love in amatory verse. Here the text seems to be asking us to consider who is more reprehensible, the unconscionable Christians who, for a profit, provide wine, Christian women, and Christian boys to backsliding Muslims, or the backsliding Muslims who allow themselves to be corrupted by unconscionable Christians?

This underlying problem is closely paralleled by the situation portrayed in "*Maqāmah* 42." Here, al-Sā'ib travels as a merchant to India, where he stays "among a people who were submissive and obedient to God, but not believers or Muslims, although they were a people who had chosen justice as their practice, and had strongly rejected injustice." Yet in this highly moral environment, he allows himself to be seduced by al-Sadūsī into visiting a brothel, where he gets drunk and is divested of his wealth. Again, the ethical question being asked by the text is: "Who is morally superior, the drunken Muslims, or the justice-loving, if drink- and sex-providing Indians?"

Taking this set of oppositions one step further, in "*Maqāmah* 35

course, also be compared with al-Hamaḍānī's "*Maqāmah* 49" with the same subtitle.

¹⁸⁰ On this subject, see *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J. W. Wright Jr., and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997).

(The Bear),” al-Sā’ib finds himself in Wāsiṭ, where he sees an animal trainer making a trained bear perform tricks before a group of women and children. Through an act of ventriloquism, the bear is made to appear as if it is reciting a poem about itself that portrays it as a rather sympathetic creature. Soon, however, al-Sā’ib recognizes that the animal’s trainer is al-Sadūsī, and threatens to reveal his identity to the crowd. Al-Sadūsī advises him not to do so, but al-Sā’ib remains unmovable. Thereupon, al-Sadūsī circles around al-Sā’ib menacingly with the bear, mocks him in verse, and publicly accuses al-Sā’ib of being a child molester, whereupon the women in the crowd, anxious to protect their children, beat him unmercifully, as al-Sadūsī makes his escape. In this episode, there is no apparent need for al-Sā’ib to reveal al-Sadūsī’s identity to the crowd, since the latter has committed no crime against his audience, but is merely providing them with straightforward entertainment, and so al-Sā’ib is repaid for his gratuitous malice. At the same time, there is no apparent justification for the extreme measures taken by al-Sadūsī to defend himself, since he has committed no offense against the crowd and thus need fear no retaliation at their hands. All in all, both the narrator and the trickster come out of the situation looking like despicable scoundrels, in contrast to the bear, who is merely doing what it has been trained to do. In this instance, we may legitimately ask ourselves who is morally superior, the spiteful humans, or the trained animal?

In all of the *maqāmāt* studied above, the socially superior in-group (Muslims, Sunnis, Arabs, humans) is being contrasted unfavorably with the socially inferior Outsider, or Other (Christians, Indians, Šī’is, Berbers, animals). At this point in our analysis, an authorial strategy begins to emerge, according to which, in *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyyah*, the careful reader is constantly being invited to make moral judgments and choices. Thus, for all its elaborate rhetorical embellishment, al-Saraqusṭī’s masterpiece is hardly an example of art for art’s sake in which the rhetorical form is all, and the content is nothing, contrary to what most Orientalist writings about the *maqāmāh* genre, be they philologically grounded and positivistic, or post-modern and (de)constructive have claimed.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ For the views of some traditional Orientalists, see their remarks, quoted in

In a broader, comparative context, let it also be pointed out that, whereas in the northern, Christian part of the Iberian Peninsula, audiences were listening to epics such as the *Poema de mio Cid*, that sang the triumphs of the anachronistically misnamed Reconquista, in the Muslim south, a considerable amount of soul-searching was taking place while, in *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, traditional attitudes and beliefs were being subjected to a painful, critical, and even dangerous re-appraisal. The danger that is always inherent in any serious scrutiny of religious values is the very reason why the style of the work attempts to obscure from the ignorant masses the very message it simultaneously invites its more discerning and enlightened readers to uncover for themselves.

Doubling and Duplicity

When an author of talent takes up the pen to write a work within the framework of an already established literary genre, we may assume that he does not do so merely to repeat what has been achieved by his predecessors, but rather, to produce something that is both new and original, thereby adding his own individual contribution and inventiveness to the genre. Whether we view the author's efforts as the result of an "anxiety of influence"¹⁸² or of the pride he takes in his craftsmanship, would seem to depend upon whether we are pessimists or optimists.

Either way, it is a daunting challenge to gauge the originality of an author such as al-Saraqṣṭī, who subjected himself to considerably stricter rules than those required in Arabic literary composition. The very concept of originality was an invention of the Romantics.¹⁸³ Does this mean that classical and medieval authors, who operated largely within the limitations imposed by a strict set of rules and conventions, were not original? When the three great tragedians of

James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī' az-Ẓamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, chap. 7, "Rending the Veils of Obscurity," pp. 87-100. For one post-modern view, see Daniel Beaumont, "The Trickster and Rhetoric in the *Maqāmāt*," *Edebiyāt*, V (1994), 1-14.

¹⁸² Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York, 1973).

¹⁸³ See "Originality," *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger, et al., 2d ed. (Princeton, 1974), pp. 594-595.

Ancient Greece wrote plays that essentially retold stories well-known to their audiences, in what way were they original? Coming closer to our subject, when al-Hamadānī, al-Ḥarīrī, and al-Saraqusṭī all tell us trickster tales similar in their conception and unpredictability, how do the authors differ, and what is the original contribution to the genre made by each one of them?

In modern terms, we expect authors to be original with respect to the literary materials¹⁸⁴ they use. For example, rather than adhering to a traditional repertory of meters and rhyme schemes, modern poets take delight in inventing new meters or even in abandoning meter altogether. As far as themes are concerned, writers are constantly seeking new ones, thereby striving to invent new tales. But in the case of classical and medieval authors, who adhere to a traditional repertory of materials, originality cannot be sought in the materials they use. It must be found instead, in the literary structure of the works they have composed. If this is so, then a well-structured work will be one exhibiting such organic unity¹⁸⁵ that even the most minute details in that work will relate directly to, and be reflected and reproduced in, its larger patterns. Put differently, there will be a close correspondence between the micro-structure and the macro-structure of a well-crafted literary work. This, as I hope to show, is certainly the case with al-Saraqusṭī.

In the introduction to his work, al-Saraqusṭī not only tells us specifically that he is imitating the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, but adds that he has imposed upon himself the technique of *luẓūm mā lā yalzam* ('doing what is above and beyond the call of duty') first introduced to Arabic literature by al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1058). That author not only made use of the technique of *luẓūm* in his famous collection of poems known as *Luẓūm mā lā yalzam*, but also, if to a lesser extent, in the prose sections of his *Risālat al-ḡufrān*, where it appears sporadically. Similarly, al-Ḥarīrī also employed *luẓūm* in his *Maqāmāt*, but he did so in an unsystematic fashion. For example, when he cannot find an exact biconsonantal rhyme, he will rhyme

¹⁸⁴ Here, I use the dichotomy *materials* versus *structure* instead of the older dichotomy *form* versus *content*, in the technical sense recommended by R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3d ed. (New York, 1956), pp. 140-141.

¹⁸⁵ See "Organism," *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 593-594.

related but not identical consonants (*adab*/*ḡadab*),¹⁸⁶ or simply abandon the attempt altogether, and rhyme only the final consonants of words. In contrast, in his *al-Maḡāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, al-Saraqusṭī adopts the strict practice of rhyming not just the last consonant, but the last two consonants of words found in pausal position; either at the ends of clauses, in prose, or of metrically regular lines, in poetry, and he keeps up this difficult artifice systematically throughout his work, hence its title, *al-Maḡāmāt al-luzūmīyah*. Because of his adherence to such an extremely demanding requirement, the author has deliberately narrowed down his rhyming possibilities, since he has a smaller pool of rhymes from which to choose. However, he resorts to a most ingenious expedient to escape from the literary straitjacket within which he has placed himself: In Classical Arabic prosody, there is, among the rules governing rhyme, a defect termed *al-ṭā'*, which consists of repeating the same word in rhyme in the course of a *qaṣīdah*. Many prosodists hold this repetition to be allowable provided at least seven verses intervene between the repeated word. There is an even further loophole in the law, for the repetition is permitted at an even closer range, so long as the repeated word is used with a slightly different shade of meaning.¹⁸⁷ And this loophole is what al-Saraqusṭī, unlike his predecessors, will exploit to full advantage, both in verse and in prose, in order to compensate for the restrictions he has imposed upon himself by adopting the technique of *luzūm*. Consider the extreme case represented by the following passage, taken from an eight-line poem, of which each of the first four verses ends with the same word *yamīnu*, so that the author is not only using the loophole in the law, but triumphantly abusing it and drawing ostentatious attention to his abuse in the process:

lā tasmaḥanna bi-sirrin / wa-in 'alat-ka *yamīnu*
 fa-li-l-umūri šimālun / wa-li-l-umūri *yamīnu*
 siyyāni fī l-ḥukmi sirrun / taṣḥū bi-hi wa-*yamīnu*
 al-šidqu birrun wa-lākin / ayna l-laḏī lā *yamīnu*

¹⁸⁶ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maḡāmāt* (Beirut, 1965), p. 176.

¹⁸⁷ See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3d ed. (Cambridge, 1967), II, 357.

Never reveal a secret, even if you are required to do so by an *oath*,
For all matters have a left hand, and all matters have a *right hand*.
One should judge equally your revealed secret and your broken *promise*.

Speaking the truth is pious, yet where is the man who does not *lie*?¹⁸⁸

As a result of this constant usage of words with more than one meaning, the type of pun known as *tawriyah* is frequent in the work of al-Saraqustī. According to Seeger Bonebakker, the *tawriyah* is “a kind of word-play based on using a word with a double meaning in a context where both meanings are allowable, at least syntactically, though only one of them is actually intended by the author.”¹⁸⁹ In “*Maqāmah* 7 (The Sea),” after the trickster Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī has used his guile to persuade a group of men to part with their money, he lectures one of his victims, the agent-narrator al-Sā’ib ibn Tam-mām, on the ways of the world, declaring in verse:

jahlita ḥulqa l-barāyā / wa-ḥalqa hādā l-zaman
fa-ḥtal li-‘ayši-ka wa-jhad / fa-mā li-‘ayšin ṭaman

You are ignorant of the nature of mankind, and of the people of this age,

So strive [or: ‘deceive’ (*fa-ḥtal*)] to earn your livelihood, and work hard at it, for life is priceless.¹⁹⁰

Since Form VIII of the verb *ḥāla* can mean both ‘to strive’ or ‘to deceive’, in this context, under the guise of a moral message, the speaker is actually concealing his true and perverse recommendation, namely that one should use deceit in order to get ahead in life.

In “*Maqāmah* 14,” the trickster gives al-Sā’ib the following advice:

fa-‘mal li-*naḥsi*-ka wa-jhad / fa-inna-hā ‘a-māru

So act for the good of your *soul*, and strive in so doing, as long as you live¹⁹¹

This recommendation would constitute sound spiritual advice,

¹⁸⁸ W19, p. 185.

¹⁸⁹ Seeger A. Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya and Ṣafadī’s Faḍḍ al-Xitām* ‘an at-Tawriya wa-l-Istixdām (The Hague, 1966), p. 9.

¹⁹⁰ W7, p. 71.

¹⁹¹ W14, p. 142.

were it not for the fact that the word *naḥs*, which means 'soul', can also mean 'self', so that the entire line could be interpreted less spiritually and more selfishly to mean: "So act for the good of your own self, and strive in so doing, as long as you live."

In "*Maqāmah* 13" al-Sadūsī addresses a judge, before whom he falsely accuses a group of people of being inhospitable to him. In the course of his speech he declares:

ta-l-lāhi, 'inna l-ḍanba bi-him *lāḥiq* wa-'inna ṭirfa ḥujjatī la-l-*waqīhu*
wa-*lāḥiq*.

Their crime, by God, is indeed *overtaking* them, for the stead of my argument is both *Eminent* and *Overtaking*.¹⁹²

In this instance, the words *eminent* and *overtaking* are also the names of two legendary pre-Islamic thoroughbred stallions.

In "*Maqāmah* 16" al-Sadūsī is urged to give up youthful folly and repent before it is too late to do so. His response to al-Sā'ib is the following:

da'-nī 'uwaffī l-ṣībā madā-hu / tumma la-ka l-tawbu wa-l-rujū'u

Let me first pay youthful folly its full due, after which you may reap my repentance and my return to virtue.¹⁹³

Nonetheless, the syntactic structure of the line is such that it could just as convincingly be interpreted to mean: "Let *me* be the one who pays youthful folly its full due, while *you* repent and return to virtue." The sentence is of the type: "The duck is ready to eat;" it is ambiguous, and conceals a less unuplifting recommendation behind a slightly more unuplifting one.

At times, there are entire sentences in which the key words have a double meaning, thereby allowing for an extraordinary metaphorical enrichment or expansion. In "*Maqāmah* 1," a group of revelers is described in these terms:

tanimmu 'an *ṣamā'ili*-himu l-riyāḍu, wa-*taḥjīlu* min *aymāni*-himu l-ḥiyāḍu.

To their *left*, redolent flowerbeds reveal their good qualities, and to their *right*, cisterns are embarrassed by their good fortune.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² W13, p. 131.

¹⁹³ W16, p. 162.

¹⁹⁴ W1, p. 18.

In this complicated amphibology, the verb *namma* can mean both 'to reveal' and 'to be redolent', the plural noun *šamā'il* can mean both 'left sides' and 'good qualities', while the plural noun *aymān* can mean 'right sides' as well as 'good fortunes'.

In "*Maqāmah* 33," the narrator al-Sā'ib recognizes the voice of a stranger and newcomer to his group as that of al-Sadūsī, and declares:

'inna-hā la-nağamātun qad ʔaraqa sam'ī 'alḥānu-hā wa-'adawātun
raffa 'alā rawḍī rayḥānu-hā.

These are notes whose melodies have knocked on the door of my ears before, and musical instruments the fragrance of whose *quavering* tunes, like unto brilliant flowers, has previously *shimmered* throughout my garden.¹⁹⁵

Here the verb *raffa*, which means both 'to quaver' and 'to shimmer' allows for the decidedly *moderniste* comparison of one phenomenon related to the realm of sound (quavering tunes) to another related to that of vision (shimmering flowers).

On the level of poetic allusion, a parallel feature may be found in the work of al-Saraqustī. For example, in "*Maqāmah* 31 (The Stars)," the trickster recites a long poem describing the heavenly bodies. In it, he addresses Suhayl (Canopus) as follows:

wa-ka-'anna l-nujūma sirbu 'aḍārā / ʔufna ʔawfa l-mahā wa-'anta
dawāru.

It is as if the other stars were a bevy of circumambulating maidens,
/ like unto gazelles, you being their Dawār.¹⁹⁶

Here, Dawār refers to a pagan idol that was circled by maidens as part of a pre-Islamic ritual. The line is an allusion to a passage from the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays:

fa-'anna la-nā sirbun ka-'anna ni'āja-hu / 'aḍārā dawārin fī mulā'in
muḍayyali.

A herd appeared before us, the gazelles of which seemed to be /
maidens of Dawār in trailing, striped garments.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ W33, p. 313.

¹⁹⁶ W31, p. 296, l. 21.

¹⁹⁷ See Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* (Bombay, 1893), pp. 23, l. 65.

In the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays, a troop of gazelles is thus compared to maidens circling the pagan idol of Dawār, whereas in al-Saraqusṭī's adaptation of the theme, the comparison is doubled, insofar as the stars of heaven are compared (1) to gazelles that are, (2) in turn, compared to maidens.

The punning that results from rhyming or otherwise using identical words with different meanings thus allows our author to highlight, to a far greater degree than his predecessors, the disparity between appearance and reality, between the exoteric and the esoteric, between the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, between the surface and the hidden meaning of words. This is a disparity that has lurked at the very heart of the *maqāmah* genre ever since its invention by al-Hamaḍānī, but the existence of which, at the hands of al-Saraqusṭī, has been pushed to ever greater heights. In fact, the text is constantly reminding the reader that appearance should never be confused with reality, and is even training him to distinguish between these two dimensions in his reading: "Without a doubt, you have divined my purpose and distinguished the essence from the accident;"¹⁹⁸ "I would recite for you, from his poetry, that which would move stones to pity and reveal both his apparent and his hidden talents;"¹⁹⁹ "Everyone possesses both an internal and an external aspect;"²⁰⁰ "I am al-Sadūsī, and I conceal my appearance;"²⁰¹ "Yet all matters have an exoteric as well as an esoteric aspect;"²⁰² "This is a vision that has both an esoteric and an exoteric dimension;"²⁰³ "But as for prose, . . . there is no difference between its exoteric and its esoteric meanings;"²⁰⁴ "For often does a deceptive appearance guide one toward an underlying reality, and often does questioning remove the rust that hides an object;"²⁰⁵ "We thus honored his abode and dwelling, for the surface meaning of his words distracted us from his underlying, secret intention;"²⁰⁶ "How excellent you are at get-

¹⁹⁸ W7, p. 67.

¹⁹⁹ W11, p. 112.

²⁰⁰ W13, p. 131.

²⁰¹ W14, p. 142.

²⁰² W25, p. 229.

²⁰³ W43, pp. 403-404.

²⁰⁴ W40, p. 375.

²⁰⁵ W44, p. 413.

²⁰⁶ W47, p. 440.

ting to the intrinsic rather than wasting time on the extrinsic aspect of matters."²⁰⁷

By its very nature, rhymed prose (particularly when its clauses are rhymed in pairs, as is normally, though not exclusively, the case in the *maqāmah* genre) encourages a form of stylistic doubling, as the following passage illustrates:

lammā fāraqtu *jurjāna*, 'urīdu *arrajanā*,
barraḥa bīya š-*šawqu*, wa-jadda n-nizā'u wa-t-*tawqu*,
fa-sirtu 'astaṣhibu r-*rifāqa*, wa-'ajūbu l-'*āfāqa*,
ḥattā fāraqtu l-*ma'hūla*, wa-rakibtu l-*majhūla*

- (1) When I departed from *Jurjān*, (2) desiring to reach *Arrajān*,
(1) I was troubled by *yearning*, (2) and great was my nostalgia and *longing*.
(1) So I sought out *fellow-travelers*, (2) and traversed the *horizons*,
(1) Until I left the *inhabited area*, (2) and rode over the *unknown*.²⁰⁸

This tendency toward stylistic doubling, which is not necessarily peculiar to al-Saraqustī, but common to the genre as a whole, insofar as the *maqāmah* was couched in rhymed prose from the moment of its birth, creates a two-dimensional portrait in which things are constantly being presented in terms of parallels (*šawqu-tawqu* 'yearning-longing') and opposites (*ma'hūla-majhūla* 'inhabited-unknown'). Such a portrait can be rendered three-dimensional by the addition of more complicated rhymes and the consequent rhyming of homonyms, and by the greater frequency in the use of puns to highlight the discrepancy between appearances and realities (*fa-ḥtal* 'strive-deceive') to the point that, in the hands of al-Saraqustī, the *maqāmah*'s third dimension has increased markedly or, to put it differently, the portrait has acquired greater depth. To proceed with our metaphor borrowed from the art of painting, the phenomenon so far discussed is the artist's technique or, in literary terms, the work's stylistic micro-structure. At this point, let us turn from that micro-structure, to the work's narrative macro-structure, in order to see how micro-technique can produce larger, and ever more impressive figures on the canvas.

²⁰⁷ W, p. 492, Appendix, no. 3.

²⁰⁸ W2, p. 25.

Whereas al-Saraqṣṭī's two predecessors had regularly couched their *maqāmāt* in the voice of an agent-narrator who was presumably telling his tale of woe to an implied author, al-Saraqṣṭī introduced the (seemingly) minor and insignificant innovation of adding a secondary narrator or transmitter who, unlike the primary one, is no longer an agent. Typically, the introductory *isnād* goes: "Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām [Warner, son of Chieftain] narrated and said: 'Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām [Wanderer, son of Multitude] informed us and said . . .'"

This innovation is no mere superficial decoration. It acquires far deeper significance when we consider the nature of the episodes narrated. Generally speaking, the latter constitute incidents in which al-Sā'ib complains of having been parted from his money by the ruses of his persecutor al-Sadūsī. In an overwhelming number of instances, however, the episode narrated by al-Sā'ib is peppered with discrepancies, inconsistencies, and ambiguities, thereby leading the reader, exhausted by suspicion, to question the veracity of the narrator's claims and, ultimately, to wonder whether what he is being told by al-Sā'ib actually ever occurred at all. Are the *maqāmāt* of al-Saraqṣṭī "the confession of a liar" to use the words of Claudio Guillén in describing the *maqāmah*'s European sister-genre, the picaresque novel?²⁰⁹ Furthermore, if al-Sā'ib is lying to al-Mundir, why is he doing so? Let us consider the following examples:

In "*Maqāmah* 32," al-Sā'ib informs al-Mundir that he was stranded in Šūl (near Derbent in Dagestan) at a time when he was no longer young (*wa-l-'umru qad wallà šabābu-hu*),²¹⁰ and when he was so poor that he was unable to leave the city, so that he was eking out a miserable existence on bare essentials. He meets al-Sadūsī, whom he recognizes and takes in, lodging him in his own home, under the mistaken impression that the aging trickster has finally repented of his evil ways and become a reformed character. One day, the two go to the main mosque, where al-Sadūsī makes a public display of piety by praying both profusely and enthusiastically, after which he turns to the assembled worshippers, before whom he accuses al-

²⁰⁹ *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, 1971), p. 92.

²¹⁰ W32, p. 304.

Sā'ib of having stolen and sold the valuable property al-Sadūsī claims to have stored up, and with which he had hoped to support himself during his old age. At this point, al-Sā'ib, whose youth had departed at the beginning of the *maqāmah*, is described as a “youth” (*fatā*).²¹¹ In an outburst of rage, those present in the mosque give al-Sā'ib a thorough thrashing, after which they break open the locks and bolts protecting a chest in which al-Sā'ib, the agent-narrator, who had earlier claimed to be impoverished, now appears to have stored his most valued possessions (implying that he has others that are, perhaps, less valuable and, therefore, that he is not quite as destitute as he claims to be), which the crowd take into protective custody. Al-Sā'ib is hauled before an unsympathetic judge, who is swayed by al-Sadūsī's old age, i.e., by appearances, and rules in favor of the latter. Having won his lawsuit, al-Sadūsī, in a hypocritical display of clemency, advises the judge to refrain from having the victim beaten, but suggests instead, that his money be confiscated (and, presumably, handed over to al-Sadūsī), leaving only his rags on the condemned, and that he be “hurled east or west,” that is to say, expelled from the city. In a final admonitory poem, al-Sadūsī adds insult to injury by declaring to his victim:

Were it not for my righteous hand and kindly behavior, your very rags would be torn from your body.

A noble youth is consoled by his hopes, but no one can console an old man

For, if you so wish, you can still strike it rich: all a noble youth needs is a camel-saddle and a camel to urge forth.²¹²

In sum, the narrator al-Sā'ib has informed the transmitter al-Mundir that he has lost all the stored-up wealth he formerly possessed, at a time in his life when he claimed to be destitute and, furthermore, that he has somehow been miraculously rejuvenated after the departure of his youth!

It should be noted that al-Sadūsī begins his sermon in the mosque, in which he accuses al-Sā'ib of theft, by invoking the person of Āsīyah, wife of Pharoah, and one of four perfect women, according

²¹¹ W32, p. 306.

²¹² W32, p. 308.

to the Islamic tradition, and that he does so by contrasting her virtue with the wickedness of her royal husband:

May God curse Pharoah and bless Āsīyah. In this couple, He united two opposites and joined a pair of antagonists . . .²¹³

The reference is to Qur'ān, 66:11 in which good wives of bad husbands and bad wives of good husbands are held up respectively as good and bad rôle-models. By making this allusion to the Qur'ān, al-Sadūsī is implying that he is a virtuous person who has been mismatched with a scoundrel but, since his story is patently false, what it actually illustrates is that he is not above resorting to the Holy Book to justify his wicked ends.

To give a glaring example of this sort of inconsistency, in "*Maqāmah* 30 (The Poets)," ²¹⁴ al-Sā'ib tells us that, on one occasion, when he was traveling through a trackless wilderness, in a caravan, the noonday heat became unbearable. The travelers then proceeded to eat up all that was left of their food, after which they pitched their tents, in order to sleep through the noonday heat. Suddenly, a beggar appeared before them, whom they fed (presumably with the food they no longer had, since we have previously been told that they had already consumed all of it!). The agent-narrator, who is now wealthy, recognizes the beggar to be al-Sadūsī, and asks him not to disgrace culture (*adab*) by begging, but offers to support him instead. Then, he mounts the trickster on one of his own camels, and they ride off, discussing the great poets of Arabic literature along the way. Some thirty poets are mentioned and anecdotal snippets of information are provided about each one of them.²¹⁵ Eventually, al-Sadūsī be-

²¹³ W32, p. 305.

²¹⁴ W30, p. 264-278.

²¹⁵ This scene provides the author with an opportunity to pun on the names of the poets, which he does systematically, according to the following formula: Imru' al-Qays "was a Ḥunduḡ Abū l-Ḥārīt ['an eminence and a lion'] rather than a mere hired hand or a ploughman [*ḥārīt*];" Ṭarafah "was a Ṭarafah and what a *ṭarafah* ['French tamarisk']! Time cast the evil eye on him with its glance when it gazed on him (*ṭarafa-hu*), uprooting both his deeply rooted *atl* ['Oriental tamarisk'] and his *ṭarafah* ['French tamarisk'];" Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā "was Mount Ajā' or Mount Salmā; a flower in bloom [*zahar*], not a bud [*zuhayr*];" al-Nābiḡah al-Dubayānī "was an Abū Umāmah, and what an *abū umāmah* ['a possessor of three hundred camels'];" al-A'šā "was an Abū Baṣīr, and what an *abū baṣīr* ['visionary', a term often applied to the blind]," etc. (W30, pp. 266-267). This approach rests

comes impatient with al-Sā'ib's seemingly unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and announces his intention of leaving the desert in order to go to some fertile area where he can find a Christian monastery, which he will visit, presumably not for reasons of piety, but in order to get drunk and seduce Christian altar-boys after the manner of Abū Nuwās, as "*Maqāmah* 20 (Wine)"²¹⁶ richly illustrates. Then, al-Sadūsī turns to al-Sā'ib and declares: *fa-ʿawwid-nī min al-rāḥilati bi-l-ʿayn, fa-ʿinna-hu lā ʾatara baʿda ʿayn* ('so give me some cash [*ʿayn*] in exchange for this traveling-camel, and you will see [*ʿayn*] no further trace of me').²¹⁷ Al-Sā'ib gives the trickster all that is left of his money, thereby buying from the trickster al-Sā'ib's own camel! How the beggar, now loaded down with money, plans to get out of the trackless wilderness on foot, is left entirely unexplained. Note too, that the trickster's statement contains a rhyming pun of the sort mentioned earlier, for the word *ʿayn*, the basic meaning of which is 'eye', can also mean 'cash', and 'seeing'. The trickster is thus saying: "Give me some cash / *ʿayn* for the camel, and you will see / *ʿayn* no further trace of me." To further complicate matters, after having ploughed through anecdotes about some thirty major poets of Arabic literature, in what constitutes the longest *maqāmah* in the collection, our critical eye / *ʿayn* may fail to detect the improbability of a man being so stupid as to buy his own camel, unless we are very careful readers indeed!

A similar example is that of "*Maqāmah* 49,"²¹⁸ in which al-Sā'ib

on the ancient Stoic idea that the connection between any given signifier and its signified is deliberate and meaningful, rather than arbitrary or accidental, so that the proper goal of etymology is to discover and clarify that connection. Relying on Stoic principles, and centuries before al-Saraqustī, Saint Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636) had explained in Latin that the cat (*cattus*) was so called *quod cattat* ('because it looks'). See Ana-Isabel Magallón García, *Concordantia in Isidori Hispalensis Etymologias: A Lemmatized Concordance to the Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York, 1995), I, 273. Centuries after al-Saraqustī, Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco (1539-1613), the first lexicographer to compile a dictionary of the Spanish language, was to explain in Spanish that ladies (*damas*) were so called because they habitually say to their lovers and husbands *da más* ('give me more'). See Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, ed. Felipe C. R. Maldonado, revised by Manuel Camarero (Madrid, 1994), pp. 395-396.

²¹⁶ W20, pp. 190-195.

²¹⁷ W30, p. 278.

²¹⁸ W49, pp. 453-460.

complains of having been afflicted by an arrogant, rude traveling-companion with whom he alights at a waterhole in the desert. There, he meets a young man who kindly helps him to quench his thirst, and who declares his undying admiration for him, expressing the desire to be his traveling-companion. The young man leaves for the night, then returns with his aging father, who asks al-Sā'ib whence he has come, and where he is going, and expresses the hope that they may be traveling in the same direction. To this, al-Sā'ib replies that he comes from the east and is going to the west to seek the largesse of a youth (*ḡulām*) who rules over that region. The old man asks al-Sā'ib if he has composed any poetry in praise of that ruler, to which the latter replies that he does not know how to compose poetry. On hearing this reply, the old man composes a series of praise-poems for al-Sā'ib's use, the last of which specifically mentions the youthful ruler, Tāšufīn, by name, despite the fact that al-Sā'ib has never actually revealed the young man's identity to him! As explained above, this is a reference to Tāšufīn ibn 'Alī, the third Almoravid ruler to hold the title of Amīr al-Muslimīn,²¹⁹ and who, in his youth was governor of al-Andalus between 519/1126 and 532/1138. This allows us to date the composition of *al-Maqāmāt al-luẓūmīyah* approximately to that period.

But aside from helping us to date the work, the dedication to Tāšufīn is helpful in interpreting "*Maqāmah* 49." At the beginning of the latter, al-Sadūsī had asked al-Sā'ib where he was going, to which the latter had replied rather vaguely that he came from the east, and was on his way to the west, to the court of a young ruler. But, at the time the *maqāmah* was written, the far more important Amīr al-Muslimīn was Tāšufīn's father, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf (r. 499/1106-537/1143) and not Tāšufīn himself. It would, therefore, be normal to expect that the Amīr was the ruler al-Sā'ib was heading for, and not his son, the far less prominent governor of al-Andalus. And yet, without being told specifically who that ruler is, al-Sadūsī names the son in one of his poems. We thus have, in this phony act of clairvoyance on the part of the trickster another of the many logical

²¹⁹ See Jacinto Bosch Vilá, *Historia de Marruecos: los almorávides* (Tetuán, 1956), p. 9, n. 1, and *passim*.

contradictions with which *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah* are riddled, and which tend to betray the fact that the entire story about al-Sadūsī is a lie concocted by al-Sā'ib for the benefit of the neutral transmitter al-Mundir.

Having composed some poems for al-Sā'ib to recite and thereby gain Tāšufīn's favor, the old man requests payment for his work, and is recognized as being al-Sadūsī. Al-Sā'ib rewards the old man as follows:

I only had one riding beast with me, on which I mounted him, and some leftover traveling provisions, that I relinquished to him, after which he left me, while thanking me, and reminding me of our former ties of friendship . . .²²⁰

Details left unexplained are the following: (1) What became of the rude, arrogant traveling-companion with whom al-Sā'ib arrived at the waterhole? (2) How did al-Sadūsī guess that the young ruler toward whom al-Sā'ib was heading was Tāšufīn ibn 'Alī, governor of al-Andalus? (3) How could al-Sā'ib have proceeded on his journey to the latter's court if he gave his only riding beast and remaining traveling provisions to al-Sadūsī, thereby leaving himself stranded and foodless in the middle of the desert? (4) What value and sincerity would purchased, second-hand panegyrics really represent? In sum, the veracity of the account is highly deserving of suspicion.

A similar predicament occurs in "*Maqāmah* 29,"²²¹ in which al-Sā'ib arrives all alone on his camel at the ruined and uninhabited city of Qayrawan in Tunisia. There, he meets al-Sadūsī. The latter persuades al-Sā'ib to let him watch over al-Sā'ib's camel while al-Sā'ib tours the ruins on foot. Upon his return, al-Sā'ib finds that al-Sadūsī has absconded with his camel. As in "*Maqāmah* 49," no explanation is given as to how the victim manages to leave the desolate city without any means of transportation.

Al-Saraqusī's "*Maqāmah* 39 (The Lion)"²²² exhibits another remarkable case of doubling. It is based on al-Hamadānī's "*Maqāmah* of the Lion"²²³ of which it is an imitation. In al-Hamadānī's version,

²²⁰ W49, p. 457.

²²¹ W29, pp. 256-259.

²²² W39, pp. 364-371.

²²³ Abū l-Faḍl Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 25-35; English trans.

the agent-narrator ʿĪsà ibn Hišām is advancing through the desert in the company of a group of travelers, on his way to Emessa in Syria. One day, during the heat of noon, they halt to take a nap, but are suddenly awakened by their stampeding horses, only to find that a lion is descending upon them. Eventually, a youth from among the group of travelers, on whose body the lion has crouched, slashes its stomach and manages to kill it. The narrator then proceeds to tell us about another adventure along the way, namely an encounter with a highwayman and, finally, upon his arrival in Emessa, he tells us about his meeting with the trickster al-Iskandarī who, in this instance, becomes the narrator's victim. Note that, in al-Hamaḍānī's version, the adventure with the lion, as well as the one with the highwayman, and with the trickster, are all told directly by the agent-narrator.

Al-Saraqusṭī, however, sees fit to complicate matters. In his "*Maqāmah* 39 (The Lion)," al-Sā'ib is fleeing from the persecution of his enemies, and decides to abandon the dangers of city life in order to bury himself in what he refers to as the "tomb" of the desert. He therefore takes up residence among a group of Bedouins who generously offer him their hospitality, shelter, and protection. One morning, he awakens to find that the encampment has been abandoned, and follows the tracks of the tribe out into the desert, where they have formed a circle around an old man who is upbraiding them for withholding their hospitality from him. Al-Sā'ib recognizes the speaker to be his ubiquitous tormentor al-Sadūsī. The latter tells the assembled company about an adventure he recently experienced: While traveling in the desert with a small group of men, he came to a place where cattle, camels, sheep, and goats were raising a deafening uproar. Suddenly al-Sadūsī sees not one, but two lions busily at work massacring the livestock and leaving their carcasses strewn all over the landscape. Since the lions are described as having manes, they are clearly males, one of which charges at the new arrivals. The narrator's companions attempt to flee, but al-Sadūsī faces the raging beast and attempts to placate it by imploring its mercy. He flatters the lion both in prose and in poetry, and recites lion-panegyrics to it. Appeased by the speaker's eloquence,

W. J. Prendergast, *The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Ẓamān al-Hamaḍhānī*, pp. 40-46.

the lion turns away and retires to a distance along with its companion. At this point, the travelers come upon the Bedouin owners of the livestock that was under attack by the lions. When they are asked if they have witnessed the taming of the lions, they reply:

We saw an amazing wonder: We saw a lion behave submissively and obediently in response to your appeal. *Was it a figment of the imagination, or was it for real?*²²⁴

As al-Sadūsī reports it, the very text itself thus asks us to question the reliability of the narration. Further inconsistencies that raise doubts as to al-Sadūsī's veracity are: (1) Only female, not male lions do the hunting for the pack, and these animals are males. (2) Unlike their civilized human counterparts, lions do not massacre their prey indiscriminately. Instead, they kill only the animal needed to satisfy their hunger.

Note that al-Sadūsī has told this tale to an assembled group of Bedouins, while alleging witnesses, namely that other group of Bedouins who owned the massacred livestock, and who are not present to testify to the truth of al-Sadūsī's account, but who, according to him, hosted the travelers lavishly and for a long time. Al-Sadūsī makes these claims in order to inspire his present listeners, namely al-Sā'ib's hosts, to act hospitably, which he succeeds in doing. Pointing to al-Sā'ib, the trickster then declares to the latter's hosts that al-Sā'ib is a long-standing friend of his (to silence him, of course), whereupon the two are led to the tent of a wealthy family, where they are lavishly entertained. At dawn, before the hosts are awake, al-Sadūsī absconds with their most valuable possessions, slips away from al-Sā'ib, and leaves him behind to face the wrath of the tribe.

In sum, the tale about al-Sadūsī, told by al-Sā'ib, about how the former claims to have charmed two lions with his eloquence, and in which he invokes unavailable witnesses to the event as proof that it actually took place, contains enough discrepancies to arouse our doubts about its veracity. Unlike "The *Maqāmah* of the Lion" by al-Hamadānī, in which the agent-narrator participates directly in the adventure he tells, in "*Maqāmah* 39 (The Lion)" by al-Saraqustī, the adventure is not actually witnessed by the agent-narrator, but is told to him by the trickster. Furthermore, why does al-Sadūsī need

²²⁴ W39, p. 367. Emphasis mine.

to appeal to his Bedouin hosts for hospitality, all the while accusing them of being stingy, when such hospitality has already been generously extended to al-Sā'ib? All in all, the narration is so unlikely, that we are sorely tempted to reject it in its entirety. Can the story be other than a lie within a lie, so that, by a process of thematic doubling, our author has succeeded in imbedding one level of deceit within another?

Al-Saraqustī's "*Maqāmah* 50"²²⁵ exhibits another remarkable case of doubling. In W, it is the final *maqāmah* of the collection and, like the final *maqāmah* of al-Ḥarīrī before him ('Basra'),²²⁶ and the twenty-sixth of al-Hamaḍānī before that ('The Exhortation'),²²⁷ its theme is repentance. But whereas both his predecessors portray the repentance of a single trickster, al-Saraqustī, with the oneupmanship that characterizes him, portrays two repentances, namely that of the trickster, as well as that of his occasional accomplice, the agent-narrator. In the case of al-Hamaḍānī, we are told by the narrator that, on one occasion, when he was in Basra, he came upon an elderly, gray-haired man who was exhorting a group of listeners to repent before it was too late to do so. In formulating his appeal, the old man bases his arguments on Mu'tazili principles, and cites Šr'i authorities,²²⁸ all to the effect that a deathbed repentance after a lifetime of sin can in no circumstances lead to a divine pardon of the sinner. In keeping with Mu'tazili principles, the gathered company is thus exhorted to repent early in life, so that its members may earn enough credit for their righteous deeds to outweigh their sinful ones. At the end of the *maqāmah*, the narrator discovers that the preacher is no less than the trickster al-Iskandarī, now grown old and verging upon death, whereupon we realize that the Mu'tazili lesson being taught by the trickster is one from which he himself cannot benefit, since his repentance has come too late in life. The

²²⁵ W50, pp. 461-472.

²²⁶ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 442-455; Thomas Chenery and F. Steingass, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī: Translated from the Arabic with Notes Historical and Grammatical*, II, 175-185.

²²⁷ Abū l-Faḍl Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 128-136; W. J. Prendergast, *The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamaḍhānī*, pp. 104-110.

²²⁸ Note that the Šr'i confession of Islam adopted the Free Will theology of the Mu'tazilah, in contrast to the Sunni confession, which adopted the Predestinarian theology of the Aš'ariyah.

speaker has thus failed to practice what he preaches while, as far as he is concerned, his lesson is an exercise in futility, for his repentance is doomed to be an ineffective one.

In his "*Maqāmah* 50 (Basra)," which, incidentally, takes place in the same city as the one by al-Hamaḍānī summarized above, al-Ḥarīrī has his trickster, al-Sarūjī, address the faithful in the Grand Mosque of Basra. This time using Aṣ'ari arguments, he confesses to the assembly that he is the renowned trickster al-Sarūjī, adding that, on this occasion, he is not after their wealth. He then informs his gullible audience that he has heard the voice of God resounding from the lowest heaven, and inquiring who wishes to be granted the power to repent, which the trickster immediately requests. The assembled company congratulates the trickster on his good fortune, whereupon he allows himself to be persuaded to accept their munificence, which, earlier on, he had declared he was not interested in obtaining. Thereafter, he retires with his loot, to a life of asceticism and round-the-clock prayer. This time (within the context of Aṣ'ari principles, according to which one may expect forgiveness after a lifetime of sin, but only if one hears the voice of God offering one the power to repent), the sincerity of a specific, individual instance of repentance is being called into question. If one hears the voice of God offering one the power to repent, one may be certain that one will be forgiven one's sins by a merciful divinity. But when a notorious scoundrel informs his listeners that he has heard that voice, while desiring no monetary reward from them, yet allows himself to be talked into accepting just such a reward, we are left with justifiable grounds to suspect that his repentance is nothing more than a hoax. Put differently, if one hears the voice of God offering the power to repent, one may be absolutely certain of forgiveness, but if one tells others that one has heard such a voice, how can they be certain that one's claim is truthful, particularly when one has made a prior career out of deceit?

Given the context provided by his two predecessors, al-Saraqṣṭī's *maqāmah* of repentance breaks new ground. In it, the agent-narrator al-Sā'ib informs us that, after not having heard from al-Sadūsī for a long time, the narrator had begun to fear that the trickster might be dead, when a man who laid claim to being a *sufi* appeared before his group to preach to them. In his sermon, the preacher

alludes to an incident involving the piety and asceticism of no less than the notorious Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī himself, whom the preacher introduces as a rôle-model of good conduct. Once the sermon is over, al-Sā'ib approaches the *sufi* to learn the whereabouts of his former victimizer, and is told that the latter now dwells in the outer limits of Khorasan, where he has adopted a life of repentance. Greatly encouraged by this news, al-Sā'ib decides to journey to Khorasan to meet his former persecutor, whom he finds praying in a mosque. Al-Sadūsī explains that he is now a reformed character; that the demands placed on him by his constant praying prevent him from consorting with his friends, for whom he no longer has any time, and so, he bids al-Sā'ib to depart for Iraq (a possible intertextual allusion to Basra, where both al-Hamadānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's rogues had repented). Then al-Sadūsī explains that the cause of his repentance was that he had seen a figure in his dreams, implying that it was the Prophet, by alluding to the *ḥadīth*: *al-ru'yā l-ṣāliḥatu juz'un min sittati wa-'arba'īna juz'an min al-nubūwah* ('an authentic dream vision is one of forty-six attributes of prophethood'),²²⁹ that is to say, when one sees the Prophet in a dream, one may rest assured that the vision is authentic, since demons cannot counterfeit the Prophet's appearance.²³⁰ This dream-image of the Prophet admonishes al-Sadūsī to repent (in *musammaṭ* verse, no less, which is scandalous when one considers the pains the Prophet took to disassociate himself from the composition of poetry!), after which, according to that trickster, God offers him the power to do so.

At this juncture, the repentant trickster withdraws, and al-Sā'ib

²²⁹ W50, p. 463.

²³⁰ Concerning this *ḥadīth*, see *C.I.T.M.*, II, 205b. See too "whoever has seen me in a dream, has really seen me, for Satan does not take on my image" (*C.I.T.M.*, II, 200a). This means that, among other attributes, prophets have the power of appearing in one's dreams. More specifically, it is believed that if the Prophet Muḥammad appears to one in a dream, one may be certain that the vision is a true one, and that one has not been the victim of delusion or of the workings of the Devil. In what follows, al-Sadūsī will use this *ḥadīth* to imply that he has seen the Prophet in a dream, urging him to repent. Of course, actually seeing the Prophet in a dream, and *claiming* that one has seen him, are two entirely different matters. For further details about seeing the Prophet in one's dreams, see Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Morality in the Guise of Dreams: A Critical Edition of Kitāb al-Manām*, ed. Leah Kinberg (Leiden, 1994), pp. 62-82. See too Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. 'Abdul Ḥamīd Ṣiddīqī (Lahore, 1981), IV, 1223-1229.

departs for Iraq, leaving him to his prayers. While he is on the road, journeying away from al-Sadūsī, we are told that the news of the latter's death reaches al-Sā'ib (which is, of course, spatially unlikely in a pre-electronic age, when it would have been difficult for one caravan to catch up with another). Al-Sā'ib returns, and visits his former persecutor's tomb, at the site of which he camps for an entire week. One night, after he has fallen asleep at al-Sadūsī's gravesite, al-Sā'ib is visited in his dreams by the ghost of the former, who urges al-Sā'ib to repent by reciting admonitory verses to him. The *maqāmah* ends with a repentant al-Sā'ib declaring:

I waited for the predetermined hour of my death, hoping for forgiveness, yet fearing punishment. Perhaps God will reduce the heavy burden of my sins and make Abū Ḥabīb's grave an auspicious place to have visited, for God is Generous, Abounding, Great, and Exalted.²³¹

Are these two repentances authentic or are they merely hoaxes? According to the Islamic tradition, if one sees the Prophet in one's dreams, that vision is a true one, but in this case, all we can be sure of is that we are dealing with a rogue renowned for his unreliability, yet who claims that he has seen the Prophet in his dreams. Hence, the entire story about al-Sadūsī, told by al-Sā'ib, has the stamp of inauthenticity about it, and the latter's own repentance, insofar as it has been triggered by a lie, also seems to be false. An alternative interpretation of this episode would be that al-Sā'ib has been tricked into a sincere repentance by another repentance that is, at best, dubious. If this is so, we again have one layer of duplicity within another, thus doubling the obfuscation of any truth the *maqāmah* might contain.

In fact, throughout the work, al-Sā'ib is constantly repenting, only to slide back into sin: "Hence, I was fully repentant, for I anticipated forthcoming blame in the Hereafter;"²³² "I decided to repent and turn over a new leaf;"²³³ "I had . . . turned my heart and breast toward repentance;"²³⁴ "I will bury my soul in this faraway tomb . . . in the hope that, by my change of location, my soul will

²³¹ W50, p. 467.

²³² W14, p. 138.

²³³ W18, p. 178.

²³⁴ W20, p. 190.

eventually be transformed, and that, through my repentance, I will be able to restore it to its pristine sharpness and luster . . . ;”²³⁵ “He has . . . returned to sin after having repented . . . ;”²³⁶ “I donned the woolen cloak and coarse garment of repentance;”²³⁷ “The lucky man is the one who seeks to restrain himself and repents.”²³⁸ With such a track record, al-Sā’ib’s repentance, as portrayed in “*Maqāmah* 50” is neither encouraging nor conducive to confidence that it will endure.

The above are further series of examples of the sort of narratorial inconsistency that may be found in al-Saraqustī’s *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*. What they all seem to suggest, is that the tales told by al-Sā’ib, in most of which he loses his money to the wiles of al-Sadūsī, are themselves lies told by the agent-narrator al-Sā’ib to the neutral transmitter al-Mundir, before whom al-Sā’ib is making a grand display of poverty, presumably in order to extract money from the transmitter. Thus, by a process of what, for want of a better term, I have called “doubling,” al-Saraqustī was able to add a second and deeper dimension of duplicity to the *maqāmah* genre, and therein lies his genius and originality.

To recapitulate, the difficulty of rhyming the final two consonants of words (*luzūm*) led the author to the expedient of rhyming homonyms together more frequently than is usual. This stylistic device led to an increase in puns of all sorts, particularly the *tawriyah* which, in turn, highlighted the lack of correspondence between the outward appearance and the inner reality of things. This process culminated in a kind of thematic doubling in which false tales are told within even falser tales, so that, in the end, duplicity achieves new dimensions and levels of sophistication in al-Saraqustī’s work. On the one hand, this work exhibits a remarkable correspondence between its stylistic micro-structure and its thematic macro-structure and may, therefore, be said to exhibit organic unity. We are thus allowed, in *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, the possibility

²³⁵ W39, p. 364.

²³⁶ W42, p. 396.

²³⁷ W, 509, Appendix, no. 6.

²³⁸ W, 519, Appendix, no. 9.

To see a world in a grain of sand
 And a heaven in a wildflower,
 Hold infinity in the palm of [our] hand
 And eternity in an hour.²³⁹

On the other hand, we might conclude that, by adhering strictly to the classical rules of literary composition, the author was totally free to be innovative and original in a way that is as elegant as it is foreign to our modern preconceptions of what originality should be. In this respect, let us note that, in pre-modern times, the rules of literary composition were as unchangeable as were the governmental institutions.

Literary Decadence or Artistic Excellence?

In a recent article in which he studies two works from the Mam-lūk period, one of which is a shadow-play by Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 709/1310), Professor Everett K. Rowson points out that “the modern Western ‘canon’ of classical Arabic literature may be said to close with al-Ma‘arrī (d. 449/1058) in poetry and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) in artistic prose.”²⁴⁰ “Beyond the work of these writers,” he adds, “Arabic literature of the Ayyūbid, Mamlūk, and Ottoman periods has been given sporadic scholarly attention at best.”²⁴¹ Professor Rowson further explains that “the principal reason for this neglect is undoubtedly the perceived lack of accord of this literature with modern taste. Rhetorical embellishment occupied an increasingly important place in both poetry and prose from the eleventh century on, and al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt*, seen as a *ne plus ultra*, is as far as most scholars have been willing to go; it is easy to dismiss all the subse-

²³⁹ William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence,” Stanza 1, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, 2d ed. (London and New York, 1989), p. 589.

²⁴⁰ “Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamlūk Literature: Al-Ṣafadī’s *Law‘at al-shākī* and Ibn Dāniyāl’s *al-Mutayyam*,” *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, pp. 158-191, at p. 158.

²⁴¹ *Loc. cit.* Compare the above statement with the following: “As always, the political conditions were mirrored in literature; the output was enormous throughout, but the qualities of originality, virility, and imagination, weak from the first, die away completely by the sixteenth century.” H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1963), p. 142.

quent *ultra*, of which there is indeed a very large quantity, as collectively too clever by half.”²⁴²

The underlying assumption being made by the scholars to whom Professor Rowson refers is that good literature relies as little as possible upon rhetorical embellishment, and that it attempts instead to speak to us simply, openly, and directly, whereas bad literature conceals the (presumed) fact that it has nothing to say, behind a veil of “empty” rhetoric. This is a peculiarly modern and Western attitude that, if accepted, would (and has) relegated several major authors of Western literature to oblivion. How did this attitude arise?

Let us begin to answer this question by noting that language has two major functions: It *communicates* factual information, and it *expresses* personal feelings. When one says: “The house is big,” one is *communicating* an objective reality, whereas, when one says “I wish the house were big,” one is *expressing* a subjective reality (that is no less real for being subjective). Furthermore, affirming that “a house is *big*” (Ar. *kabīr*) is not synonymous with affirming that “a house is *grand*” (Ar. ‘*aẓīm*). In the former case, the statement is *transcendent*, in the sense that it communicates a universal reality lying beyond the speaker and which is unconnected to him, whereas in the latter, the statement is *immanent*, in the sense that it expresses a particular reality lodged within the speaker. Thus the words *big* and *grand* are anything but synonymous, since the former communicates transcendent size, whereas the latter expresses immanent wonderment over that size. Similarly, one might refer to the Statue of *Liberty*, and yet say: “You are interfering with my *freedom*.” In this instance, *liberty* is a transcendent concept, whereas *freedom* is the immanent experiencing of that concept by an individual.

The point of all this is that science and philosophy, the aim of which is to explain and *communicate* the nature of transcendent reality, must rely on a type of writing that is as clear, objective, impersonal, and unambiguous as possible, because, if a scientist were to declare that “one plus one equals two” in language that is so ambiguous that the reader is left with the impression that he actually means “one plus one equals three, or possibly four, or even five” all science would grind to a halt. The unambiguous language of science is

²⁴² Rowson, *loc. cit.*

precisely the kind of language some scholars find woefully lacking in later Arabic literature. In contrast, literature, the purpose of which is to explore and *express* the endless complexities of an immanent human reality (which is no less real for being immanent), thrives on ambiguity, so that rhetorical embellishment is not only highly appropriate to it but, one might even add, other factors being equal, the more the rhetorical embellishment, the more the ambiguity and, therefore, the greater the possibilities of expression in the literary work.²⁴³ How then, did this prejudice against rhetorical embellishment arise?

In the West, the literary and artistic movement known as baroque, which culminated in the seventeenth century, provides us with a parallel, *grosso modo*, to the course taken by the much-despised late Classical Arabic literature from the so-called “Age of Decadence” (*‘aṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ*). Consider the following two opposite reactions to a key scientific discovery of the time:

In 1604, two Dutch lens-grinders, Jacob Metius and Zacharias Jansen, invented the telescope, which was improved by Galileo (1564-1642) almost immediately thereafter, in 1609, while the latter was teaching in Padua. John Milton (1608-1674), who visited the great Italian astronomer in 1638, was deeply enthusiastic over the latter’s discoveries, and has the following to say about him in his *Areopagitica*: “[In Italy] it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought.”²⁴⁴ In *Paradise Lost*, he describes the shield of Lucifer in these terms:

²⁴³ Jonathan Curiel, “Mathematician Manil Suri Finds Sudden Success as a Novelist with ‘The Death of Vishnu,’” *San Francisco Chronicle* (Monday, February 5, 2001), section E, pp. 1, 8, records the following statement by Professor Suri, who is both a mathematician at the University of Maryland and the author of a recently published novel entitled *The Death of Vishnu*, (New York and London, 2001): “In mathematics, if you’re doing a theorem or trying to write down a result, you want to be completely unambiguous and lucid. In writing, I think the best fiction holds something back, and is not completely laid out for you. There are different ways to interpret it. So that’s what’s nice about being able to do fiction. It’s like getting revenge on mathematics.”

²⁴⁴ *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing: To the Parliament of England*, in *John Milton*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford, 1991), pp. 236-273, at p. 259.

. . . his ponderous shield
 Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
 Behind him cast; the broad circumference
 Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
 Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
 At evening from the top of Fesole,
 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
 Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.²⁴⁵

In sharp contrast to Milton's welcoming and positive approach to the scientific advances of his day, we have the hostile and decidedly negative view taken by the great Spanish writer Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645) who, between the years 1635 and 1636 composed a series of satirical sketches entitled *La hora de todos y la fortuna con seso*.²⁴⁶ In chapter thirty-six of that work, entitled "Holandeses en Chile," we are introduced to a Dutch ship that is driven by storms to a port on the coast of Chile, where its crew is attacked by a group of Spain-hating and freedom-loving Araucanian Indians. The latter are under the impression that the newly arrived Europeans are Spaniards and, therefore, their would-be oppressors and mortal enemies. The captain of the ship explains to the Araucanian chieftain that he and his crew are Dutch, and that, having themselves thrown off the yoke of Spanish "tyranny," the Dutch should be treated as natural allies of the Indians. The Dutch captain then attempts to persuade the Araucanian chief to sign an anti-Spanish treaty with Holland by offering him several gifts, among them a *tubo óptico* or telescope, explaining to the chief that with such an instrument, he will be able to determine, from a distance, whether approaching ships are friendly or hostile; that he will be able to see clearly and distinctly the spots on the surface of the moon that falsely appear to be eyes and a mouth, and that he will be able to discern a black spot on the sun's disk. When the Indian chief takes a look through the telescope, he is horrified and declares:

Instrumento que halla mancha en el sol, y averigua mentiras en la luna, y descubre lo que el cielo esconde, es instrumento revoltoso, es chisme de vidrio, y no puede ser bienquisto del cielo. Traer a sí lo que está lejos es sospechoso para los que estamos lejos; con él debisteis

²⁴⁵ *Paradise Lost*, I, ll. 284-291, in *ibid.*, p. 363.

²⁴⁶ Ed. Jean Bourg, et al. (Madrid, 1987).

de vernos en esta grande distancia . . . Con este artificio espulgáis los elementos, metéisos de mogollón a reinar . . . llevaos esta espía de vidrio, soplón del firmamento, que, pues con los ojos en vosotros vemos más de lo que quisiéramos, no lo hemos menester. Y agradézcale el sol que con él le hallasteis la mancha negra; que si no, por el color, intentárades acuñarle, y de planeta hacerle doblón.²⁴⁷

An instrument able to detect a spot on the sun, to uncover deceptions on the moon, and to reveal what heaven conceals, is a rebellious instrument; it is a glass gadget (or: piece of gossip),²⁴⁸ and cannot be well-loved by heaven. Bringing close to one that which is far away is a suspicious act for those of us who are far away; with this instrument you must have seen us at a great distance . . . With this device you examine the elements with a fine-tooth comb and attain rulership by sponging off the achievement of others. . . begone with this glass spy, this stool-pigeon of the heavens. Since, with our naked eyes upon you, we can see far more than we wish, we have no need for it. Moreover, let the sun be grateful to this instrument for the fact that, through the latter, you discovered the sun's black spot, otherwise, because of the sun's color, you would surely have attempted to mint it, and turn it from a planet into a doubloon.

There can be no doubt that, in this case, Quevedo approves of the Indian chief's reaction to what he perceives as the horrors of technological progress. Quevedo believed in a benevolent Providence (*hora*) that gives its name to the title of his book. He further believed that in moments of personal crisis, this Providence intervenes to help individuals arrive at the right decision and do the right thing. When such moments of crisis are reached, Quevedo uses the words "entonces le vino la hora" ('then, Providence came to his rescue'), to indicate that the character in his narrative is making the correct decision. And that is exactly how the Araucanian chief is presented as arriving at the conclusion that the telescope is a pernicious innovation.

These two diametrically opposed attitudes toward the invention of the telescope: The one expressing admiration, and the other scorn, as exemplified by Milton in England, and Quevedo in Spain, are symptoms of far deeper developments affecting seventeenth-

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 311-313.

²⁴⁸ Here, Quevedo is punning on two basic meanings of the word *chisme*: (1) 'a piece of gossip', and (2) 'a gadget'.

century Europe. At the same time that the modern sciences were beginning to progress in Italy, Holland, England, France, and Germany, at the expense of traditional religious beliefs, they were being rejected in Spain, which sought its future not in reason and science, but in religious belief and, one must hasten to add, also in literary *expression*, so that the poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627), who so tyrannized the Spanish language that he practically succeeded in inventing a poetic language all his own, became one of the pinnacles of a culture valiantly opposed to the modern sciences and their practitioners.

Rhetorically embellished literary language, which reigned supreme in Spain, was not lacking in the rest of Europe at the time. In Italy, Giambattista Marino (1569-1625) introduced it among his followers and disciples, thus giving rise to a movement that came to be known as Marinism after him. In England, John Lyly (1561-1627) introduced the convoluted style of the Spanish author Antonio de Guevara (1480?-1545),²⁴⁹ giving rise to the literary movement known as Euphuism, which was ridiculed by Shakespeare (1564-1616) in "Love's Labour's Lost" (written *ca.* 1594), although by 1590 Euphuism was effectively dead in England. In France, Molière (1622-1673) was viewing *préciosité* with a jaundiced eye, as a "ridiculous" literary affectation: On October 24, 1658 his comedy "Les précieuses ridicules" was performed at the Louvre, before Louis XIV.²⁵⁰ But at the same time that Molière was spoofing *préciosité*, Descartes (1596-1650) was laying the foundations for French rationalism, while, slightly earlier, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) had been doing the same for English empiricism. By the eighteenth century, a kind of expository prose, suitable for communicating the discoveries and doctrines science had to offer, had been developed in all the major Western Europe-

²⁴⁹ Lyly's *Euphues*, published in two parts (*The Anatomy of Wit*, 1579, and *Euphues and His England*, 1580) was based on *The Diall of Princes* (1557), Sir Thomas North's English translation of Guevara's *Libro llamado Relox de principes y Libro áureo del emperador Marco Aurelio* (1529). See F. Landmann, "Shakespeare [sic] and Euphuism: Euphues, an Adaptation from Guevara," *New Shakespeare [sic] Society's Transactions*, XIII (1882), 241-276; John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit (Editio princeps, 1579); Euphues and His England (Editio princeps, 1580)*, ed. Edward Arber (London, 1934).

²⁵⁰ Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, *Les précieuses ridicules*, ed. Gustave Larroumet (Paris, 1887), p. 1.

an languages with the exception of Spanish, in which, as late as the first few decades of the new century, the florid style of Gracián (1601-1658) and Quevedo was still the most common model for Spanish prose. Thus, the new Spanish writers of the enlightenment, such as the Benedictine scholar Feyjoo (1676-1764), were faced with the challenge of creating, almost from scratch, an entirely new and streamlined discourse designed to serve as a vehicle with which to communicate rational ideas. Gradually, as the reaction against the old rhetorical style of the previous Spanish Golden Centuries increased, Góngora, that prince of poets, fell out of favor, and came to be dismissed as a poet of bad taste in his own homeland. The controversy over Góngora's literary merit began in his own lifetime, but by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries critics, prominent among them being Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912), were more or less unanimous in condemning what they considered to be his excesses.²⁵¹ It was not until the early twentieth century that the critical and scholarly studies of Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990) restored that undeservedly forgotten giant to literary favor.²⁵²

It would seem, then, that with the rise of an interest in science, that had begun to characterize Western Europe around the seventeenth century, and that had triumphed by the eighteenth, *communication* came to be perceived as more desirable than *expression*, and a clear expository style, that could be made to serve as a vehicle of communication, came to be more highly prized than that other, highly embellished and rhetorical style, that was more suited to expression. The end result was that Latinate Góngora was dismissed as a *culterano*²⁵³ and doomed to oblivion, whereas Words-

²⁵¹ See, for example, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España* (Madrid, 1884), II, chap. 10, 315-543, at pp. 488-541, where the author inveighs against Góngora and his school, namely *culteranismo*.

²⁵² He wrote some sixty critical items on Góngora, prominent among them, Luis de Góngora y Argote, *Soledades*, ed. Dámaso Alonso (Madrid, 1927); Dámaso Alonso, *La lengua poética de Góngora* (Madrid, 1935); *Góngora y el "Polifemo": Texto, estudio, versión en prosa, comentarios y notas, estrofa por estrofa*, 4th ed. (Madrid, 1951); *Estudios y ensayos gongorinos* (Madrid, 1955).

²⁵³ The term was coined by the poet's enemies during his lifetime, and made to rhyme with *luterano* ('Lutheran') thereby causing him to be associated with all that was anathematic to Inquisitorial Spain. He was also accused by Quevedo of being a crypto-Jew. In other words, no holds were barred in reviling him.

worth (1770-1850), with his poetics of the four-letter word, eventually set the stage for an entirely new kind of literary sensibility. Such were the major developments that led, in Europe, to the undervaluing of rhetorical embellishment in literature. Nonetheless, literature thrives on expression and ambiguity, not on communication and clarity. Therefore, to affirm that a given body of literature is bad because it is not simple and clear is to judge literature by a set of criteria that are essentially extrinsic to its nature and purpose. It also makes just about as little sense as it would to claim that scientific prose is bad because it is not sufficiently poetic or rhetorically embellished; that Einstein's writings are inaccurate because they are not embellished by rhyme and rhetoric.

Aside from the fact that the baroque movement only lasted for a century in Europe, whereas the period of intense rhetorical embellishment in Arabic literature began considerably earlier, and lasted seven centuries, the two phenomena coincide in certain key respects. In their own modern period, Arab writers, like their European counterparts, have also felt the urgent need to develop a style of writing suitable for communicating the discoveries of science. In the process, the unfortunate side-effect has been a rather wholesale rejection of those authors of the woefully misnamed "Age of Decadence." In this instance, one fears that many a baby may have been thrown out with the bath water, and one can only hope that the day will eventually arrive when it will be possible to put aside the blinders that seem to prevent us from appreciating the literary value inherent in the work of truly great authors such as al-Saraqustī.

Remarks on the Translation and Annotation

Puns are untranslatable into a foreign language, and rhymes, unreproducible. In the case of a work as studded with puns, rhymes and *double entendres* as this one, translation can thus never hope to convey the full impact of the original and, insofar as form is concerned, can truthfully be said to be an exercise in futility. The full extent of the work's astonishing beauty is thus largely locked inside the original Arabic, where it must forever remain and, of which, any rendition into a foreign language is doomed to be but a pale reflexion. We must be satisfied, in English, with the bare meaning

at the expense of form. Thus, when a pun is of particular significance to the meaning of the text, this is indicated and explained in the footnotes.

The *maqāmah* genre is primarily couched in first-person narrative. In it, one often finds a seemingly endless series of direct speeches imbedded one within the other. In this instance, the normal English rules for enclosing direct speech within quotation marks would lead to utter confusion, inasmuch as we would have to use double, enclosing single, followed by double, enclosing single quotation marks, with no amen. Therefore, these rules have been largely abandoned in favor of a system in which a new speaker is normally introduced by a new paragraph. While not perfect, it is hoped this system will be less confusing to the reader than it would be to force the Arabic style of direct speech into a punctuation straitjacket not designed to fit it.

An attempt has been made to render a highly poetic text, couched in an elevated diction and style, as readable, rather than as literal, as possible. To this end, the usual Orientalist practice of bracketing words and passages not found in the Arabic original but necessary to complete the sense in English, has been abandoned, and such additions have been left unbracketed. What is gained is a text that flows more smoothly over the printed page, and is, therefore, less off-putting. In particular, I have often specifically indicated who is speaking, where the Arabic text leaves the reader to determine this either grammatically, or by exercising his powers of logic. My additions to the text should be transparent to the Arabist, yet cause no impediment to the general reader's understanding of it.

The translation is based on the text as edited by W. Occasionally, when a superior reading is to be found in D, it is adopted, and the two alternate readings are indicated in the footnotes.

The individual *maqāmāt* are arranged in the sequence followed by W. When their numeration differs from that found in D, that alternate numeration is given in the footnotes.

The text contains a large number of quotations from, and allusions to, Arabic poetry, the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth*, obscure Arabian and Middle Eastern toponymy, etc. The Arab editors have included an extensive critical apparatus in their editions, the aim of which is to identify these items, which they do by relying on the major medieval Arabic

sources. Since this is a translation, not an edition, I have normally used readily available Western sources (in particular, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*) whenever possible, in identifying and explaining the more significant or obscure items, for the benefit of the non-Arabic-reading scholar. Where this has not been possible, I have referred to the original Arabic sources. In some instances in which I have been able to identify items missed by the editors, I have gone into greater detail, referred directly to an Arabic source, while also providing a translation.

Some Arabic words have many meanings, and some of these are rare. The editors devote a large portion of their critical apparatus to explaining such rare words to the Arab reader, or to defining the precise meaning of specific words as intended by the author. Since all these philological difficulties are automatically lost in translation, there is no need to discuss them in the footnotes, and no attempt has been made to do so.

Ambiguity and contradiction are the essence of the *maqāmah* genre since, through them, an unreliable narrator allows his readers to catch him in the act of uttering blatant falsehoods. Contradiction being, therefore, important to the genre and its interpretation, the reader is alerted in the footnotes to the fact that the text contains a logical contradiction, wherever I have been able to detect one.

TRANSLATION

Prologue

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,
in Whom I seek help:

After praising God, the Exalted, and blessing the Prophet chosen by Him, let it be known that the following are fifty *maqāmāt* composed by Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqṣṭī, in Córdoba, one of the cities of al-Andalus, when he devoted himself to what the master Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī¹ had composed in Basra. In composing them, Abū l-Ṭāhir exhausted his mind and kept his eye awake, while in their prose and poetry he made a requirement, beyond the call of duty, of what is normally not required by the rules of literary composition,² so that they attained the utmost degree of perfection, yet only God knows best if this is true.

¹ On whom, see "Preliminary Study," n. 4, above.

² *Lazīma* . . . *mā lā yalzam*, i.e., he adopted the technique of introducing a penultimate, rhyming consonant, where the rules of prosody require that only the final consonant of a word should rhyme. This was the technique introduced to Arabic poetry by Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (see "Preliminary Study," n. 111, above).

Maqāmah 1

The author said:

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:

I was in a certain country, having exhausted both my acquired and my inherited wealth, smelling the earth to find my way, as I traversed its length and breadth; continually wheeling around Time in order to circumvent its effects, and observing its every rising and setting sun. Hope itself had abandoned me; effort and exertion themselves had flung persistent journeyings at me, along with an emaciated camel for crossing vast and empty deserts, while I had no companion during my prolonged exile, other than the shimmering of the morning or evening mirage, until I was finally driven to some delightful, pleasant valleys, fertile sand tracts, pastures where herds grazed untended, and waterholes. There, I let my gaze wander over flowers and blossoms, and my eye roam over brooks and streams, until I beheld a company of men like fixed stars, who were offering one another the shooting stars of winecups, as they reveled in merriment, and spared no effort to engage in debauchery. They had rejected sobriety, declared wine to be licit, exhausted their cash and property, and replaced the fragrance of black musk with that of the winejar and its dark pitch. To their left, redolent flowerbeds revealed their good qualities, and to their right, full cisterns were embarrassed by their good fortune.¹ They were heedless of all consequences, and unaware of Time, the observant. Such people as these “are greeted by sprigs of fragrant herbs on Palm Sunday,”²

¹ The Arabic original of this sentence is as follows: *tanimmu 'an šamā'ili-himu r-riyādu, wa-tahjilu min aymāni-himu l-ḥiyādu*. Insofar as each one of the three words underlined above has more than one meaning, the sentence is an amphibology, and one difficult to translate literally. The rendition provided tries to take all the various possibilities of meaning into account.

² This is a quotation from the second hemistich of a line of verse by the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābiḡah al-Dubayānī (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 840-842; M30, n. 26, below), whose long residence in Iraq and Syria made Christian rituals and traditions familiar to him. The line is contained in a *qaṣīdah* praising the Gassānid dynasty of Syria, which recognized the suzerainty of Byzantium, and adhered to the Monophysite confession of Christianity. It was translated by R. A. Nicholson as follows:

and descend from the noblest origins and lineages. Youth has wrapped them in its mantles and given them its fresh, cool water to drink. They snack upon the fruit of peccadilloes, all the while trailing the edges of their wraps and letting down their ringlets and curls.

The winecup had coursed through their joints, so that you could see only a helper and a friend among them. They had alighted in a hollow of the land and taken a meadow as their bed, and lo, before them stood an old man with an imposing mustache and corpulent arms, whose words they were heeding, being seduced as much by what was old as by what was new in his speech. He was entertaining them with a part of his own story, and providing them with its most far-reaching curiosities and novelties, thereby making them love indolence, nor were they bored by his prolixity and long-windedness. I turned toward their assembly, hastening to greet them first,³ wishing them a long life, and offering to sacrifice myself for them. Upon hearing my words, they declared: "Here we have a resplendent honor, a redolent glory, an emaciated camel, and a guest descending upon us." The old man hastened to add: "Here we have some news that is stale, an overly-known tale, a laughable swindler, and an aged camel that has cut its tooth on experience. Whence come you from, O disheveled one; O Aš'ab?⁴ Which of your two characteristics, namely unkemptness and covetousness, is harder to deal with, and more difficult to handle? You have ventured against kings, become involved in stringing together the pearls of poetry, ridden over dangerous places, and penetrated roads deeply. Do you have some tale from afar to tell, O tribesman of Huḍayl?⁵ What little palm tree laden with dates or what little rubbing post

They keep the Feast of Palms, when maidens pale,
Whose scarlet silken robes on trestles hang,
Greet them with odorous boughs and bid them hail.

See *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1907, repr. 1956), p. 54.

³ A sign of politeness.

⁴ Aš'ab ibn Jubayr was an Arab man of letters, a *ḥadīṭ* scholar, and a singer who became proverbial in Arabic literature for his greed, and who died in Medina in the year 154/771 (see *E.I.* 2, I, 690-691).

⁵ A North Arabian tribe settled in the vicinity of Mecca (see *E.I.* 2, III, 540-541).

for itching camels do you seek to your satisfaction? Indeed, being a brother to brigands, how can you hope to attain the rank of slaveholders and men of status?" Then I replied: "Take it easy, old man, take it easy! Have you no welcome for me at all? If you see that my traveling-provisions are exhausted, that my provision-bags are empty, that my flame is extinguished, that my skin is worn out, that my hide is chapped, and that my friend and my drinking companion have deserted me, it is equally true that I once seduced full-breasted, nubile maidens, overcame dire hardships, satisfied those who placed their hopes in me, made the object of their hopes available to them, lavished great gifts, established friendly ties with the stranger, honored the guest, bestowed abundant presents, proudly trailed the edge of my robe, allowed my glance to rove over slaves and horses, drove forth thoroughbred steeds, and prevented true leadership from becoming lodged anywhere but in myself. Then, it so happened that circumstances changed, years followed upon years, they made off with both my recent and my former splendor, and left their trace within my bones and on my skin. I was given misery in exchange for happiness; frowning and scowling in exchange for laughter, the most pungent of salt in exchange for the sweetest of honey, humiliation in exchange for esteem, and dearth in exchange for plenty." Thereupon, the old man hastened to offer his sons in sacrifice for me, and to placate me with his good wishes, saying: "It is just as he has stated, yet how can we steady one who has stumbled? I know his parents and grandparents, and have witnessed the multitudes and numbers of his followers. For a long time, he sat upon a throne and wore silk; the full-breasted, nubile maiden was attracted to him, the joints of cane spears snapped in his presence, kings bowed before his good fortune, and all support and foundation resided in him. His peers obeyed him, and his equals responded to him; he conquered many countries, so that everyone was humbled before, and yielded to him. O Time, what a force you are, who spares no man, and chooses⁶ no boon companion; you torment the near and the far, and are no more concerned with the unfortunate than you are with the fortunate! It is only right that

⁶ Reading *yunqī* with D, rather than *yubqī* with W.

this superior man should be received in a friendly fashion, that his domes should be erected, that he should be cared for, and that his neck and its nape should be adorned by you. As for you, O sons of the generous; men of lofty ambition and a magnanimous nature, extend a lengthy shadow of protection⁷ over superior men, be compassionate by giving of your surplus, have pity on a once powerful man who is now despised, on a former abundance that has recently become scant; on a wealthy man now reduced to poverty, and on one hovering over your waterhole, who has just alighted at it."

Upon hearing this, each member of the company took off the clothes he was wearing, and handed the money he had to the old man, while the latter removed my threadbare rags from me, and brought me all the clothes and money he and I could desire, filling both my right and left hands, while simultaneously turning his face both north and south.⁸ Then he said: "O my God, Remover of dearth, Uniter of drinking partners, Knower of secrets, Provider of complaisant damsels, Facilitator of connections, and Joiner of lovers, furnish this group with joys and delights, wrap them in woolen mantles and silken shawls, pour forth Your reward upon them, remove Your afflictions from them, protect them from the vicissitudes of Fate, prevent them from becoming that warning example prevalent in proverbs and biographies, send one of Your lengthy veils to be placed over them, and make them successful in Your affairs." Then he added, saying to me: "Take these donations for yourself, for you need fear no harm, as long as I am with you." Then we departed, for evening had cast its first shadows, and the time for supper had arrived. He led me, so he claimed, to meet his clan, while he conversed with me, along the way, about the gains and losses in his fortune. Then he began signaling and pointing, and said: "Here are my tribe and family: All of them will be your obedient slaves, for you wield over me an authority that demands obedience." Thus I stepped forward, until he brought me close to some tents and to a group of people who were fast asleep. Then he said: "Wait here for an instant, so that I may show you an important matter, reveal to you a remarkable affair concerning myself,

⁷ Reading *raffū* with D, rather than *raqqū* with W.

⁸ Presumably to look for an avenue of escape for his ill-gotten gains.

lead toward you a fine horse and a noble steed, such that you will mount upon a comfortable surface consisting of the latter's back, and climb upon a lofty mountain-summit consisting of the former's peak. After that, you will inhabit an imposing palace, and succeed to the caliphates of al-Ma'mūn⁹ and al-Rašīd."¹⁰ Then he entered the tents and awoke the sleepers. Hardly had I perceived those people, than they began to revile me, saying: "Who is scurrying about in the dark, and paying us a visit by night? Perhaps he is yesterday's traitor and thief!" Palms did not restrain themselves, for the right one was busy slapping me whenever the left one was not raised against me. Not a word of mine was listened to, until I felt no further wish to live, and they drove me¹¹ from their territory, hurling me as far as they could, and leaving me in such a state that I could neither turn my eye about, nor pronounce a single consonant. Despite that, the old man shot at me with my own arrow, expressed astonishment at the contrast between his own rainbearing cloud and my barren one, and invoked his respect for me by saying: "Now you really need to go to bed!" Then he slipped away from me, and turned to hide and escape, while reciting [*basīl*]:

Time summoned you, hoping you would respond, for how excellent is the listener who responds!

How often have you befriended Time for the sake of your desires, when the noble and the well-bred have deceived you.

Therefore, hearken to the following account about Time, for every report about Time is remarkable:

Only a young hero's triumph over luck constitutes true Glory, therefore, who are the Tamīm, and who are the Tujīb?¹²

⁹ He was the seventh 'Abbāsid caliph (r. 198/813-218/833), (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 331-339), famous for his support of scholarship and the Mu'tazili theologians.

¹⁰ The fifth and most famous of all the 'Abbāsid caliphs (r. 170/786-193/809), whose reign came to be viewed, in Arabic literature, as a golden age (see *E.I.* 2, III, 232-234).

¹¹ Reading *ṭaradū-nī* with D, rather than *ṭaraḥū-nī* with W.

¹² Two famous North Arabian tribes from central and eastern Arabia (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, X, 172-176, and for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, X, 582-584). Al-Saraqustī was himself a member of the former tribe, while the latter achieved fame in al-Andalus by setting up a dynasty that ruled over Zaragoza from 410/1019 to 420/1029.

Whenever a man deceives both Time and humankind, he will be proclaimed a lord of vast superiority.¹³

Oh, many a close companion, whose plight was sorrow, along with an anxious, throbbing heart, have I abandoned.

Such a man was summoned by Time as he lay sprawled out in the dirt, and yet, though he heard the summons, he failed to respond.

Then I knew that he was the master, Abū Ḥabīb, and I declared: “No physician can cure the malady of his deceitfulness.”

¹³ The order of this and the previous line is inverted in D.

Maqāmah 2

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:

When I departed from Jurjān,¹ desiring to reach Arrajān,² yearning troubled me, and my nostalgia and longing intensified. So I journeyed forth, searching for traveling-companions, and traversing the horizons, until I left the inhabited area and rode over unknown territory. Suddenly, I came upon a party of men traveling together, mounted on swift, thoroughbred steeds, who were trotting toward a faraway land, advancing with determination and a firm purpose in mind. They turned their bridles in my direction, and generously offered me greetings and assurances of safety. Then they asked: "Who are you, O solitary man, and in what direction are you going, inasmuch as you are shunning the main highway?" I answered: "I am one whom pathways have rejected, and whom both eastern and western regions have expelled." They replied: "May you be granted the goal of your hopes, and may you be protected from death; may the road be made easy for you, and may your family and friends be given good news about you. Have you any knowledge of al-'Uḡayb³ and al-Ġamīm,⁴ and have you encountered the two tribes of Asad and Tamīm?⁵ Have you passed by al-Wa'sā' and turned toward al-Ajāri' and al-Aḥsā'?"⁶ I responded:

¹ A city in the far north of Iran, just east of the southeast corner of the Caspian sea, between the provinces of Tabaristan and Khorasan (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1141).

² A city in southwest Iran, near Shiraz and Ahwaz (see *E.I.* 2, II, 659).

³ There are several places bearing this name, including a well near Kufa, in southern Iraq. See Yāqūt, *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch (Mu'jam al-buldān)*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866-1871), III, 626 (hereafter abbreviated *J.G.W.*). It is mentioned in the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays. See Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* (Bombay, 1893), p. 24, l. 74. Therefore, it appears to have had literary resonances.

⁴ A place in Arabia, between Mecca and Medina. See *J.G.W.*, III, 817-818.

⁵ Two famous North Arabian tribes, from the second of which al-Saraqusī descended (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, I, 683-684, and for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, X, 172-176).

⁶ These three Arabic names mean, respectively, 'the vast area', 'the sandy hillocks', and 'the wells dug in sandy terrain'. There are several locations bearing such names, all within the Arabian Peninsula. For al-Wa'sā', see *J.G.W.*, II, 96 and *passim*; for al-Aḥsā', see *J.G.W.*, I, 109 and *passim*. Al-Ajāri' is not featured in *J.G.W.*

“The enquirer has met with the well-informed and asked him questions about all that comes and goes: I left those places when the grass was abundant and the plants were tall in them⁷—a land whose watering-places were pure and whose fair, delightful valleys and fertile, sandy tracts overflowed, so that its flowers and blossoms laughed together, its flocks of camels and its herds of cattle comingled with one another, its domesticated and its wild animals intermingled, while its uplands stood out from its lowlands. What a rich, fertile pasture it is; what a fortunate lot, to the one who scouts for forage in it, except that in that land you will find every predatory lion and serpent, namely the tribes of Asad⁸ and Sulaym!⁹ Misfortunes were unleashed against it, tribes and squadrons of cavalry destroyed one another, desires for vengeance were renewed in it, adversities became of little consequence, hatreds were consolidated; curving, sandy stretches and hillocks reverted to a wild state, while upon it, guarded women were violated, citadels and fortresses were seized, the tribe of Tamīm abandoned its ancestral lands, and was treated with contempt by whoever wished to do so.”

On hearing this, a brave young hero, who proudly dragged the train of his lofty ambition, and who took shelter in the inviolable sanctuary of his courage, stood out from the group and, in a state of shock, invoked the oneness and omnipotence of God, while wandering back and forth in confusion, saying: “Would that your mother had been bereft of her child, O scout, and that both your drizzles and downpours might lack abundance! By God, victory belongs by right to the tribe of Asad, for the fighting men of our

⁷ Note that, while on a journey from Jurjān, which lies close to the extreme northeastern border of Iran, to Arrajān, in that country's southwestern region (i.e., across Iran, roughly from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf), the narrator will now provide an eyewitness account of the intertribal warfare he has observed in the course of his travels, but that is currently being waged in the middle of the faraway Arabian Peninsula, which lies ahead of, rather than behind his path. Put differently, how could al-Sā'ib, in the course of his wanderings across Iran, have personally observed the events that were taking place in Arabia? This spatial and temporal inconsistency serves to underscore the unreliability of the narrator.

⁸ See n. 5, above.

⁹ A branch of the Northern Arab federation of Qays 'Aylān (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 817-818).

tribe are not made of fragile palm filaments or fibers! You have offered us an astonishing wonder, and aroused in us a deep sorrow and grief. Time has produced its marvel, revealing it prematurely; it has replaced the head with the foot, and the crown with the anklet; it has assigned victory to a rabble of mixed race over the purebred, to the praiseworthy over the blameworthy,¹⁰ to the importunate over the resolute, to the individual over the group, to rumps over necks, to asses over thoroughbred steeds, to the ox over the lion, to the yelping cur over the swiftly loping wolf, to the lowly over the lofty, to *Spica Virginis* over *Arcturus*,¹¹ to the immature, baby camel over the mature, adult one, to the drizzle over the downpour, to the braying ass over the neighing steed, and to the thirsty over him who has taken a second drink; it has compared the *nab'* to the *ġarab*,¹² and the foreigner to the Arab."

Then the leader of the group came forward and said to me: "You have diverted us from our goals, awakened the sleeping, killed¹³ the living, and desolated tribes and clans." Next, he pointed to an old man like a dessicated, twisted palm branch, who combined purity with corruption, and dignity with brazen shamelessness, and asked him: "As for you, O man of eloquence and elegant rhetoric, now that the misfortunes of Fate have cast us aside, what is your opinion concerning that which auspicious and inauspicious omens have provided?"

The old man said: "It is my considered opinion that you should mount me on a thoroughbred steed, await my return, and place your trust in me, thereby lighting your fire from my tinder, which produced it in the first place; and that you should send me forth by night, for I will spy out the fighting men of our tribe tirelessly, hover about them at length, infiltrate tribes and nations, consult the

¹⁰ Sic.

¹¹ These two stars are known dually as *al-simākāni* ('the two *simāks*'). *Spica Virginis* is known in Arabic as *al-simāk al-a'zal* ('the unarmed *simāk*') and *Arcturus* as *al-simāk al-rāmih* ('the lance-bearing *simāk*'). The author is therefore saying that Fate has granted precedence to the unarmed over the armed, i.e., to the weak over the strong. See M31, n. 12, below.

¹² Two species of tree, the *chadara tenax* and *salix Babilonica* ('Babilonian willow'), respectively. The former was used to fashion spears and bows, whereas the latter was carved into cups and bowls.

¹³ Reading *amatta* with D, rather than *abbanta* with W.

oracular voice of the cawing, croaking raven, bringing you news from its very source of origin, along with reports couched in the very wording in which they were relayed to me, for I will hasten back to you, without prolonging my absence, so that you may know in which encampments your paternal relatives reside, and from whence the attacking enemy has retreated.”

The leader replied: “We are of one mind with you, even though your absence and separation will grieve us.” Then the old man mounted a large, swift-paced horse, stirred the dust from the ground, girded a sword, gathered his voluminous bundles, filled his provision-bag, placed traveling-provisions behind him on his mount, and declared: “I commend you to God, generous men that you are, and ask Him to grant you all your wishes.”

Then I followed after him to bid him farewell, for I considered him to be a deceiver. But he became suspicious of me, and said: “Take pity on me, O stranger,” and recited [*basīl*]:

Do you not see that morning and midday mirages, as well as Fate, always arouse the suspicion of the freeborn man?

When Time shows you its method, stick to your own method.

Heed not the blame of a people who have hurled their barbs at you.

Be not incapable of making an effort, but fill instead your traveling-bag, whenever possible.

Go down to the pool of Ḥumm,¹⁴ for you will find its water and drink to be sweet.

Become well-informed concerning the reports that travel over the face of the earth, and confront the wolf and the raven on its surface.

Never fear packs or flocks of such beasts or birds, but inhabit instead, a desolate wasteland on this earth.

Everyone on its surface is a stranger, hence how can you complain of exile upon it?

¹⁴ A pool between Mecca and Medina, famous in Islamic history for certain statements in favor of ‘Alī made there by the Prophet (see *E.I.* 2, I, 993-994).

All that rests upon it is dust. Therefore, why should we not grasp at dust?

So I exclaimed: "By God, you are the master Abū Ḥabīb! Who will prevent you from being cursed and reviled? If youthfulness has returned to you, why has manly courage not done so? How often have you dyed your graying beard, yet spurned lean warhorses and spearheads!" But he departed from me, saying [*mujatt*]:

I shall not return to you, for Fate abounds in misery.

The resolute man arrives at dawn through every mountain-pass and river-valley,

For man alternates between two paths: that of those who depart in the evening and that of those who arrive at dawn,

While one day, the consequences of our acts will be both apparent and visible.

Ask those who dwell in Kufa and in Basra,¹⁵ on my behalf, and ask, as well, those who dwell in the rural areas of Iraq:

"Why are townsmen so prompt to deceive country folk?"

How excellent is the purehearted, freeborn man, whom I have duped out of the blackness of my heart.

Many a generous, highborn man was such that I gained possession of his noble steed.

How much harm is caused by proximity to a pillow, and how hard it is¹⁶ to keep for long a secret.

Will Fate ever grant satisfaction by quenching thirsty souls,

Though they have long complained to Fate of their intense and burning thirst?"

¹⁵ Two cities in southern Iraq (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, V, 345-351; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, I, 1085-1087).

¹⁶ Reading 'azza with Ḍ, rather than *garra* with W.

Maqāmah 3

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām related and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:

I went down to the land of Ḥulwān,¹ where I remained grieving and sad, suffering from all varieties and kinds of misfortunes until, when I reached Dū l-Majāz,² in the region of Ḥijāz,³ there appeared before me, between Najd and Tihāmah,⁴ a heroic youth who was radiantly handsome and glowing with energy; who possessed all the natural charm and marks of distinction one might desire, along with clear signs and indications of the nobility of his origin. He was wrapped in a striped, Bedouin mantle, and was wearing a sword-suspensory; his lofty ambitions inspired him to soar as high as the stars, yet he sought refuge in frowning and in a brooding silence. His virtues could not help but be unveiled, nor his sword-suspensory but reveal the mettle of his sword. He was redolent of camomile and wormwood,⁵ he longed to be a glorious champion, and brandished lances while in pursuit of fleeting and difficult goals until, when he beheld the ruins and vestiges of a certain encampment, and identified its marks and tracings, he approached them in honor of those who had abandoned and forsaken them. Then he exposed and revealed the grief from which he was suffering; he began to wander back and forth in a state of confusion, to roam over the area where those landmarks lay, to turn here and there, to draw near to them, to circle them seven times, followed by seven times more, and to kiss the traces of those springtime settlements.⁶

¹ There is one town of Ḥulwān in Iraq, near Baghdad, along the pilgrim route to Mecca, a second in Egypt, and a third by that name near Nishapur, in north-eastern Iran (see *E.I.* 2, III, 571-572).

² A place near Mina or 'Arafat, both of which are close to Mecca. See 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar al-Baḡdādī, *Ḥizānat al-adab wa-lubb lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, et al. (Cairo, 1931), IV, 358.

³ In the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula (see *E.I.* 2, III, 362-364).

⁴ Deserts to the northeast and southwest of the Arabian Peninsula respectively, between which lies Mecca. For the former, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 864-866; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, X, 481-482.

⁵ A bitter tasting plant, yet one with a fragrant smell.

⁶ In pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, the lament over the abandoned encampment was an opening topos of the panegyric *qaṣīdah*. Here, the youth is also imitating

He did not cease to ask and enquire about their inhabitants, nor to sing in a quavering voice, as he chanted [*basīlī*]:

Zarūd⁷ has become empty of its inhabitants, hence it contains neither humans nor roving animals.

Although nourishment used to abound in it, it now contains no pasture for grazing camels, nor any place where forage may be found,

For everything in it is now gone, and there is no pure water left in it, nor any that is cool.

Oh for the times I spent with Salmà!⁸ What has become of dear little Salmà, beautiful as a soft and tender antelope?

She wore the freshness of youth as her mantle, so that other mantles reflected the water of her mantle's beauty.

Then, I said: "Alas for the flowing tears, and the love-longing of this gallant, energetic youth! Yearning has bent him down on account of his tenderness, and dragged over him the train and sleeve of its robe; it has routed a steadfast man and softened a tough one, for intense emotion and deep longing have exhausted him, while weeping and wailing have choked him to such a degree that his sword-suspensory and robe have been moistened by his tears."

In this wise, we continued for a long time to address him and to ask him to approach us, but he would merely begin to repeat his dirge, with the trace of dust and dirt upon his flanks, and to recite [*basīlī*]:

The tale of one who has departed would be revived once more, if only times now past could be brought to life again.

the rituals of the Pilgrimage to Mecca. He wanders like the *sāī* (who goes between Safa and Marwa), he circles the ruins seven times (like the *ṭawāf* or 'circumambulation' of the Ka'bah, and kisses the traces (like the pilgrims who kiss the black stone in the Ka'bah). The implications are thus entirely blasphemous.

⁷ A mountain in Hījāz, as well as a village near Qayrawan in Tunisia (see *E.I.* 2, Supplement, p. 198).

⁸ A classical woman's name, conventional in Arabic love poetry, and equivalent to the Dorotheas and Florindas who populate our own pastoral tradition.

O spring encampment, you used to welcome me, when white swords and straight lances protected you,

And the tribe of Sulaym⁹ blocked my way, both the straight-haired and the curly-locked among them.

So where is Salmā, and where is Su‘dā? What has become of dear little Salmā, and what of Su‘ād?¹⁰

For how many a day and night, you knew not what separation and absence really were.

O you who interrogate this encampment about a people who will never return to it:

They have departed as do the nights of Time. Where are Jadīs, and where are ‘Ād?¹¹

Al-Sā’ib said:

He thus continued to weep so intensely that his moans succeeded one another without interruption, for he was in a state of total grief, as if a massive conflagration had melted him down and set him on fire,¹² until he collapsed upon the ground fainting, and was singled out by the hand of sorrow. Then an old man who was wearing the covering of a waterskin¹³ in lieu of a shirt, and was dressed in threadbare garments, approached him from the caravan, and said: “This is the result of love,¹⁴ and the swooning of a man over his loved ones. I am his traveling-companion and I am concerned about him. I will be responsible for his recovery and cure, for I know the hidden secret of how to induce it. Do you happen to have an ‘*ajwah*’ date?¹⁵ I know that, on yonder heights, either at a spear’s throw

⁹ A Northern Arab tribe. See *E.I.* 2, IX, 817-818; M2, n. 9, above.

¹⁰ Further women’s names conventional in Arabic love poetry.

¹¹ Two legendary pre-Islamic tribes that became extinct: Jadīs perished in an intertribal war with Ṭasm that finished off both groups (see *E.I.* 2, X, 359-360), whereas ‘Ād is said to have been destroyed by God in punishment for its wickedness (see *E.I.* 2, I, 169). The latter legend is a Qur’ānic equivalent to the Biblical tale about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹² Reading *yulhibu-hu* with D, rather than *yudhibu-hu* with W.

¹³ Reading *zimāl* with D, rather than *rimāl* with W.

¹⁴ Or: ‘the touch of a serpent’ (*hubāb*). We are dealing here with a pun.

¹⁵ A variety of date considered to be of very high quality, grown in Medina,

from, or on a promontory within them, there is a kind of earth called Consolation. Through its virtue I have often cured a man who is madly in love, slaked a man's thirst, and spun my magic spells for a man stung by a serpent, so that he recovered his health. Give me leave to spur this thoroughbred steed toward it and, thereby, to remove from this youth's heart the touch of madness and listlessness with which it is afflicted, so that he may be restored—God willing—to good health. Then, he will not be stingy or avaricious with me." Everyone thought his plan to be a sound one, and promised him a reward and a recompense. So he climbed upon the back of the youth's mount and gave it free rein, saying: "Give me his traveling-bag in which to fetch the earth, along with his sword so that, in its possession, I may neither be wronged nor harmed." Then he sped forth, outstripping the wind in his escape, and repeating a melody and song in which he declared [*myḡtatt*]:

Time is a loaned garment, yet the freeborn man need feel no shame in that fact.

Alike to me is the wailing¹⁶ of one who complains of my betraying him, and the bleating of sheep and goats,¹⁷

For a freeborn man is one who spends the night with prudence as his hallmark.¹⁸

It is enough for the young brave, and suffices him, indeed, to know that life is a loan,

For in the course of Time, what noble individual has not been made to roam?

Many a noble, well-protected man is annihilated with the passage of Time.

After some difficulty, the youth recovered. He questioned both the riders and his traveling-companions, he sorrowed and lamen-

reputed to have been planted there by the Prophet Muḥammad himself, and often mentioned in *ḥadīṭ* literature, for which, see *C.I.T.M.*, IV, 144b.

¹⁶ Reading *annatu* with D, rather than the misprint *'nni-hu* recorded in W.

¹⁷ Reading *yū'āru* with D, rather than *nu'āru* with W.

¹⁸ Reading with D. A variant of this line provided by W may be translated: "A true man is one who strives by night, with prudence as his hallmark."

ted, rode across the empty deserts,¹⁹ traveling aimlessly, without a guide, looking for a trace of the old man, who had by now disappeared from sight, eluding every glance and eye. As the youth departed, he recited [*rajaz*]:

The Bedouin are more entitled to nobility than are the sedentary, and this old man's mother is neither from the tribe of Tamīm,²⁰ nor from the confederation of Muḍar.²¹

By means of his cunning, he did violence to the group with which he associated. What filth and dirt lie on his robe!

May one who caused us harm never be forsaken by harm, and may he never become useful without suffering harm for it!

Thus I realized that the old man was the master Abū Ḥabīb, and exclaimed: "May he not be granted the enjoyment of any friend or loved one! What an astonishing plunderer in the guise of a victim, and what a victor in the garb of one vanquished!"

¹⁹ Either on a borrowed horse, since his own has just been stolen by the old man, or we are faced with an inconsistency in the narrative which, once again, underscores the unreliability of the narrator.

²⁰ A distinguished North Arabian tribe from which the author claimed descent (see *E.I.* 2, X, 172-176; M1, n. 12, above).

²¹ One of the two major groupings of North Arabian tribes, the other being Rabīʿah (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 352-354). The implication intended by the speaker is that, not having a Bedouin mother, the old man has little claim to nobility, but since Bedouins normally trace their lineage patrilineally, the argument is largely inconclusive and ineffective.

Maqāmah 4

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

The vicissitudes of Time hurled me to the land of Yemen, through whose regions I journeyed, alternating between despair and hope as I did so. When I was in the district of Oman,¹ by turns experiencing poverty and prosperity, I encountered group after group of people going down, singly and in pairs, to where a man was standing, telling stories and tales, and enduring weariness and fatigue in the course of his preaching. At times, he spoke in verse, and at times in prose, moving fluently, without stumbling in his discourse. I turned to listen to his words and heed his guidance, I sipped the fresh, cool water of his speech, and garnered the lawful magic of his eloquence. He was saying:

O people, let me provide you with edifying examples, for you, whom I am addressing, are neither the scum nor the dregs of society. "To the true believer, wisdom is a stray sheep,"² and exhortation is a guidance to right conduct. Death will inevitably arrive, for our appointed hour is imminent. As he alternates between a disappointing hope, a departing life, a deterring Fate, a rapacious death, a declining morning shadow, a lengthening afternoon shade, a flawed judgment, and an obstructing Destiny, man takes comfort in safety; he confuses colocynth³ with honey, and declares: "May you never perish! How sweet are aloes and colocynth!" Yet the raven of death⁴ hovers overhead, circling about him, while Fate wears down and exhausts every new thing. How often does the raven alight upon a man's courtyard and caw to announce his death and departure, letting him hear an eloquent tongue and bringing him to his senses with the speech of a sincere adviser [*basīf*]:

¹ In the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula (see *E.I.* I, III, 975-977).

² And, therefore, one that needs to be sought after. This is an Arabic proverb. See al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-amṭāl*, ed Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977-1979), I, 381, no. 1152 (hereafter abbreviated *M.A.*).

³ Which is bitter.

⁴ Since pre-Islamic times, the raven has been a harbinger of death, misfortune, and separation, and appears as such in pre-Islamic poetry.

The censurer has made himself heard, and the eloquent speaker has provided a clear admonition.

Woe unto you! Do you not see that the raven of the fleeting nights cries out to announce your death?

Yet you so persist in your youthful folly, that the censurer has given up admonishing you.

Then the preacher turned away with a humble heart and flowing tearducts, adding:

The deceptive abode of this world is extremely treacherous. Its shade is like the heat of the sun; its coolness, like boiling water. Although its first shoots are verdant, the green plant soon withers as the forecaster looks in vain for rain. This world is a wellspring of misfortunes and a source of strife; it is a deceiver of deceivers, a fount of alienation and fatigue [*ṣarī*]:

Never let Time, the deceptive, deceive you, for it is a scatterer and a sunderer.

Restrain yourself, O headstrong one whom no restrainer can lead away from error, yet for whom I would sacrifice my very soul.

Following in your footsteps have night and daytime raced, while you rest beneath the shadow of your vain illusions.

How many an aspirer to the lofty peaks of glory has had his nose removed by amputation!

Oh, may God have mercy on the man whom some deterrent continually prevents from following the right path!

O people, you are of different categories and kinds: Among you are the high and the low, the wealthy and the poor, the foolish and the sensible, the ignorant and the learned, the famous and the obscure, the idle and the industrious, the healthy and the sick, the transient and the permanent, whereas I am a mere wayfarer among you; a member of a certain clan and tribe, except that the Fates removed me from my own people, so that our abodes become distant from one another. Let me provide you with some remark-

able information about myself, thereby admonishing both the heedless and the mindful among you. I was the son of a Qayl,⁵ and used to drag the hem of my robe in pride, to pine for a lady with a mole on her cheek,⁶ to wrap myself in the garment of splendor and haughtiness, to revel in the meadow of ease and riotous living and, between Najd⁷ and al-Ḥujūn,⁸ to seek guidance in matters of love, until the hand of death smote my father, and our reign came to an end. My friends and close companions deserted me; both the half-breed and the purebred forsook me. Once I had fallen asleep, heedless that I was, a rebel seized command. He violated all oaths and agreements and, being jealous of men of rank and ambition, he had me banished and condemned me to being a fugitive, to seeking out generous men, and to tasting what is lawful and forbidden. How often have I tasted the dust, sought water from the morning and midday mirage, and repaired to my downy-cropped chicks,⁹ who were as thin as lances and swords, and who watched out for me as impatiently as does the debtor, imploring my compassion as I do that of all generous men. But what will my chicks think of me, if I return to them with an empty provision-bag, having failed to earn a living for them?

Then he recited [*basīl*]:

O my Lord, whose largesse is munificent, for Your largesse is abundant and ample indeed,

Failure and success are lots that You award: The successful triumph where the foolish fail.

Hope may be thwarted, and a judgment may be unsound, but the judgment of one who trusts in You is never unsound.

Alike in God's eyes is the tiny ant that He nourishes unstintingly, and the huge elephant.

⁵ The title of some legendary pre-Islamic princes of Yemen (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 818-819).

⁶ Considered a sign of beauty.

⁷ In the northeast of the Arabian Peninsula (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 864-866).

⁸ A mountain near Mecca (see *J.G.W.*, I, 138, and *passim*).

⁹ I.e., his children.

Of His creatures, neither the mature, nor the baby camel, are ever overlooked by Him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

On hearing this, each bystander rushed toward the preacher with a *ḍinār*,¹⁰ to extinguish the burning flame of that poor man's need. Then the preacher began kneeling gratefully before God, praising and invoking His name at length, and saying to his audience: "May you never have to depart from your homelands, may you never lack the habitual resting places of your camels, may Time never notch the edges of your swords, and may it never frighten your flocks." Then, in his attempt to get away in haste, he began to break through the ranks of the believers, moving with meteoric speed. Yet I had appointed my glance to be his supervisor, and him, to be the object of my scrutiny, so I ran after him on the double, while he fully gave me the slip with total fraud and deceit, until he had left the inhabited area behind. Yet the follower persisted in pursuing the followed, for I called out: "Slow down, O deceiver; what family and friends have you got?" But he gave me the cold shoulder, in an effort to avoid me. So I said: "Master Abū Ḥabīb, your own preaching has condemned you. Must you always be a deceiver and a thief?" He replied [*mujtatt*]:

I have struggled with Time, by restraining my struggles within it.

Thus have I forestalled the cunning of the nights, and thus have I forestalled the cunning of men.

Incompetence and stupidity are only natural¹¹ to those shaded by marriage canopies,¹²

So accept these useful words couched in improvised rhymes.

Forestall the times, and beware of the fleeting passage of the nights.

¹⁰ A gold coin.

¹¹ Reading *ḥulq* with D, rather than *ḥurq* with W.

¹² I.e. 'women'.

If a western region is unfit for you, let an eastern one become
your spacious range.

The freeborn man is but a sword that casts its brilliance over
Fate.

Oft though you declare: "I shall remain," you shall, without a
doubt, depart.

I am al-Sadūsī, yet I have shed the garment of the respected,
portly elder.¹³

I am not ignoring you; instead, I have tried to avoid a lengthy
altercation between the two of us.

Then he slipped out of my sight, after having bidden me farewell
and confided to me the thoughts he had just confided.

¹³ *Bajāl* means both 'respected' and 'portly' because, in traditional Arab society, portliness was a sign of worldly prosperity and, therefore, of power. Hence, it commanded respect.

Maqāmah 5

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:

I alighted in the town of Damietta,¹ where people were in straits narrower than the eye of a needle, for disturbances were rampant, years of drought had followed one another, and strife had taken root, making order and harmony impossible.

He added:

Sorrow enfolded me in its mantle and made me one of its number, in which state I grew distressed, in that I was unable to milk the udder of the youthful camel of friendship. Then I declared: "What a muddy drinking-trough and arid meadow!" And I began to cajole my soul into bearing the situation patiently, by deceiving myself at times, and at times by trying to pull myself together, saying: "What do you know about sorrow, having never ridden over the smooth or rough areas of this land before? You are a mere wandering, transient apparition; a flash of summer lightning announcing no rainfall; one fated to disappear as does the waning crescent moon, and yet you call down woes and curses upon this place." I did not know that, were it not for the weakness of human nature, a man could become so attracted to a region and so tempted by its waters, even though it refused to welcome him. I went to the main mosque, where the desperate meet the covetous, and there I saw a youth like a shining star, with a humble appearance and a tear-moistened eyelid, who was reciting poetry and prose with much distinction, thereby toying at will with men's thoughts. All ears were paying full attention to his words, and all desires were directed toward him. He did not cease to attract and invite men's minds to tarry and stay, as he cried out in words that captivated their hearts and surpassed the utmost efforts of both the outstripping and the pursuing horse, all the while declaring:

O people, blessings are not made to last merely by expressing gratitude to God, nor are grudges prevented merely by invoking His name. The resentments I observe among you are even worse than the drought that has befallen us, and the feuds that have

¹ In northeastern Egypt, on the Nile delta (see *E.I.* 2, I, 292).

become entrenched among you are even more harmful than our tribulations. Therefore, cleanse your breasts, purify your hearts, and put an end to your doubt and suspicion, or else you will experience death and misfortune. Know, further, that any disagreement among you over your objectives will prevent you from enjoying the good fortune provided by the rain-bearing constellations.² Wherefore this bickering and hatred? Why not adopt a forgiving and tolerant attitude instead? Consider the nations of yore, and prepare for death and destruction. Wherever dissension and discord predominate, a single man is worth one thousand. Differences have arisen among equals before, but friends who remain united can always overcome the might of their opponents. Therefore, maintain friendly relations with one another and respect your leaders [*mutaqārib*]:

Consider how discord severed the bonds of the men of Iyād³ and their leaders.

How many tribes whose garments were cruelly torn to shreds, did discord attack before that.

Misfortune destroyed the Ḥārījīs,⁴ for it felled their Šabīb⁵ and their Ḥabbāb.⁶

What a seditious act was instigated by their maternal relatives who, had it not been for discord, would have knocked at their door.

How much can interfere between a desire and its object, thereby keeping men from their loved ones.

Where are your minds and your common sense, and why do you

² The rising of certain constellations was thought to produce rain which, in Arabic, was a proverbial symbol of prosperity and fertility (see *E.I.* 2, I, 523-524).

³ A distinguished North Arabian tribe whose power and prestige declined after the rise of Islam (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 289).

⁴ A dissident sect that broke away from the Islamic mainstream when the fourth orthodox caliph 'Alī (r. 35/656-40/661) consented to having his claims to the Caliphate decided by arbitration (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1074-1077).

⁵ Šabīb ibn Yazīd was a Ḥārījī leader whose rebellion was suppressed in 78/697 by al-Ḥajjāj, the ruthless Umayyad governor of Iraq (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 164-165).

⁶ Possibly he is Ḥabbāb ibn al-Aratt, a companion of the Prophet, who died in the year 37/657, at the age of seventy-three (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 896-897).

harm and oppress one another? Has the time not come for the dark nights of perdition to be dispelled, for the pearls on the necklace of injustice to be scattered; for the criminal to consider his crime abominable, to regret what he has perpetrated and committed, to repent yet once again, and to ask his Lord for acceptance? Perhaps his hard heart will then become tender, his frozen mercy will again begin to flow, his extinguished compassion will shine forth, and he will consider hope in God to be his duty, for God has no chamberlain before Him to mediate on that sinner's behalf [*sarī*].

Seeking pardon from the Lord is your duty, for there is no chamberlain before God to mediate on your behalf.

Lo, repentance is at hand, therefore, let the sinner and wrongdoer find refuge in it.

Let God's mercy descend afresh, for this shocking situation has lasted far too long.

None but a brave youth entertaining high aspirations, and who is of noble stock, can achieve success or win acceptance.

Al-Sā'ib continued:

Then the youth turned toward an old man shriveled up like a hedgehog, the arrows of whose eyes were striking and piercing their mark, and added:

This is my father, who helps me earn my living, and my rival. I always grant him all the rights to which he is entitled, yet I fear his hostility and disobedience; I now lead him along, step by step, just as he once led me along, from degree to degree, immersing me in the waves and morasses of Fate's barrenness, casting over me the robe of his literary refinement, wrapping me in the mantle of his love and affection, pruning and straightening my branch, placing a ring and mark upon my neck, loosening my bridle, sharpening my lance, aiming my arrow, and honing my understanding, until I rose to the same glorious heights he had attained, and grew tall in the soil of his own elevation. Then he put me in possession of horses and servants, and made me desire to rule over kingdoms and nations. But it was not long before Time again imposed its misfortunes, and inflicted misery and harm on us, for it shortened its

protective shadows, muddied its cool waters, forbade what had once been permitted, and erased our virtues and sincere friendships. Indeed—by Him who causes dawn to break, created rare innovations, raised the seven heavens, made the *ġarab* and the *nabʿ*,⁷ knows the hidden, answers the questioner, scorns the proud, prizes the humble—if my father’s frozen knowledge were to flow, if his extinguished fire were to be rekindled, if his tongue were to be freed, and his excellence to burst forth, his distinction would impress you, and his confusion would cause you regret. Yet he is imprisoned in the fetters of senility; he counts his every breath, thinks that his present is like his past, and that his roar is like his whisper. Hence, in driving him forward, I am driving a slow-paced camel, making a lot of noise as I do so, but grinding no meal in the process.

Then the old man awoke from his slumber, removed the noose of his halter, concentrated his energy, raised his head, summoned his strength, loosened his bonds, and said [*mutaqārib*]:

Lo, the cub is father of the lion, and drops of dew warn you of a coming deluge.

It suffices a valiant youth to be considered a truly noble aristocrat who gives clear indications of his distinction.

My arrow hits the mark, and my bow shoots well, and how many an arrow of mine has his arrow feathered.

If Fate has sundered his ties, will Fate join them together again?

I have offered you words to refute the ignorant and heal the confused of his confusion.

My goal is clear, should any prudent man wish to strive and follow the paths that lead to such a goal.

Although a youth’s Fate is forever admonishing him, he can still experience the admonishment delivered before his day.

What new thing hides from Time, that Fate does not wear out,

Or what group, like a unique necklace, that Fate does not shoot down with whichever of its arrows it pleases?

⁷ See M2, n. 12, above.

O people, Fate delays and slows us down; it offers us one drink after another, it is a rent that is never mended, a burning thirst that is never slaked. But after hardship comes ease, and following upon a storm comes a breeze, and after trying times the Lord awards favors. Therefore, be aware of the possibility of relief, forget your immersion in trouble and confusion, and do not despair, for God will dispose of harm. The hopeless, desperate man will be the loser, for God's grace is close to His worshippers. Abundance alternates and takes turns with dearth; it supervises and oversees misfortune. Man only reaps what he has sown, so beware of repenting, for the capture of your quarry is auspicious, success will incline toward you, fortune will whisper in your ear, and luck will cleave to you, while relief will court you and Fate will jest with you. And if the sparks of hardship have recently scorched you, now the blossoms of joy will be redolent. No, by God, no situation is permanent, and no drought lasts forever. I can just see myself rolling in clover within your valley, and filling my vessel to the brim at your drinking-trough. It is as if the one who recently sought vengeance against you is now at rest, your bird is tranquil in its nest, your meadow is full of plants, your drought is receding, your she-camels are giving milk, the one among them that was formerly frightened is now safe, the one that was disturbed is now at peace, and the one that was aroused is now calm, so that stability has returned, and the myrtle and oxe⁸ are now vying with one another in their fragrance. Therefore, place your trust in me, for I have seen both good days and bad, milked the different sides of Fate and deciphered its various lines. I have endured its terrors and firmly withstood its changes; I have wrestled against, struggled with, and struck out at Fate, until it covered me with dust, abandoned me to the morning and midday mirages, and snatched my youth from me in its prime, leaving me an old man, yet one with a chick,⁹ unable either to advance, to cry out for help, or to strike fire from the wood of the 'afār or the marḥ.¹⁰ And soon, what little life is left in me will perish, the remnants

⁸ *Buphthalmus sylvestris*, a fragrant plant.

⁹ I.e., 'a child'.

¹⁰ Two trees, the wood of which is highly flammable. A stick of marḥ (*cynandum*

of my humors will dry up, and I will be completely forgotten, just as the attachments and pangs of love are completely forgotten, if not for the diligence of my hired wailing women and female mourners, and the memorial inscription on my grave and tombstone. After my death,¹¹ I will be asked: “What is your effort and achievement, and where is your flock and herd? Have you been unfortunate or fortunate; near to God or far from Him [*basīl*]?”

When the Summoner demands His account, then oh for the fortunate, and oh for the unfortunate!

How can you expect Him to be pleased with you, when someone else has been pious and devout?

You have performed no righteous deed for which He can be pleased with you, nor is your heart pure.

How different are a verdant spot at dawn, and a desert without vegetation, bare as a shield.

Whatever a man receives will be easy for him to accept, when he meets the Exalted.

Happy is the man of noble ambitions who follows the right path, for he will ascend unto his Lord.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then gifts poured down upon him, souls were favorable to him, everyone offered to sacrifice his money and family for him, and received him with friendliness and hospitality, saying: “You must stay in my home, for you have my assurances that you are very dear to me.” But he replied: “I am on the brink of departure, and on my way to my clan and group. Traveling provisions are all I will ask of you, for you are the sort of people among whom traveling provisions may be found.” Then were his leather bags filled, and garments were heaped before him, one upon the other, after which the old man said to me: “Assist me, your brother and father, for I have picked and chosen you to do so, and you will be grateful for

viminale) wood is placed under another of *ʿafār* wood, with which it is rubbed to produce fire.

¹¹ I.e., on Doomsday.

having helped me, after you have filled your traveling-bag and your saddlebag.”

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I went with the two of them, out toward the countryside, rejoicing in him, for he was a clever, witty fellow. Then he removed his veil, smiled, and looked at me attentively, saying to me: “O Abū l-Ġamr, plunge your hand into this abundant loot. What do you think of this sustenance, and of the way I derived and obtained it?”

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I filled my hand to overflowing and said: “Pardon, me, O my God!” And the old man said to me: “Although you are going up hill, and I am going down dale, wherever I find you, I will give you a share of my booty.”

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he climbed into his boat, embarked upon the sea, and crossed it, while saying [*mujtatt*]:

I am al-Sadūsī in truth: I travel at night, over land and sea.

At times I am despoiled,¹² and at times I am wealthy and prosperous.

Some men cross the desert, whereas you repose in shade, beneath a tent.

You depart, obeying beautiful women, while breaking and violating your promises,

Without considering weakness shameful, despite your maturity and vigor.

Seek to deceive the miser without using force on him,

And pay no heed to whether you obtain the object of your desires with ease or with difficulty.

Strive to win both this world and the next, yet be no ally to losers.

Life consists in obtaining its basic necessities, on which you will travel as if on a sturdy camel.¹³

¹² Reading *harīb* with D, rather than *hazīn* with W.

¹³ Vowelizing *jasr* with D, rather than *jisr* with W.

Even if you are considered free, you are actually languishing in the fetters of captivity,

For no living creature can enjoy this life forever, even if he is bestowed the lifespan of an eagle.¹⁴

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I marveled at his ease¹⁵ in speech, and the natural affinity between him and his daily sustenance, so that I exclaimed: "A blessing on his wonders, but a curse on his impostures!"

¹⁴ Proverbial for its longevity.

¹⁵ Reading *tayassur* with Ḍ, rather than *taysīr* with W.

Maqāmah 6

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

I halted, according to the decree of Time, in the land of Yemen, resolving to enter Aden,¹ and traveled from palace to palace,² as though I were seeking the traces of Dū Yazan³ or Dū Ru'ayn,⁴ long after their disappearance. Eventually, I ended up in a major city and seaport, when suddenly a vessel showed up, sailing to a gentle breeze, alternating between tautening and slackening, announcing prosperity, and inspiring generosity and magnanimity, while its sail fluttered peacefully, and its wing flapped joyfully until, at last, it drew near to the shore, and cast forth every sailor and shiphand on board. I was more desirous of news from India, than Qays was for Laylā,⁵ or than Bišr was for Hind,⁶ since I longed for its marvels, and was curious about its wonders. While I was searching for an informant, and greeting both big and small, and while people were either diving in or swimming out, and trading and profiting, suddenly an old man bent like an arch or a bow appeared, racing in the bridle against Time, and attacking with a tongue keen as a sword and sharp as a spearhead, who walked with slow, halting steps, and appeared to be on the verge of collapsing in a dead faint. He was wrapped and had veiled his face in his mantle; he was disguised and unrecognizable to anyone scrutinizing him and, after somewhat of an effort, he signaled his greetings, and began to speak,

¹ In the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula (see *E.I.* 2, I, 180-182).

² These are presumably the ruined palaces of the ancient, pre-Islamic Ḥimyarite nobles.

³ Sayf ibn ḏī Yazan was a famous noble from the Ḥimyarite kingdom of Yemen, who in later times inspired a popular epic that was named after him (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 101-102).

⁴ A Ḥimyarite nobleman who is said to have warned 'Amr, the last of the dynasty of the Tubba's not to commit fratricide against his brother Ḥassān. See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1907. Repr. 1956), pp. 25-26.

⁵ Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, known as Majnūn Laylā ('the man who went mad over Laylā'), was a famous 'Udri poet, who sang of his passion for his lady, Laylā (see M30, n. 109, below).

⁶ Bišr ibn Abī Ḥāzim was a pre-Islamic poet (see *E.I.* 2, I, 1241). Hind (a lady's name) has not been identified, but was, presumably, his beloved.

exhibiting a forearm as thin as a stripped palm branch, and speech as delicate as a breeze or a *nasīb*.⁷ He said:

I implore you by God, O company of travelers and traversers of oceans and deserts, pray give ear to my tale, and grant me full leave to tell it, for you are, indeed, the most glorious of people in your ambitions and the most noble in your responsibilities. You have avoided the reversals of kingdoms, preferring the terrors of travel. Hence, you are truly freeborn men, whereas other people are mere bondsmen. To you belongs the sweetness of life, and to others, its bitter colocynth. Lo, hearken to me briefly, and perhaps I can quench your deep thirst or cure your illness. Let me remind you of the swelling seas, plowing ships, the raging main, the flowing water, the wine-dark wave crests, the successive showers, the dark days, the impending floods, the overtowering waves, the roar of the wind, the wail of the gale, the cry of alarm, and the commotion of the troubled sea. Lo, give thanks to God; pray to Him⁸ and invoke His name, cause your thoughts to dwell upon His benefactions, and spend the late evening and early morning hours in praise of Him. When Death hovered above you, and you could no longer protect yourselves from behind or from in front, how many among you declared: "To God do I swear, with an oath that conceals no limitations or excuses, and in which I accept the pain of fasting, worship, and rising at night to pray [that, if I am saved, I will perform these acts out of gratitude to God]." Yet once danger was removed from you, and fortune again wooed you, you abandoned your pledge and sought to cancel the acts of gratitude you had sworn to perform.⁹ Men such as you, have, at one moment, come close to your Creator indeed, yet on the morrow¹⁰ you will be despoiled of the merit you thereby earned, for you will be asked about the most intimate details of your behavior, be they significant or beneath notice: about where you paid your alms-tax, and how you suckled the udders of this world. Then will you experience remorse over

⁷ The traditional amatory introduction to an Arabic panegyric *qaṣīdah*.

⁸ Reading *wa-ṣallū* with Ḍ, rather than *wa-ṣilū* with W.

⁹ Calling upon God in moments of danger, when at sea, and later showing ingratitude after having been rescued by God, is a common motif in the Qur'ān, e.g. 17:67, 29:65, and *passim*.

¹⁰ I.e., on Doomsday.

your neglect, and regret over having failed to comply with the condition you imposed upon yourselves; over your promise and oath, and your deficiencies and excesses. In this wise do the heedless become neglectful, and homecoming and returning travelers end up caring only for their families, to the exclusion of their religious duties [*sarī*]:

Praised be your Lord for your return, O homecoming traveler, for He is your Guardian and Benefactor.

O prudent one, you have won a glorious fortune, whereas *you*, O heedless one, have abandoned your good fortune.

What a difference there is between a person on the ascent, whose ambition soars, and one on the descent, whose ambition is base.

Do not neglect giving alms to those who deserve them, and your Lord will be your Guarantor and Surety.

Be generous with the wealth that lies within your control, and you will earn¹¹ God's blessings.

Do you not see that His blessings are a torrent, in the mantles of which you are clothed, as you proudly trail the hems of your garment?

Hasten in performing a good deed, for whoever hopes for his Lord's satisfaction must be fleet of foot.

Gather—may you be rightly guided—the praise of a Praiser the rising and setting of whose stars of good fortune will salute you on His behalf.

O my God, increase these merchants' acquisitions, and remove from them any tax-collector or accountant; add to their merchandise, hide from them the squanderer and the indigent, help them to obtain blessings, guide them along the right path, both in rest and in motion, avert from them the sorcery of sorcerers, the heresy of heretics, the misfortune of being murdered, and the deceit of the deceiver. Guide them aright, judge them favorably, with equity and

¹¹ Reading *qāfilū* with D, rather than *nāfilū* with W.

uprightness, return them to their homelands, make them abide in their resting places, inspire them to perform their duties, divert them from the path of disobedience, protect them as they come and go, and whether they are prudent or heedless. O you who have traveled abroad and have now returned home, are there locks upon your hearts?¹² Your very babes and children would implore you to be generous, on my behalf. Never let the reaping of profit divert you from the fulfilment of your vows, but keep, instead, the promises you made to all those whose need excuses their begging. By Him Who split the seed and the date-stone,¹³ and made you familiar with distance and separation, one who has endured suffering now stands whispering before you, and one whose means and income have been reduced is calling out loudly to you. Time has notched his swordblade and ordained his rising and setting, hence his skin has been torn to shreds, while both his new and his old property have perished, his waterholes have been troubled, and his pastures have been exhausted; Time first overburdened him with its burdens, breaking him under its trot and gallop, and then abandoned him, leaving him tired and exhausted, a prisoner in the fetters of senility [*basīl*]:

Behold me: I am exhausted and hungry, hence, is there no one to feel sympathy for, or perceive my distress?

I have not been filled with longing—for there are various kinds of love—by a ray of lightning flashing over *Dāt al-Ġaḍā*,¹⁴

Nor am I one whom coquetry has emaciated, and whom a fair gazelle fawn has filled with fascination.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then everyone gave him a precious gift from whatever he had earned, squeezing and milking the udder of generosity for him,

¹² Qur'ān, 47:24.

¹³ In order to make them sprout. Qur'ān, 6:96.

¹⁴ Literally, 'the land of the *ḡaḍā*', a type of tamarisk producing a very hot fire when burned. This is a possible reference to Najd, where this plant abounds. Here, and in the next line, the mercenary speaker is declaring that, unlike the 'Uḍri poets, he has no interest in love, but wants money instead. The 'Uḍri tradition, alluded to here, was reputed to have originated in Wādī l-Qurā, within the confines of Najd (see *E.I.* I, IV, 1077-1078).

after which he gathered his worn garments around what he had received, and filled both his right and his left hand with more than he had hoped for, while simultaneously being at a loss as to how he would carry away his abundant spoils, so he said to me: "O traveler, will you be of assistance? Comfort this, your paternal uncle, in particular or in general." I hastened to do so, in order to discover his secret and ascertain his wickedness, for doubts about him had so struggled with me, that I had said to myself: "There is more to this mystery than meets the eye." So I began to follow him, since he was in front of me, but he said: "Go ahead so that you can lead me." Then he directed me to the apartments of a tavern or hostel exuding cooking-odors and smoke, where he was accosted by some damsels fair as oryxes or gazelles, adorned by the moles on their cheeks, who tore his tattered garments from him and uncovered the valuable objects he had obtained. Upon seeing the latter, they offered to sacrifice their mothers and fathers for him, thereby relieving him of the pain of being disliked and rejected, whereas he began to fondle their breasts and legs, and to unclothe them in what proved to be a showcase and marketplace of debauchery. So I said: "Abū Ḥabīb, do you go from preaching to lechery; from winding your turban around your head to unwinding it;¹⁵ from good to evil? What does the doctrine of 'Reward and Retribution',¹⁶ or the doctrine of 'the Creator who brings His creation back to Him',¹⁷ mean to you?" In response, he composed a poem, saying [*muḥtāt*]:

Know that I am al-Sadūsī, and that all of Time is one long holiday for me.

Whenever revelry eludes me, I seek its return.

Youth has left me behind and departed, but it has left me used to its ways.

¹⁵ In al-Andalus, the turban was the distinctive headgear worn by jurists, that is to say, by men who studied and applied the Holy Law.

¹⁶ A major Mu'tazili doctrine, according to which God has promised to reward the righteous, and threatened to punish the wicked on the Day of Judgment, and will not change His mind (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793).

¹⁷ A reference to the doctrine of Resurrection and Final Judgment.

In front of my acts stands the Lord who created mankind, and who will bring mankind back unto Himself.

His promise of rewarding good deeds is fully guaranteed, and in His control lies the threat of punishment for wickedness.

I have learned, with absolute certitude, that the fortunate man is truly fortunate,

And that, shortly, earth will be scattered over me.

For God, everything is easy and nothing is difficult.¹⁸

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I left him to his evil desires, and to his unwholesome pasture and grazing ground, hoping on his account that, because of his admission of guilt, he would be pardoned for his lack of moderation, and I said: "Perhaps the deep conviction of his faith along with the frankness of his sincerity will grant him deliverance and salvation."

¹⁸ In D, this line comes after the fifth one.

Maqāmah 7
(*The Sea*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

I rode continuously on the mount of Time, from one situation to another, experiencing abundance and privation, arrival and departure, as I sought and flushed out my daily sustenance, but the much and the little of it was refused to me. I would approach it, but it would keep its distance; I would seek it out, but it would fail to favor me. So I asked God Almighty to guide me in embarking upon the seas and abandoning deserts and wildernesses, and I declared: "Perhaps seafaring will be of greater benefit and less exertion to me; a more useful plan of action, and a more efficient way for me to achieve success." About the sea, I had long ago heard a proverb that competes with the racehorse as it speeds along by word of mouth. It goes: "Live close to a king or a sea."¹ I eventually came to the conclusion that the truth of that proverb was most apposite and to the point, and so, I decided to renounce the bleeding foot and inner pad of the camel, and traveled to the port of al-Šaḥar,² from which city I had decided to embark upon the sea. There, I suddenly heard a loud voice saying:

Whoever listens to me for a short while, will derive a great advantage, sharper than his well-crafted sword, thanks to my sound guidance, for I will inform him about what he does not know concerning China and India.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then people gathered around him, contending with one another to hear his words, whereupon he declared:

O people, everyone swoops down to snatch up his daily sustenance. A commodity, in the procurement of which men plunge into and cross this terrible sea is, indeed, important and remarkable. What impels you to sail this raging sea, and to traverse this swelling flood when, on land, you have a wide enough expanse and room

¹ See *M.A.*, I, 302, no. 894.

² On the coast of Oman, in Yemen (*J.G.W.*, I, 154, and *passim*).

enough to wander? In contrast to that, before you lie the quagmires and the fears provided by the terrors of the sea! One would think that you had actually mastered the sea's reins, and made peace with its fish; that the crests of its waves had been lowered, and that its currents and swells had been humbled for you! By God, if you ever traverse or swim across it, you will place yourselves at great risk, and your attempt will be considered an act of hubris. Have roads on land been obstructed before you, or have the entrances to kingdoms been blocked in front of you? Can you find no profitable commerce in seeking out the presence of kings? Does life not offer you places on land in which to drink, evening and morning, where you may doze off at midday in the shadow of prestige and honor, lodging your claims against the most honest of creditors and debtors? Must you, instead, travel at length in order to trade with the infidel, thereby allowing them to control you when you remove your veil before them, and letting them pass sentence against you in order to plunder your bags and bundles of goods? If you trade with them, you will witness fire being worshipped,³ you will see celestial conjunctions being observed for the purpose of divination, you will gaze upon graven images whose favor is being sought, and see homage being paid to al-Madān⁴ by a nation that hides itself from you through the use of an unintelligible language; that falsely claims to be cleverer and more motivated than you are; that disdains you as one disdains ants, and that accuses you of being heedless and negligent. Then, he recited, saying [*rajaz*]:

Oh how despised are Arabs among non-Arabs, when the latter revile the former, and heap injury and abuse upon them!

Beware, 'Abdallāh,⁵ of 'Abd al-Najm,⁶ and rein in your soul as if with a bridle,

For a tree can be felled by continual gnawing, and an unruly, headstrong steed can be controlled with a muzzle.

³ An allusion to the Zoroastrian religion (see *E.I.* 2, V, 1110-1121).

⁴ A pre-Islamic idol. See Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kūṭāb al-aṣnām*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Pāšā (Cairo, 1924), p. 111.

⁵ Literally, 'Worshipper of God', a Muslim name.

⁶ Literally, 'Worshipper of the Stars', a Pagan name.

Beware of the onslaught of death, from whatever direction it may attack, for every lofty building is raised only to collapse.

Why do you wish to cross the seas when you have a broad expanse on land over which to travel, and when that land is a fresh harvest issuing from God's favor, a robe of compassion ready to be worn, and a tinder from which to kindle fire?

Al-Sā'ib said:

On hearing these words, everyone cut the cord of his resolve, and severed the ties of his inclination to board ship, adding:

What an excellent guide you are! Long may you live, O skilled chorister and singer to us all! You have caused us to change our minds by making us aware of the dangers of seafaring. Would you be willing to repeat your advice in order to restrain our unruly souls even further?

But the speaker replied:

Of what use would it be for me to repeat my words, when the unfortunate and the fortunate are predestined to be as has been ordained? My home is far away, but I will return to you tomorrow, for I have not yet provided you with some secret information on how to earn an affluent and comfortable living and, though I plan to rise early, my exhausted mind will have had a chance to rest by then.

Al-Sā'ib said:

By the time people were dispersing from the speaker, everyone was repeating his rhymes, and gazing back and forth at him, some longing for and approaching him, and others arguing with, and contradicting his words. Then, a dark-skinned man⁷ accompanied by ten other men⁸ came up to the speaker and began to say to him:

What is your purpose and your business, and why all this song and dance on your part? You have prevented us from setting sail, and lowered a veil before the light of dawn. Do you desire money or status? Are you speaking of what is real, or are you merely weaving an illusion? The deception you have perpetrated is seductive indeed, for you have charmed men's hearts with your spells.

⁷ Presumably a ship's captain.

⁸ Presumably his crew.

You will find what you seek among us, for your wealth and prosperity lie in our custody.

Then the speaker replied:

Without a doubt, you have divined my purpose and distinguished the essence from the accident! I will now raise the inclined, bring back the vanished, mend the breach, heal the wound, loosen the camel's hobble, modify my words, inspire ambition and determination, reverse this defeat and flight, enliven the dullness of your market, and repair the ruin of your business, so that your sail may be unfurled and you may continue to exercise your power and influence over travelers.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the dark-skinned man hastened to give the speaker some *dirhams*⁹ and garments, while his men declared: "Pack your bags and get out of here by tomorrow, for we do not know who you are, and do not trust your comings and goings, nor do we have any faith in your absurd statements and your cunning."

The speaker replied: "In this matter, I am entirely trustworthy, but I have no guarantor and none to vouch for me in this area." Then he made an appearance of turning away, showing signs of disease and ill health.

Al-Sā'ib said:

On the one hand, the group was suspicious of the speaker's departure whilst, on the other, they were just as afraid of his anger and rage.

Al-Sā'ib said:

At that moment, a youth, who showed signs of being of high and well-established lineage, and on whom divine guidance and grace shone, arose and came toward them.

He said:

O master, be careful with this group, for they have offended you with their reproaches. O group, what do you want from this master? You have shredded his already tattered garments, taxed his patience, and offended his good manners. Perhaps Fate has heaped trials and tribulations upon him, or a slanderer has distressed him.

⁹ Silver coins.

I will vouch for him, and act as his guarantor for the conditions you impose upon him. Submit your proposal to him, and make me accountable for whatever agreement and decision you reach with him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus, they trusted the words of the youth, calmed down upon hearing them, and left the master, busying themselves with lighting their lamps while they waited for the arrival of dawn, and considering the matter from all angles until they grew confused and exhausted. When the late morning had arrived, the forenoon had appeared, and people were craning their necks to hear news of the master, as they waited for him to begin his instruction, he finally appeared before them, as if he were the crescent moon, and they greeted him, thanking and praising God. He responded to their greeting in like fashion, glanced back and forth, and said:

How greatly is man in need of being restrained, and how suited to him are decisive and trenchant words. Absolute praise be to Him who created all things, causing them to come in groups and singly; who put benefit and harm into them, and added safety and danger to them. Concerning this sea, there is a tale to tell, for it contains signs and portents that can lead to the obtainment of civilization's amenities, and to the earning of profits. It further contains the watercourses and torrentbeds of human livelihood, pearls and coral, and gatherers and harvesters of its fruits. The sea generously produces clouds that put white silk and cotton to shame. God conferred it upon His servants when He subjected it to them,¹⁰ thus causing its fame to be bandied back and forth, and when He made it a place and location where those who desire His bounty may find it;¹¹ when He increased the range and power of His servants by means of it, made of its water a purifying element,¹² and of those of its denizens who are not ritually slaughtered, lawful food;¹³ and when He relieved the fatigue and exhaustion of those who cross it. One is always being warned by the sea, and always patient in face

¹⁰ Qur'ān, 14:32.

¹¹ Qur'ān, 17:66.

¹² For use in ritual ablutions.

¹³ Land animals not ritually slaughtered may not be eaten by Muslims.

of the hardships it offers; one is constantly invoking God in it, respectful and mindful of Him, looking forward to relief, inhaling the fragrance of God's mercy, reading and studying from the sea's books, struggling and practicing one's profession within its expanse. Often does one pursue its fish, flush out those that hide in it, eat the salted ones and the fresh, and catch both the swimming and the crawling creature within it. In the sea, one is safe if one is prudent; one takes or leaves its contents, endures the galloping speed at which it chooses to flow, while being spared the rigors of a swift camel-pace and trot. On the sea, when you see someone who appears to be standing still, he is really moving, and when he seems to be seated, he is really traveling over vast distances, while being protected from stumbling and remaining fearless of the swirling dust of the road. Therefore, what harm can occur, when the blowing winds are unleashed in the presence of divine mercy,¹⁴ and men's souls are filled with joy by the divine grace that has permeated them; when they wear a mantle of security, and hold a warranty against Fate? And when the sailor finally casts his anchor, forgets his doubts and conjectures, sees his scant goods growing, and his worthless property increasing in value, so that his abundance and wealth become enviable, he regards his travel over the sea by day and night to be commendable. Now, no one can gain the upper hand over him, so as to overcome him, nor can any traitor stab him in the back; no impediment can prevent him from approaching, no beauty or excellence can torment him, he need complain of no postponement and delay, nor beware of warnings and fears, nor need he flatter or cajole those who are asleep to his requests, nor take up the defense of, and put up a resistance to protect his property, nor complain of the fine sands¹⁵ and of the many forkings in the road, nor suffer the spreading and dissemination¹⁶ of false rumors. On the contrary, he finds himself under the imperious rule of God, and sleeps beneath a wakeful and protective eye that is alert all through the night. His order is obeyed, his reproach is feared, his outbursts of anger are dreaded, his wells are

¹⁴ Qur'ān, 7:57.

¹⁵ In which camels' feet sink.

¹⁶ Reading *ša'ta-hu* with ʔ, rather than *ša'ta-hu* with W.

well attended. He is made responsible for protection and defense, and is concerned with sails and rigging; he rests upon a soft bed, in a choice spot, under an outstretched shade, in the enjoyment of both his inherited and his earned wealth, thereby leading a comfortable life. Lo, before you lies the clear path I have described, therefore, beware of shameful and dishonorable roads, for they wear out human bodies, drag down sleeves, tauten the skin, bequeath stupidity, and harden the firestick to the point that it can produce no fire. Such roads provoke stubbornness, clothe in weakness, and choke with a mere sip of water. Beware of the road whose travelers are many, and whose master is arrogant; whose branchings are plentiful, and whose hardships and toils are numerous. Such a road is like a well whose water was once plentiful but, in accordance with Fate's decree, has now run dry; whose buckets have become muddy, and whose range is too narrow for a freeborn man to travel. Here you have trustworthy advice, a sound opinion, the guidance of one who encourages you, and the direction of one who has traveled east and west, who has lived in different times and periods, settled down in various towns and cities, entered roads, taken kingdoms, devoted himself to traveling and journeying by night, and investigated doctrines and opinions. Therefore, take it from me as a sincere recommendation designed to announce and predict your success. I ask for no reward, and I desire no favor in exchange, for I am neither concerned with personal gain, nor of my lineage am I vain.

Then he began to recite [*mujtatl*]:

I am a blazing meteor, but what a difference there is between me and a mere meteor.

The intensity of my resolve ignites and blazes forth.

I have ravished my sustenance from Time, and have done so for a long time.

I said: "It is lawful plunder" for the spoils I took from it were precious.

I neither place my hope in the wealthy, nor do I respect the poor.

Alike to me are a barren cloud that passes me by, or a gentle rain,

For I have healthy skin on my face, tanned by misfortunes, as well as healthy skin on my body.

Time's only drawback lies in its inevitable passing.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he turned away, having inspired a resolve to travel by sea in every one of his listeners, by filling his heart and ears. At that point, his guarantor arose and addressed the dark-skinned man and his group:

One such as I, breaks no promise, and tells no lie. What has become of the bargain you sealed with a clap of your right hands,¹⁷ and assured this master, our speaker, with solemn oaths, that you would honor? Gaze upon him: he has proven that his initial appearance was false, he has modified his words, opened closed fists, convinced opponents, organized what was dispersed, joined the disunited, set the broken bone, and claimed back the investment he had left in deposit. He has lived up to his oath, therefore, live up to yours, for God is the noblest witness and the noblest One in whose name witness may be borne.¹⁸

The master added:

I will not heap insults upon you; instead I will consign you to the vicissitudes of Time. Nonetheless, if I so wished, I could insist upon demanding what we had originally agreed upon.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the dark-skinned man and his group hastened toward the master with their purses, and bestowed upon him costly clothes and pearls. Thus they blunted the edge of his sword and extinguished the blaze of his sparks. I followed after him to find out his background, and who had reared him; the nature of his bow, and who had shot it. He said:

O Abū l-Ġamr, what do you think of my song and dance?

Then he added:

¹⁷ To seal a bargain, Arabs clap each other's right hands, rather than shaking them.

¹⁸ Qur'ān, 85:3.

This youth is my son; he does not care about my lapses from virtue. I have guided him from grade to grade, made him progress step by step, trained and instructed him in this profession, and graduated him from it, until he excels in it as much as I do, so that his soul and mine have become equals in it.

Then I exclaimed:

By God, you are the master Abū Ḥabīb! Your life has been prolonged, and your trickery and cunning have obeyed you! Then he turned away from me to leave, thinking that I was trying to deceive and despoil him. But, as he left, he recited [*mujtatt*]:

You are ignorant of the nature of mankind, and of the people of this age.

You are not, O child of Time, expected to rise as high as al-Suhà.¹⁹

So strive²⁰ to earn your livelihood, and work hard at it, for this life is precious.

Do not be concerned over any leanness you might exhibit, or any plumpness,

For the incapable, weak individual is ultimately deserving of every kind of humiliation.

My home is in China, in India, and in the land of Yemen.

At the abandoned encampment, others weep at length over separation.²¹

If I am not up to facing heroic endeavors and performing noble deeds, then who is?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon I said to him:

¹⁹ A star in the tail of Ursa Major. It is so dim that it is believed to be very far away, and has thus become proverbial for what is unattainable (compare M31, n. 20). This line is missing from D.

²⁰ Or 'practice deceit' (*fa-ḥtal*). Here we have a pun. Under the laudable guise of recommending hard work as a means of earning one's livelihood, the speaker is actually recommending trickery and deceit.

²¹ An opening *topos* of the pre-Islamic panegyric *qaṣīdah*.

What is this abnormal shortening of a long syllable, and this innovation in your natural poetic talent?²²

He replied:

You have criticized me implicitly, while simultaneously admiring the wonders of my improvisation. Yet my poem is in a meter that is neither difficult nor rough. The fact that its meter is not recognized by established prosodic usage cannot detract from it, as long as human ears are delighted by it. Even if al-Ḥalīl²³ did not include this metrical variation in his repertory, it is justifiable in its own right, for it is absurd to impose metrical constraints and limitations on people, when one considers human weaknesses and shortcomings. I knew all along that only the final metra of the poem's first hemistiches would please you,²⁴ and that only the prosodic structure and form of those same metra would satisfy you. Therefore, consider the following, revised version of my poem, in its standard dimeter form, and in which no irregular shortening of the penultimate syllable is to be found. The *mujtatt* meter of the following version of my poem is neither abnormal, nor does any *brevi in longa* detract from the final metron of each line.

He again recited [*mujtatt*]:²⁵

O child of your desires, you are not immune from death.

You are ignorant of the nature of mankind, and of the people of this age.

So strive²⁶ to earn your livelihood, and work hard at it, be it by peaceful means, or by the sword.

²² In the above poem, the speaker has taken the unusual liberty of modifying the normal *mujtatt* meter by introducing a penultimate short syllable (where a long one is required) in the final metron of the second hemistich of every line.

²³ Al-Ḥalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 175/791) was a grammarian from Basra who established and described the Classical Arabic metrical system. His descriptive work soon became highly prescriptive (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 962-964).

²⁴ Since they adhere to the normal pattern of *mujtatt*, whereas those of the second hemistiches deviate from it.

²⁵ Having just recited a poem exhibiting a variation from the normal *mujtatt* meter, the speaker will now recompose his poem in a strictly regular form, in order to demonstrate both his scorn for, and his mastery over, the prosodic system in vogue.

²⁶ See n. 20, above.

Do not be concerned over any lean food you may have eaten,
or any fatty one,

For the incapable, weak individual will eventually be placed in
charge of his own security.

My home is in China, in India, in Najd, and in Yemen.

Others let down veils of tears that shine like pearls,

Over a beloved in Najd, or a loved one in Oman.

As for me, in heroic endeavors, and in affairs of the heart, I am
always the one who causes distress.²⁷

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus, I marveled at the generosity of his nature and at the superiority of his *ḡarab* and *nab*,²⁸ and said:

May God add further satisfaction to that which you already enjoy, and may He protect you in your journeys and in the intervals between which you water your camels. May fortune continually descend upon your home and neighborhood for, in due course, you have greatly improved your poetic skill, even if you have foretold the coming of fortune on the basis of an illusion,²⁹ thereby reversing men's decisions with a firm determination and an able heart.

Then he turned away from me chuckling, and said to me:

May God will that, as long as I am in exile, I will never be deprived of your bickering friendship!

²⁷ The word *mānī* ['one who causes distress'] can also mean 'a liar', and also represents the Arabic form of the name of Mani (AD 216-*ca.* 277), founder of the Manichaean religion (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 421). Thus the line could also be interpreted "As for me, in heroic endeavors, and in affairs of the heart, I am a liar," or even ". . . I am a Mani," i.e., a disbelieving dualist. This is another pun. Under the pretense of claiming to be an effective warrior and lover, the speaker is covertly declaring that he is a liar and a disbeliever both in love and in heroism.

²⁸ On which, see M2, n. 12, above.

²⁹ Literally, "even if you have forecasted the coming of rain from a bolt of lightning that does not announce rainfall."

Maqāmah 8

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

I did not cease to journey up hill and down dale in my travels, to encounter clear and muddled situations, to test the mettle of mankind, people after people, to try my luck among them,¹ to become acquainted with tribe after tribe, and to devote my life to them, day after day until, when youth wrested its cloak from me, and Fate made me listen, I responded to the latter's call, and came to Alexandria, arriving in it with great wealth and high rank. Whenever I reached such a major city, I used to look for what was excellent and good in it; I used to seek out its virtuous and pious men, and inspect its hills and vales. While I was wandering about its outposts and guard-stations, full of awe for its inhabited and abandoned areas, I suddenly came upon a group of men who, having recently gathered as thickly as do camel-ticks, were now scattering as thoroughly as do locusts. I turned to observe what was going on and what was occurring in that group and place. But I only found some men standing in prayer, or turning to go away. I asked, and was told: "A preacher who attracted people to him by pouring for them some of the fresh water of his eloquence was just here."

So I asked:

Who will inform me about him and what he said? Will he by chance return, bringing back with him the sharpness and luster of his sword's eloquence?

They replied:

He promised that tomorrow he would return to this same place, and leave no lukewarm believer but that he would inspire him. Our congregation even made him swear that he would return, for people like him do not break their promise. We have never seen one sweeter than he is in his speech, or with a broader and more powerful memory, or having more supporters and followers in the pursuit of good.

¹ Literally, "to cast the dealer and the shuffler's gaming arrows among people." A reference to the pre-Islamic gambling game of *maysir*, in which arrows were shuffled and dealt out to the participants. The game was forbidden by the Prophet (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 923-924).

Al-Sā'ib said:

I remained as anxious as one roasting over hot coals as I pondered over the matter, and asked: "Who will make this amazing wonder available to me?"

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I spent the night thinking only of that man's place of assembly, and anticipating only the location where he would be in the morning. Thus, when day broke, longing and anxiety drew me to him, so that I was the first to appear before his prayer niche and to scare away the raven of the night.² In no time at all, after he had sworn an oath, performed the forenoon prayer and conducted some supererogatory prayers, I heard him say: "Hurry, hurry! Wake up, wake up! Indeed, has the time not come for hardened hearts to be humbled, for the clouds of blindness to be dispelled, and for the water of repentance to flow? Time is short, and your final departure and destination lie ahead of you, yet none listens and none sees. Your situation is critical, yet your vision is immature; the hour of death is at hand, and hope is misleading; covetousness is obeyed, and men scatter and disperse from virtue; passion is adhered to, as are the summer and spring encampments of wealth; aspirations wander at will, and eyes are fast asleep." Then he composed, saying [*sarī*]:

Woe unto your night, O sleeper! How long will you continue to stray, O aimless wanderer?

The raven of death is swooping down, therefore listen to it, as it hovers overhead.

Youth's sterile lightning-bolt, which produces no rain, has seduced you; how long will you attempt to forecast rain from that bolt?

The meadow of right-guidance would ripen if a cultivator such as you were to tend it in accordance with the law of piety.

You have been reproached for a long time, yet you will never desist from sin until you are reproached severely.

² The night, which is black, is compared in color to a raven.

By plunging into the watery abyss of sin, you have strayed from the shore, O swimmer.

You have been reproached for a long time, yet no repentance is forthcoming; the warning has arrived, and there will be no one to pardon you; the one who exhorts you to virtue has appeared,³ yet you have no taste for it; a brief respite has duped you into a false feeling of security, but neither your first drink nor your second will last. You say: “Tomorrow, or thereafter I will repent,” but you do not know how early or how late that will be. How preposterous are your hopes and expectations. Who will grant you a delay and a respite, when the one who seeks you⁴ is swift in execution, and the dangerous flowerbed of temptations is lush? This is a world that deceives and misleads you, yet you leave no legacy behind you, nor do you make any deposit. It is as though you were oblivious to what the world will do with its inhabitants.⁵ Do you not see that it admonishes and forbids you, and that when it gives you its worthless gift, you are neither content nor satisfied?

Then he beckoned to a youth who was sitting in front of him, blazing like a star, and striking men’s hearts with the projectiles of his glances, and said [*rajaz*]:

Arise, my dear child, let me hear you speak, and thereby bear heavy loads and burdens.

Beware of being abandoned and left alone, and of being doubted, or becoming the subject of gossip.

You will elevate speech to an impressive level. How excellent is the one who takes human beings into his confidence and speaks to them.⁶

Then the youth stood up at once, arising from his seat, and saying [*rajaz*]:

In order to speak, I have prepared words like swords, whose edges are sharp and whose luster is bright.

³ Reading *ḥalla* with D, rather than *jalla* with W.

⁴ I.e., death.

⁵ Reading *bi-ahli-hā* with D, rather than *bi-ahli-ka* with W.

⁶ The two hemistiches of this line are inverted in D.

I hasten forward, at the run and gallop, to fulfill the request of
my speeding predecessor,

Who has not complained of fetter or hobble, while I shall endure
the heaviest of mantles,

Not forsaking, an atom of the burden, for I know,⁷ since Time
is full of hatred,

That passion spreads mutual hatred, while the freeborn man is
the one who loves but does not hate.

Then the youth added:

How favored is the fortunate man, how close to God is the
distant one, how distinct is your road, and how noble is your group!
Yet your hearts are blinded, and the seeker becomes distracted
from the object of his search. Hence, the path of righteousness has
come to be obstructed, while the path of shame has been deemed
acceptable. Were it not for God's gentle kindness and hidden be-
nevolence, no good work would endure, and no safeguard would
protect you for, without neglecting you, He has granted you a
respite, He has provided you with a blessing, has done you a good
deed, and is blameless in admonishing you. Hence, beware, be-
ware, as of this warning! Hasten, oh hasten back to what requires
repentance! How wicked, oh how wicked you are, indeed! Beware
of persisting in, and embracing sin [*ḥaḥḥ*]:

You have embraced sins privately and in public, intending to
repent, yearly and monthly,

Moreover, you have gone on expecting to live for ever and an
age, though what remains of your life grows shorter and shorter.

You entertain hope of eternity, and of life in Paradise, but life
beguiles you by force and by compulsion.

Wonders are many, but have you observed the bright stars on
the horizon?

The sun burst in upon them, at dawn, and they fled, complain-
ing of exhaustion, in their weakness and shortness of breath.

⁷ Reading *wa-qad* 'alimtu with D, rather than *wa-lā* 'alimtu with W.

Then brightness flowed over the earth, until you would have imagined that a river had arisen in the east, flowing from the brilliance of the sun.

What a marvel, continuously repeated, fills both east and west with wonder and edification.

Then the youth who had just spoken, pointed to another youth, whom he claimed to be his twin brother, adding that they were alike as two peas in a pod,⁸ and said to him: Lighten your brother's burden a little, for he is growing weary.

The latter hastened to say [*basīl*]:

Offspring of right-guidance, you are not weary; rather, you are a runaway captive.

Today, you have escaped from responsibility for the sin of rebelling against God, but how will you escape from it tomorrow?

Praise be to God, every minor sin is easy for Him to pardon!

O Lord, who mends the fracture, when a bone is broken, Your servant is now broken by the crop of sins that he has harvested.

Be merciful, be merciful, O Merciful One! Easy to Your sublimity is all that is difficult.

Toward You, O Glorious One do the destiny and journey of mankind return at fall of night.

Then he said:

O people, let kindness not forsake you. A worshipper is prone to sin, but the Lord is too generous for hope to remain hidden, salvation to remain concealed, pardon to be denied, or divine bounty and its fragrant breeze to be diverted from him. Lo, return to Him, and you will be well received, otherwise, you are but depraved and foolish.

Then he bowed his head, as does a serpent knocking at the door of generosity, and remained silent for a long time, manifesting no desire to speak, after which he said:

⁸ Literally, "two dates in a cluster."

O wisdom, respond to your supplicant; let him who is attentive to you listen, strike fire from your flint, and diffuse the fragrance of your oxeye⁹ and myrtle. May you be rescued from avarice and guarded against uncertainty. O people, why do I falter in my speech, when I have been trained in eloquence? Proverbs and memory escape me, while my thoughts and ideas resist my efforts to express them. Perhaps something has interfered with me, or an ignorant man has slandered me, or one who casts the evil eye has caused me harm, or an ill-omened bird has descended upon me. You have committed sins, not being faithful to your inner intentions; you have been remiss in your obligations, and mocked the divine precepts. Every one of you will return to his home to eat or sleep, to rest on a mattress, and to enjoy his morning and evening meals, yet he will hardly give thought to a stranger deprived of his homeland, robbed of his pasture and the resting-place of his camels, even though the arriving wayfarer and guest are granted a right in the Book and the Revelation.¹⁰ Yet this unsuspecting old man was felled by anxiety and a severe setback. He is neither worried about what will bring him wealth, nor concerned with having his basic needs satisfied, nor is he pleased by anything other than the occupation in which he is currently involved. Death has prevailed over him, the prime of his youth has betrayed him, his mind has expired, his raincloud has dissolved, his hills have become dessicated, and his torrent-beds have dried up. Let these afflictions of his be the only hint you need in order to act in such a way as to receive, in return, the good news of our gratitude. Acquire, then, abundant merit by giving alms to a guest who has arrived by night, and now descends upon you.

The narrator al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, people handed over whatever was in their hands, paid close attention to their exhorter, and said:

We will sacrifice our property and our children for you, and share both our earned and inherited wealth equally with you. Pray,

⁹ *Buphthalmus sylvestris*, a fragrant plant.

¹⁰ Qur'ān 9:60: "Alms are for the poor and the needy . . . and for the wayfarer: thus it is ordained, and God is full of knowledge and wisdom."

pitch your tents among these abodes of ours, and fling aside your traveling-staff.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the old man got up from prayer, asked for forgiveness, put an end to his aloofness from the assembled company, and said [*rajaz*]:

Welcome to you, O choice company, who have severed the bonds of my wanderings and travels,

And generously offered me the hospitality of your homes, whereby your money has increased in value, far beyond its actual weight.

Lo, my children, hasten to comply with my preferred wish, for my building warns me of its imminent collapse.

Do not think that my heart is proud, for a star will travel by night with the travelers,

And as long as they move while the star is ablaze with light,
The sun must inevitably set.

The narrator, al-Sā'ib said:

Then I spent that night observing him attentively, occasionally joining him in prayer, and taking turns at it. Presents and gifts had been heaped upon the three guests, night fell, and sleep parted them from me. When dawn came, I found myself bound with some ropes, and wrapped in a threadbare mantle. Before me, there was a note on which was inscribed [*rajaz*]:

Now then, Abū l-Ġamr, brother to virtuous men, inevitably, an ox must needs be yoked.

Have you longed for my visit?¹¹ If so, what do you think of the melody produced by my lute's highest string,

And the wail of my chicks and birds?¹² The one who is content, and does not ask for alms, acts not by choice.

You have all wished to stop a star in mid course. But how can a thoroughbred steed be compared with an ass,

¹¹ Reading *izdiyārī* with D, rather than *izdiyārīn* with W.

¹² I.e., "my children."

Even if that steed were to be restrained by hobbles and fetters,
and there were no other inhabitants in the age we live in?

Leave aside the anecdote transmitted by Miḥyār,¹³ about the
magnificent king Baḥtiyār.¹⁴

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus I realized that this was a trick of al-Sadūsī's, and the ruse
of one benighted; of one lacking all proper guidance, yet forever on
the move. I asked God to protect me from him in the highlands
and in the lowlands, during every sleeping and waking moment, on
every pillow, and in every bed.

¹³ Miḥyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1037) was a famous poet (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 24-25; M30, n. 164, below).

¹⁴ 'Izz al-Dawlah Baḥtiyār was a Buwayhid ruler and poet, who reigned in Iraq from 356/967 to 367/978 (see *E.I.* 2, I, 954-955). Although the anecdote Miḥyār tells about him has not been identified, the line seems to mean that one should forget the glories of the past and worry, instead, about the present.

Maqāmah 9

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

When the *jinni* who inspired my youth was a *mārid*,¹ and the arrow of my idleness was penetrating, I used to be acquainted with every scoundrel, and sought to drink from every raincloud and downpour of love. I had often heard that the City of Peace² was a seat of knowledge and of eminent scholars; I had been informed about the culture it possessed, and the grace that had been bestowed upon it. Hence I longed for it as one longs for the intimate companionship of a beloved, or for an apparition coming to visit one in dreams, so I determined to travel, twisting together the various strands of my resolution. When I arrived there, I did not cease to traverse its quarters and alleys; to explore its commodities and neighborhoods in their various species and kinds; to accost its buxom maidens and lascivious women; to involve myself deeply in the city's seditions and factional struggles; to enjoy its outspread shade and tempered breeze, and to inhale its fragrant narcissus and its violet. While I was wandering about in its lanes, and its fair landmarks³ appeared before me, I suddenly came upon a bevy of women strutting about in mantles and cloaks, swaying like branches, manifesting virtuous beauty, whispering words to one another that were sweeter than honey, and deadlier than misfortune. There was one whom I took to be their chaperone, and who had lowered her veil, announcing her stern refusal to be swayed. Yet she did not cease to observe me, and even winked at me. I pretended not to acknowledge her presence, while actually doing so, and I followed in her footsteps, continually turning away, because I was stumbling from bashfulness, while she proceeded to turn around and indicate to me that all that had transpired was unavoidable. Therefore, I

¹ Literally "an insolent rebel." This is an epithet of Satan, as well as the term for a particularly evil kind of *jinni*. Thus, the line means "When the genie of my youth was a real devil . . ."

² An epithet of Baghdad (see *E.I.* 2, I, 894-908).

³ Literally "the blazes on the forehead and pasterns of its horse."

resolved upon peeling off the veil of my fear, and revealing what was hidden in the baggage of my soul. So I said [*ramal*]:

O wondrous person, will anyone answer the man who calls you?

Then she laughed mockingly at me, winking at me with her glance, and saying [*ramal*]:

O freeborn, noble man, everyone you call answers you,⁴ for the *dirham* has sworn that this wondrous person, namely myself, will not ignore it.

With these words, she kindled my fire, and released my *dīnār* from the hobble of its purse, while my illness intensified, and my imagination went wild, like a flock let loose to graze freely, so that I followed after her, flattering her and fawning on her, being kind to her and jesting with her. As a result, she took note of my conversation and its substance, and understood the import of my facial expressions and the words I spoke in confidence, whereupon she said: "Many a desire is difficult to achieve, and many a free man is decked in the garb of a prisoner, yet I have freed him from his captivity, and caused ease to follow upon his difficulties, so that the fulfillment of his wish drew nigh, and his passion was quieted; the ardor of his love cooled, and his fear was calmed. Can hope remain distant, or can any act become impossible, or can arrows miss their mark, or can the kindling of fire fail, in the case of a person whose physical features are pleasing, whose contours are clean-cut, whose figure is plump, whose return is slow, whose departure is swift, whose skin is unblemished, who traverses the horizons, whose spending is conspicuous, who befriends the stranger, who clothes the despoiled, who increases what is lacking, who strengthens the lowly, who raises the fallen, who is generous to the humble? If you despise him, he honors you, and if you rival in glory with him, he surpasses you in it; if you humiliate him, he protects you, and subjects your mount and your stallions to his control, and if you protect him, he

⁴ Reading *kullu man tad'ū yujību* with D, rather than *kullu man yad'ū nujību* with W.

humiliates you, and rolls your cheek and the back of your head in the dust."

Then I said:

How excellent and sweet is your logic, how brilliant is the flash of your lightning, how truthful are your words, and how heavy is your downpour! In promoting this affair of mine, will you be the bucket-rope of my well? For my liver⁵ is athirst, and I am complaining to you with a heart that yearns for a long-necked gazelle in the propitious bevy you are leading. Were I to lavish my hidden wealth on my objective, and meet my death over it, it would be of little consequence to me, and I would not consider my sacrifice to be equal to what I can observe in your bevy.

Then she said:

This problem can be very easily solved, for Fate will protect you. Deep affection always leads to weariness but, if I am your go-between, I guarantee that I will meet your request, while, if you sacrifice your well-hoarded money, you will master impregnable fortresses of feminine virtue; if you bribe chamberlains, you will rend veils, and if you make provisions available, you will get the girl you love.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, I trembled like a supple branch, and said: "This woman is the key to my success!"⁶ So I asked her, in the name of the Lord, "Why don't you tell me your name, for you are, without a doubt, the halter in control of all my hopes." She said: "I am Umm 'Amr,⁷ though I have no son called 'Amr. Yet many a Zayd and 'Amr⁸ have I befriended in this kind of affair." On the spot, I accepted her offer, so that she would accompany me to my lodging, and I could show her my wealth and status, but she made excuses and refused. After much difficulty on my part, she accepted, and

⁵ The seat of the passions, according to Greek and Arab medicine.

⁶ Literally, "the pivot of my pole."

⁷ Literally, "mother of 'Amr," an epithet of the hyena. The hyena is associated with sexual perversity and hermaphroditism, because the female hyena's genitals resemble those of the male. See *E.I.* 2, Supplement, pp. 173-176. This suggests that the woman is a ruthless sexual predator.

⁸ Zayd and 'Amr are the standard names used to illustrate grammatical examples (such as *qaraba Zaydun 'Amran* 'Zayd hit 'Amr'). Using such names here is like saying "I have befriended every Tom, Dick, and Harry . . ."

responded to my invitation, so we went forth until my dwelling became visible to her, at which point I said: "Either wait outside or enter, as you wish." She replied: "I only wanted to identify your door; I will neither enter nor wait outside." So I hastened to give her a *dīnār*, and said: "This is a gift and a present, so that, if possible, you will be insistent and demanding on my behalf." She replied: "I will take my leave of you for the remainder of the day, in order to comply with my vow of fasting." Then, on the morrow, I began to look for her and, if only I had known where she lived, I would most certainly have gone there to find her. But she came upon me suddenly, as does a bringer of glad tidings, signaling with her glance and beckoning to me, bearing a note in her hand, on which was written [*munsariḥ*]:

O you who pine for a coquettish and bashful creature, you have glued your mighty cheek to the dust!

Beware of the sin of passion, and of its stumbling, for the sin of passion is unforgivable.

He who struggles with love will never gain mastery over it, even though he has many partisans and supporters,

But as for him who shows up early, with silver as his mediator, how deserving of victory is he!

Al-Sā'ib said:

When I glanced at the note, my pain intensified, my still unhealed wound opened up again, and I said to her: "Return with an answer, while I decide upon the proper course of action," for I desired a sincere friend whom I might inform about my troubles, and whom I might empower over my situation, as if he were my sun and moon. While I was meditating, considering, and redirecting my thoughts, I suddenly espied the master Abū Ḥabīb strutting proudly toward me, and a downpour of memories about him trickled over me. So I said: "Speak of the Devil, and he shall appear! How excellent is that which Time reveals and conceals!" Then I bared to him my secret: both what was publicly known about me, and what Time and Fate had made me experience privately. He said: "By God, I know that passion is a violent force, and that, being a man, you are only human. By virtue of my love for you, I

should, by all rights, reproach you and address you harshly, yet I have experienced the selfsame kind of love that you have experienced, I have been afflicted by it just as much you have been afflicted, I have tasted both its honey and its bitter colocynth, and I have just barely escaped from the snare of its adversities. I have seen it make fools out of men, and assign ups and downs to them; I have seen it dress the powerful in the garment of the weak, rend the knot that has been tightly knotted and firmly twisted, disturb men's fates, toy with their arrivals and departures, make off with their property, and wrest from them the robe of their beauty; for love bequeaths destitution and begets remorse. Yet the soul has its requirements, and treats man with severe stubbornness. Whoever is already entangled in a net, let him not make matters any worse; whoever is already caught in a snare, let him restrict his movement, and whoever is bound by ropes, let him not prove incapable of taking precautions, for seeking a remedy is imperative, and the sensible person is prudent and determined in his situation, while no distant lover is remote from patience, and no individual, be he unfortunate or fortunate, is safe from love. Therefore, take and leave, without investing too much emotion in your affair, slacken or tighten the reins of your soul, make your measures attractive by means of your generosity, add fair deeds to your fair words, vary your tactics, note that both desire and consolation are possible, do not reveal all your love, and hold back the water of your raging wave." I replied: "How excellent is your abundance, and the wisdom that the jewels and pearls of your speech contain! But perhaps an answer to this note will come up, or else a donor, consisting of your mind, will bestow it." He said: "Write." So I wrote [*munsarih*]:

Whoever desires to catch shying young ladies should not fear arrowheads or swordblades.

Wonder at the gazelle that stains its claws with blood as it pounces on the lion!

How excellent would my love-union with one who is inaccessible be, should her dream-image visit me from a distance.

The more I lavish my love on her, the more she avoids me, like a fugitive in full flight.

Then he turned away from me, after having said: "I will be your helper and assistant in this affair; your bounteous garden and your fountain."

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I awaited Umm 'Amr's return, only to find her slow in doing so, until finally she appeared, peeking through the gap in her veil to prolong my anticipation. I handed her the note and said: "Return hastily, otherwise you will incur in sin." She came back shortly, as fast as blinding lightning, turning toward me a compassionate neck, and handing me a note in which was written [*mujtatt*]:

O you who desire a love-union with me, you are riding on the treacherous edges of swordblades.

Before our union can take place, there lies a day of battle that will be won by a sharp, cutting sword.

If you are determined to win my love, how will you obtain a union with me?

What you must do is act with the lavish generosity of a free-born man who abounds in glory and good qualities.

What a noble intercessor is generosity, in uniting one with the goal of one's hopes!

No words could divert me from it, even if al-Ḥiṣālī⁹ were to embroider them with his embellishment.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I awaited Abū Ḥabīb's report on the matter he had agreed to investigate for me, until he finally appeared, like a swiftly loping wolf, or a feather on a speeding arrow. I said to him: "What do you think of what is written in this note, and how shall I be delivered from this trap?"

He said:

I think you should show some tenderness, and be delicate in your speech, as well as gentle. Therefore write.

⁹ Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn Abī l-Ḥiṣāl al-Ġāfiqī (464/1071-540/1145) was a renowned Andalusī man of letters and a contemporary of al-Saraqustī (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 578a).

So I wrote [*mujtatt*]:

O you who yourself sin by accusing me of sinning against passion
and our love-union,

When I am suffering from a wounded¹⁰ heart that is roasting
over the live embers of my love for you,

Will Fate ever grant a love-union to this lover,

When your memory of him is dimmed by an obstacle that
weakens the ties of your affection?

A mediator, full of glory and virtues, came to you on his behalf.

Her words were not of the kind that are fashioned and embroi-
dered by al-Ḥiṣālī.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Hardly had he retired, when Umm 'Amr approached me, while
indicating her disapproval and expressing her reproof of me. I handed
her a *dīnār*, saying: "To this coin I'll add its equal, and the equal
of that, even though you should see my whole house, and all that
it contains, being spent on this suit."

She said:

The girl you desire is the pick of an entire kingdom, the unique
pearl on a strand; she cannot be matched by any quantity, nor
evaluated by any estimate. I see that you are hesitating, so what
have you got to boast about when, in love, there can be no stingi-
ness. Neither crops nor palm trees thrive upon avarice, nor does a
miser achieve his hope, nor a hesitant person succeed in his at-
tempts, so spare me this paltry sum, and be generous enough to
give me one ingot of gold and another of silver.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said to her: "Here are my leather bags, my jewels, and my
clothes. Take what you wish and, by God, if you don't return with
news of what you find out, you will cause me deep disappoint-
ment!" So she chose from my belongings a mantle and a cloak,
some earrings for the upper ear, and others for the earlobe, and

¹⁰ Or "pure."

said: "This is what is most appropriate, honorable, and suitable for a person of her status. Expect her and me to arrive this evening, so make a bed on that mattress, prepare your appetizers and wine, and tidy up your sitting-room and drinking-place for, by God, no one has gazed upon her before you, nor has any inherited or acquired wealth seduced her, with the exception of a certain graciousness and affection she has noticed in you, along with the luck and chance that have smiled in your favor." Then she left me, while my soul followed after her, full of excitement, as my thoughts gnawed on pieces of *nab'* and *garab*,¹¹ until night grew dark, grief kept me awake, and I spent the night like Ziyād,¹² in an increase and surfeit of anxiety. Then, when dawn broke, its blazing brilliance shone, and its pearls flashed from their shells, I went outside, seeking to obtain some news or sign of Umm 'Amr, and saying to myself: "No fruit or palm pith has, as yet, been gathered here." On the ring of the doorknocker, I found a note on which was written [*sarī'*]:

Your sandal tripped you up, Abū l-Ġamr, and you have come to find yourself in a state of severe hardship.

Your wealth is not a total loss, since you have been taught a lesson, so show no despair over the hardships of life.

A superior man is a resolute man, who competes with all mankind in cunning and in hatred.

O lover who has strayed from the path of passion, far be passion from sharing your ignorant view.

Cool, with the water of despair, the live ember of your grief, but do not pile one live ember upon another.

I have tested this age and its sons, one and all; both its Zayds, and its 'Amrs.

Glory is only the *dirham* that your hand clasps, after you have won it in gambling against your rival.

¹¹ For which, see M2, n. 12, above.

¹² The pre-Islamic poet al-Nābiḡah al-Dubyānī, renowned for his descriptions of wakeful nights spent pining for a lost love (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 840-842; M30, n. 26, below).

The real hero is the one who does not cease to milk and to extract the milk of Time,

So harbor against Time the heart of one contented; one who is satisfied with a bare minimum.

Be not concerned whether Time grants you the fate of wearing a fine mantle or a threadbare, tattered garment.

For you are still a thoroughbred steed, whether you race forth or stumble; whether you are fat or lean.

Think it proper to defer only to one who can forbid Time's evil or command its good,

And do not say: "An incompetent has achieved his desires." How different is the lot of the weak and that of the brave.

As for Umm 'Amr, beware, indeed, of her deceit, as long as you own a cloak and an ample, flowing garment.

Al-Sadūsī is a friend to cunning, and wields white swords and tawny lances.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I drank from the most revolting cup of despair, took refuge in consolation, withdrew from my companions and friends, recovered from my fears and sufferings, and said: "This is the last time I will engage in flirting and in youth's amorous dalliance."

Maqāmah 10

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

When the prime of my youth was in full bloom, and the genie of love was actively conversing and debating with me, I was afflicted by the loss of a dear friend, and Time pierced me through the heart because of his absence. I had tested his loyalty and found his sincerity to be laudable, his attributes to be noble, and the pure, refreshing water of his friendship to be sweet. With his loss, night became more pleasant to me than day, and the night-blooming gillyflower, more redolent than the oxeye,¹ from my desire for solitude and my wish to be alone and to avoid all human intercourse. Since I could no longer bear the company of man, I consorted with a strong, swift she-camel, and I did not cease to travel from town to town, hoping to find patience or endurance in each place, until I came to 'Uṣfān,² thirsty and in deep grief, with no one to illuminate me, and finding no delight save in the cawing raven or croaking crow of separation. There, I went back and forth, wandering about in a state of bewilderment, as I traversed the town's quarters, until I stumbled upon a scholarly gathering, with youths "swarming toward it from every hill,"³ so I went in the direction of that assembly, adhering to the words of 'Adī,⁴ and saying: "Perhaps I will find consolation, or meet those who can assist me in overcoming my intense longing." When I reached it, I found that it was a gathering filled to overflowing by those attending it, and a crop of scholarship ready for the harvest, whose teacher was dressed in a waist-wrapper, and was claiming descent from the notables of Nizār.⁵ He was also a great expert in the subject of rare words, and was drawing

¹ *Buphthalmus sylvestris*, a sweet-smelling plant.

² A watering-place or town thirty-six miles from Mecca (see *J.G.W.*, I, 100, and *passim*).

³ Qur'ān, 21:96.

⁴ 'Adī ibn Zayd, al-'Ibādī was a pre-Islamic Christian poet of Ḥīra who died there ca. AD 600 (see *E.I.* 2, I, 196). The above allusion is to a line of poetry in which 'Adī declares: "Do not enquire about a man, but observe his companion instead, for all men imitate their companions." This aphorism is equivalent to: "You will be known by the company you keep" (see W, p. 105, n. 13).

⁵ Nizār ibn Ma'add was the eponymous ancestor of the tribes of Muḍar and Rabī'ah (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 82-83).

toward him the clusters and branches bearing the fruits of grammar, beginning with the proper usage of indefinite and definite nouns, and the declension of nouns and conjugation of verbs, while applying the method of every school in explaining grammar, yet preferring the views of Abū ‘Amr⁶ and al-Ḥalīl⁷ in that discipline. He would abandon the subject of transposition and assimilation, only to discuss the standards of virtuous and saintly men. At times, he discussed proper and verbal nouns, and at times, proverbs and rare anecdotes, passing from the principles governing both apposition and the predicates of nominal sentences, to historical traditions and anecdotes, until he plunged into the river of poetry and its beauties, and dived for its jewels and pearls, for he traveled up hill and down dale in his commentary upon the latter, with adornment and refinement in his words, while declaring:

Poetry is the science of the Arabs and their register; their enduring monument and their vaulted arch. Through it, their days of battle and their glorious deeds are known, along with their ancestors and descendants; it is the repository of proverbs and of *loci probantes*,⁸ the consolation of the one who is absent or present, the aspiration both of the novice and of the advanced student, the song of the chorister and of the soloist. What an excellent meadow, pasture, goal, and object of desire it is! How many distant ones has poetry brought near, how many reputations has it broadcast worldwide, how many hopes has it brought within reach, how many obscure individuals has it made illustrious, how many stubborn persons has it bent, and how many fruits has it harvested! One whose information I entirely trust, without rejecting any part of it, be it old or new, informed me, saying:

Exile, and a faraway destination, hurled me to a certain town in Khorasan,⁹ where I fell in love with a young man of the Banū

⁶ Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā’ al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī was the founder of the grammatical school of Basra. He died *ca.* 154/770 (see *E.I.* 2, I, 105-106).

⁷ Al-Ḥalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhidī (d. 175/791) was a grammarian from Basra who also established and described the Classical Arabic system of prosody (see M7, n. 23, above).

⁸ Literally, *ṣawāhid*: Pre-Islamic poetic texts containing rare words and grammatical constructions that were used by later philologists to clarify obscure passages in the Qur’ān, and to justify the rules of grammar they established.

⁹ A province in northeastern Iran (see *E.I.* 2, V, 55-58).

Sāsān.¹⁰ But Fate kept interrupting his relationship with, and diverted his mind from me. He scorned my deep passion, was enamoured of another, treated me unjustly, and covered me with blame, while I was beginning to lose my patience, the face of desperate longing was unveiling itself to me, love was visiting me in my sickness, and my soul neither desired nor sought consolation. But I had no influence over him, and no mediator, and no one to offer me useful or helpful advice, until the intensity of my agony forced me to state my case openly and to speak out frankly, so I struck fire from my worn-down flint-stick, and continued to importune and implore the young man incessantly. Then, after much difficulty on my part and, although he had little experience in exercising that virtue, he repented with generosity, so I wrote to him [*rajaz*].¹¹

O you who are fond of avoidance and separation,
Have mercy on your devoted lover.
Even love, O people, is ruled by chance,
Yet why am I dealt the short arrow by chance,¹²
*When I have awakened the birds in their nests.*²¹³

Many a glorious and lofty person among mankind,
Who is lavish in granting munificent gifts,
And scorns the enemy's lance and sword,

¹⁰ The dynasty that ruled Iran before the Arab conquest (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 70b-83), but also the underworld of beggars, rogues, and swindlers who earned their living by generally dishonest means (precisely the type of characters portrayed in al-Saraqustī's work), and who claimed, without any basis in fact, to descend from the Sāsānid kings of old, whose name they misappropriated. See *E.I.* 2, IX, 70a-70b; C. E. Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, 1976).

¹¹ What follows is one of three strophic *musammat* poems included in the work. It was studied and translated into Spanish by Ignacio Ferrando Frutos, in "Un poema estrófico (*musammat*) en las *Maqāmāt Luzūmiyya de as-Saraqusfī*," *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*, II (1996), 119-128. For the *musammat* form, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 660-662.

¹² The losing arrow in the pre-Islamic game of *maysir* (see M8, n. 1, above).

¹³ I.e., the speaker is claiming to be one who gets up so early that, when he does so, even the early birds are still asleep. This is an imitation of a famous hemistich from the *Mu'allaqah* of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays: "And I get up in the morning when the birds are still in their nests." See Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* (Bombay, 1893), p. 20, l. 54.

Has failed to find favor in love.

Love destroys the brave horseman who returns to the charge.

For you, I have abandoned my family and friends,
And sacrificed my life and youth,

But I have not sacrificed the sincerity of my heart,
For not everyone who suffers from love

Betrays or deceives it.

It is enough that I have staked my claim to love.

Unhappiness in love is true happiness indeed.

How many a man thirsting for a drink of love,

Knows not where Ḥayf or Tanīm are,¹⁴

And does not drive female camels that mourn the loss of their first-born.

O unfeeling one, who knows not the nature of love,

For you it is a forbidden¹⁵ feeling, the avoidance of which is
not permitted,

But that is not how the noble-minded conform to love.

O you who remain calm, while a fire rages in my heart,

You know not for whom I yearn, or whom I remember.

Near or far, you are the goal of my hopes,

O you, who are stingy in granting a union, and in making me
happy,

How wonderful would my constant mention of you be,

If no enemies knew of it.

You are the garden of my fantasies and thoughts.

Will my love for you remain unfortunate,

O you who have become a fertile pasture?

Who will give me sound advice about love,

To protect me on its "distressful day?"¹⁶

Either way, whether I avow or deny my love, woe is me!

Far beyond blame and praise

¹⁴ Two places near Mecca (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 168b). The meaning of the passage is that whoever thirsts for love will lose his bearings.

¹⁵ Or "permitted," since the word *basl* has these two opposite meanings, hence the pun in this line.

¹⁶ Qur'ān, 11:77.

Are you, who are rendered inaccessible by your seclusion
 and by the steel blades that defend you.
 Who will rescue me (the garment of whose love is worn out,
 though still new),
 Among your strong and numerous group,¹⁷
And visit me, evening and morning, in my sickness?

The teacher continued:

Hardly had the young man gazed and glanced at the note, than he generously and magnanimously granted his lover a union, for the note had softened his severity, broken his pride, weakened his recalcitrance, and unleashed his generosity. And how kind and tangible was that virtue; how soothing and quenching! Indeed, what can be more useful and beneficial; more brilliant and lofty, than what brings life back to the soul and clothes the sun in its radiance. Had the lover I speak of been allowed to choose between a powerful kingdom and great glory, on the one hand, or the intimacy he came to enjoy, along with the relief from his former grief, on the other, he would most certainly have chosen the latter over high rank, thus adhering in his choice to the words of 'Utbah.¹⁸

There are many stories of this sort, and many tales similar to it have been transmitted on the basis of sound authority, yet this one alone need suffice, for after the gist of a matter is presented, what follows is utterly superfluous. So much for that. Now, to proceed with our exposition, it is often the case that a guest will complain of the village in which he lodges. If so, you must first offer him your rewards, and only then confide your public and private problems to him. As for me, I am experienced in the causes of love, and no one who goes for it or renounces it can elude me. Moreover, I plan to take up residence among you, so that the clear meaning of my speech, along with all my secrets, will both be lavished upon you, for I have found your vicinity to be excellent, and your conversation to be courteous.

¹⁷ This line and the previous are inverted in D.

¹⁸ A possible reference to 'Utbah ibn Ġazwān al-Šaḥābī, a companion of the Prophet who is said to have composed an ascetic sermon in which he encouraged men to renounce the dizzying temptations of power (see *E.I.* 2, I, 1085a, and *passim*).

They said:

We are prepared to sacrifice our wealth and kinfolk for you, and do most warmly welcome you. Therefore, stay among us, with no fear of having to depart, or apprehension over having to suffer any lack or want, for tonight you will experience an example of our kindness,¹⁹ and be overwhelmed by all sorts of ties to us.

Al-Sā'ib said:

The teacher turned his face sideways to glance at me, for he had recognized me and I had recognized him. Then he winked at me and I winked at him, and stayed behind until his clique had left, and his coterie had been reduced to silence. Then he took me by the hand and said: "Come along, let us go and wait for these people to fulfill their promise, and harvest the fruit of their date-cluster." Then, hardly had evening fallen, when food and clothes appeared, comfort arrived, misery departed, blessings flowed in an uninterrupted succession, and our herd grazed at will. He stayed among them for a few days, relishing their fondness and desire for him, until he was summoned by the herald of departure and the habit of roaming and wandering. Once he had determined, resolved, and decided to leave, he bade me farewell at dawn, deposited a *dīnār* with me, set my heart on fire, and said to me: "Let this coin suffice you as a lamp in the gloom of night,"²⁰ and he began to recite [*munsariḥ*]:

Do not dwell for long among Bedouin tents and encampments,
even though you wear a fine mantle over your robe,

But seek God's sustenance beyond them, by wandering around
Ḥayf,²¹ if you wish, or even Malal.²²

Do not spend the night in thirst, after having taken only one
single drink, but fully quench your thirst by taking a second
drink.

If the guest stays too long, he becomes a target, and is shot
down with the arrow of loathing and boredom.

¹⁹ Literally "you will read the title of the book of our kindness . . ."

²⁰ Reading *al-layl* with Ḍ, rather than *al-dahr* with W.

²¹ See n. 14, above.

²² A place between Mecca and Medina (see *J.G.W.*, I, 144, and *passim*).

Therefore, do not remain in error, or you will reap the fruit of reproaches and of him who displays all his defects,

For the freeborn man is one who is familiar with the noonday heat, but unfamiliar with the coolness of afternoon and morning shadows.

Have you not noticed that stagnant waters are shunned, whereas the best waters are those that flow along the surface of the earth?

The sword is of no use to its bearer if it remains sheathed in its scabbard.

Therefore, when the sun rises, appear on mountain-tops and summits,

And be not concerned whether the matters that afflict you in this age are important or trivial.

Endless is the distress of the impassioned lover who mourns over the abandoned encampment, and weeps over its ruins.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I was astonished at the facility with which he could express himself, at his playing with words, at his talent, and at the speed and suddenness with which he could pounce upon his victims, so I wished him well, and hurried away from him.

Maqāmah 11

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

Having abandoned my nest and den, having given up my friend and neighbor, and having lost my reputation, and all pride in my ancestry, I went down to water at Sinjār,¹ thereby renouncing all human companionship, and surveying nothing but an unexplored region of the earth. Since I was desirous of a physician who might treat my ailment, I went in search of one who could assist me, until I finally reached the place where camel-saddles come to a halt, and journeys and travels come to an end. There I saw an old man shaking the dust out of his saddle-blankets,² while casting furtive glances at me, on the side. Yet, as he did so, he concealed himself from me, at times appearing, and at times disappearing behind his veil. My suspicions led me to take a closer look at him, so I asked him:

Do I know you, or are you the product of my delusion?

He lost no time in shaking my hand and greeting me, and in revealing the veiled portion of his face. And lo, he was al-Sadūsī, the like and equal of whom none resemble, so I said:

What a welcome experience it is to meet you, for I have inhaled your fragrance for some time. From whence have you appeared and arisen, and what has Time taught you and made you learn?

He replied:

As you know, the fangs of Time are bare, its luck is short,³ its protection is lacking, its poverty is rebuked, its appearance is deceptive, the bonds of its friendship are frayed, so that its departure is preferable to its arrival, and its jackal is deadlier than its lion. It forgives no fault, but lies in wait for Scorpio and Naṭrah,⁴ playing

¹ A town between Iraq and Syria, in the territory of the tribe of Rabī'ah, that abounds in date-palms (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 643-644).

² "To shake the dust out of one's saddle-blankets" is an expression meaning "to bring one's journey to an end; to arrive at one's destination."

³ Literally, "lacking hair on its tail."

⁴ The Aselli, namely two small stars between which is a white particle, or cloud, in the constellation of Cancer, according to Western astronomy, but considered by the Arabs to be the tip of the nose of Leo. The reference seems to suggest that Time is neither afraid of scorpions nor of facing lions head on.

tricks on men's minds, as does the gambler with his arrows.⁵ Oh, what a serious joker it is; what an experienced innocent,⁶ what a deadly beloved, and what a trusted deceiver! Its heart is not tender, and no affection is to be expected from it; whoever relies upon it, will be disappointed, and whoever holds on to it, will be freely given away. No one is safe from its snare, or recovers from its disease, unless he runs in its racecourse and makes his own noble steed compete with its donkey; unless he scorns its power, and finds its rumbling gale to be gentle; unless scarcity and plenty are alike to him, and his serious and important affairs mean nothing to him; unless he is concerned only with what is easy, having no use for what is difficult, and unless he casts care aside while keeping an eye on what is truly significant. As for you, how have you been while I was away, and you were spared both the good and the bad luck I habitually visit upon you? As far as I am concerned, during my absence, I have let events follow their own natural course, allowing the milker to proceed with his milking, showing no concern for shame nor for being loathed, and no respect other than for the moment [*ḥaḥḥ*]:

As for the truly intelligent man, he is neither concerned with recent, nor with remote events.

It is all the same to him whether Time awards him a magnificent crown, or a lowly sandal-thong.

After Time has protected a hero for a while, it will inevitably shoot him down with unerring arrows.

Never let the perfidy you witness deceive you, any more than the tightly interwoven bonds of friendship to which you cling.

Other than himself, no man has a friend who is solicitous of his affairs, and watches over them.

An intelligent⁷ man who is on a par with royalty, yet content

⁵ In the pre-Islamic game of chance called *maysir* (see M8, n. 1, above).

⁶ Literally, "what a mature baby camel."

⁷ Reading *labībun* with Ḍ, rather than *sa'īdun* with W. Since the above poem begins with the word *al-labību* (twice repeated), and ring composition is frequent in Arabic poetry, Ḍ's seems a more sophisticated and satisfactory reading.

with as little as an ant can carry in its mouth, will achieve success and find deliverance.

Then I said:

How sweet, in God's name, is your tongue, and how rare is your excellence! You have humbled the lofty, exalted the lowly, cured our disease, and quenched our thirst. Alas for your departure!⁸ Who will be a virtuous friend to me after you are gone? Is there a path to your friendship—you for whom I would sacrifice my companion and my tribe?

Al-Sadūsī replied:

"Verily thou wilt not be able . . ." ⁹ Away with all those who are helpful and subservient! Exile and remote absence are for me! Exploration and travel in search of one's livelihood bequeath pain and suffering; their well-rope is long and their promise is dilatory. My life consists of dawns followed by dusks, of buckets hanging from well-ropes, while at times I am quenched, and at times I go thirsty. Sometimes I bring up a bucket full of water and sometimes, one full of foul-smelling mud. But, so that experience may instruct you, and you may learn to run and gallop, come with me toward one of these places, and let us stage the following hoax: You will feign passion and madness, and behave in a variety of ways. You will remain still at my command, and not be concerned should I rebuke and revile you.

So I agreed to go along with his plan, and assumed the burden of obliging him, while he led me to a certain door, took off what clothes I was wearing, left me in rags and tatters, and described for me the behavior and demeanor he wished me to adopt. As he took me toward a certain group of men, he punched me in the chest with his fist, while declaring:

O men of superior intelligence and balanced reason, praise God for your virtue and good health; for your sufficiency and lack of want. This is a close relative of mine who is not to be blamed or reviled over his misfortune. He grew up in abundance and plenty,

⁸ Since al-Sā'ib has just informed us that he met al-Sadūsī as the latter was arriving from a journey, there appears to be an inconsistency in the narration, that betrays the unreliability of the narrator.

⁹ Qur'ān, 18:67: "Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!"

and led a sheltered life. He had a paternal cousin whom he loved passionately, and who returned his love. He often slept with her in her home, as she slept in his. When her family became aware of the situation, they made all paths leading to her, be they rough or smooth, impossible for him to travel, and the two were forcibly separated from one another. As a result, madness and insanity afflicted him, and love, in all its manifestations and forms, assailed him, so that he was left as you now see, wandering aimlessly about the land, and oblivious to his acquired and inherited wealth, while I follow after him like his shadow, gathering the downpour and dew of the alms he is offered. But right now, my traveling provisions are depleted, and my milk-skin and provision-bag are empty. Were it not that memories of my relative's beloved would come back to him, and thoughts about her would return to him, causing him to be overcome by swooning, and afflicted by fainting, over his predicament, I would recite for you, from his poetry, that which would move stones to pity and reveal both his apparent and his hidden talents.

At that point the assembled company said:

By God, we insist that you let us hear, and that you show us all that to which you have alluded.

So al-Sadūsī replied:

On a dark night, when we were between Najd¹⁰ and al-Ḥujūn,¹¹ I heard him reciting [*mutaqārib*]:

The dream image of Umm al-Walīd¹² hovered around me, but was neither resolute nor strong.

How far from the land of the tamarisk¹³ is that visitor who endures the bite of hoarfrost as well as exhaustion.

That dream-image hovered around me, but not like the weak and frightened bird that gazes all about as it sips from a scant remnant of rainwater in a hollow.

¹⁰ D reads "Mina," a town near Mecca (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 65-66). Najd is in the northeast of the Arabian Peninsula (see M4, n. 7, above).

¹¹ A mountain near Mecca (see *J.G.W.*, I, 138, and *passim*; M4, n. 8, above).

¹² The name of the poet's lady.

¹³ A possible reference to Najd, where this tree is plentiful, and where 'Udri love is said to have originated (*E.I.* 1, IV, 1077-1078).

If it would only abide with me, I would now lavish all my earned wealth upon that dream-image, having formerly bestowed all my inherited wealth upon it.

How far, oh, how far from my mind are all thoughts but those of my absence from, and longing for, Umm al-Walīd!

I have seen my relative in the vast desert, writing in the sand or on the flat surface of a rock [*ṭawīl*]:

Men speak of Qays, and also of Laylā,¹⁴ but in the intensity of my passion, I am far more faithful than, and far superior to Qays.

Within the lists of love, every lover feels exhaustion, whereas my thoroughbred steed¹⁵ is untiring and high-spirited within the lists of love.

Neither is nearness to Umm al-Walīd of any avail to me, nor does distance bring me consolation, for my passion will not abandon me,

Since I cannot forget Umm al-Walīd, nor can I graze on any other pasture than that of longing and remembrance.

Mentioning her to another saddens me, and whenever she is mentioned to me by another, I become both jealous and cheerful.

I reassure my soul, when it feels alarm for you, although I have been cast aside, despite the deep anxiety in my love for you.

Behold me in the desert, emaciated and abandoned, having been rejected by one who is immune to anxiety, and cheerful as can be.

Al-Sā'ib said:

¹⁴ Two legendary, star-crossed lovers belonging to the 'Uḍri tradition. Qays is said to have gone mad and died because of his love for Laylā (see M6, n. 5, above).

¹⁵ Vowelizing *ṭirf* ('thoroughbred steed'). If we vowelize *ṭarf* ('glance'), we could translate ". . . while my glance is untiring and high-spirited within the lists of love." This is another pun.

So I tucked my head in my clothes and pretended to sleep (although I did not feel sleepy), and that one false step led to my downfall.

He added:

Despite the fact that unanimity is rare, compassion increased among the bystanders, for they consoled al-Sadūsī with the money and clothes that were available to them, and thus rescued him from his adversity and hardship. Then he bent over me, to make them think that he was casting magic spells to exorcise me, and that he was guarding me with his very soul whereas, in fact, he was saying to me: "Go on acting as though you have fainted, and pretend you cannot walk, so that we will receive our milk in full, and rake in all our profit." To them he said: "I have an amulet with which I exorcise, enchant, and protect him, therefore, keep an eye on him for me, until I return with that amulet, for the precariousness of his condition worries me."

Al-Sā'ib said:

I remained in that state until the evening was full of shadows and the well-rope had let down its bucket. Then I said: "This is one of his wretched barbs, and only the first of his damned annoyances." Then, after night had let down its curtain and unfurled its canopies over the earth, the group dispersed, leaving me alone. Eventually, I was free to go to the house where we had deposited our belongings and stored the fruit of our toils, but I found nothing in it¹⁶ but a note—may it be smitten by what smote Lubad!¹⁷—in which was written [*sarī*]:

O my companion, ignorance is often of different sorts, therefore, return to reason, and cure your madness.

¹⁶ Literally, "I found neither hair nor wool in it."

¹⁷ I.e., death. Lubad was the name of the last of seven eagles (or vultures: the word *nusūr* is used to designate both species) that belonged to the legendary Yemenite king Luqmān ibn 'Ād. He was surnamed "The Man of the Eagles," because it had been granted to him that he should live as long as seven eagles, one after the other, eagles being considered proverbial for their longevity (see *E.I.* 2, V, 811-813). This sentence is a recontextualization of the second hemistich of a line of poetry in the *Mu'allaqah* of the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābigah al-Dubyānī: "By the latter part of the forenoon, the encampment had been emptied, for its inhabitants had departed, and it was smitten by what smote Lubad!" See al-Nābigah al-Dubyānī, *Dīwān*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut, n. d.), p. 31, l. 2.

Never be deceived by a companion, even though he averts the misfortune of death from you.

Always be doubtful and suspicious of him, for a prudent man is one who entertains many doubts.

If a bird can escape from deceit, so can a fish in the bounding main.

Make the rounds with Fate, for a brave youth is a waterwheel with which Fate toys.

Do not be concerned over how you will meet your death, after years have leniently passed you by.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I showered him with reproach, heaped insult and abuse on him, and ended up loathing his aims and purposes, even though his eminent talent had at first struggled with me to determine his true nature, and even inclined me in his favor.

Maqāmah 12
(*The Persian*)

The narrator said:

I alighted in Zafār,¹ with my claws clipped, my *marḥ* and ‘*afār*² trimmed, emaciated from my travels, like an exhausted she-camel traversing wastelands and deserts, having come to loathe journeying by day and by night, and to detest all that stands erect or is inclined. I had been left with a burning thirst in me, and longed for any omen whatsoever, be it ominous or propitious. I neither grieved over an absent beloved, nor associated with a night-visiting dream-image, for I had gone forth seeking the guidance of gently blowing breezes, and deriving the information provided by slowly plodding mounts. Suddenly, I beheld a caravan approaching as swiftly as though it were a bird flying on the secondary and primary feathers of its wings, and at the head of which rode an old man with an imposing bearing and a pleasing appearance, who displayed perfect and well-balanced proportions, so I asked him:

Whence did your caravan appear, and for what purpose did oblique winds bring it here?

He replied:

We are the caravan of Iraq, the worn garment of parting and separation, the importers of head-veils and silken shawls, and the descendants of proud-necked princes. We are the offspring of Persia, and the places where we were born, and in which we grew up, remain serenely undisturbed. Brave exploits and backgrounds are attributed to us, and any man who strives for abundance and precedence is one of us. Entire nations have submitted to us, and our goal has always been within our reach. We Persians possess towns and large cities, just as you Arabs possess the *muhājirūn*³ and the *anṣār*.⁴ To us belong the scholars and men of learning, just as the

¹ A Yemenite town near Sana. In ancient times it was the capital of the Himyarite kingdom (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1185-1190).

² On which, see M5, n. 10, above.

³ The Prophet Muḥammad's Meccan supporters, who fled with him to Medina in AD 622 (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 356-357).

⁴ The Prophet's Medinan supporters, who received him and his Meccan followers hospitably (see *E.I.* 2, I, 514-515).

men of noble origin and forbearance belong to you. Islam came to us, and we received it hospitably, inhaling both its south and east winds. We soon became attached to its bonds, mounted its highest summits, and transmitted knowledge about it, in order to extend its tent ropes and fill its buckets and riverbeds, while we straightened its crookedness, and accepted the duty of avenging the insults made against it. How many of its pillars did we raise, how many of its eye diseases did we cure, how many a cold spell and a sweltering night-heat did we endure for its sake, and how many a purpose and goal did we achieve through it! We are its foundation and support, while it inclines or stands erect according to our will. We possess power and strength, and control height and might; no one can match the level of our courage, nor can any solitary wild beast elude us. We have never aimed at a target without hitting it, nor desired a kingdom without taking it by force; we go about performing great deeds and acquiring rights to glory, initiating and concluding events of such magnificence that they cannot be encompassed or enumerated, nor can Ya'rub⁵ or Ma'add⁶ rise to their level, for no one can vie with us in superiority, in marksmanship, or in archery.

The narrator said:

Thereupon, he loomed large in my eye, his eloquence impressed my ears, and I declared:

How excellent is that which your caravan has made known, unanimity has agreed upon, Time has bestowed, and Yemen has acquired!⁷ This man is the relief of Bedouins and of settled folk, the only product of a barren age, the marvel of the times, and a gift to the waking and to the sleeping.

The narrator said:

Then I followed him, until he settled in a lodging reserved for strangers, and displayed the attire of one who had been fleeced, so I asked him:

Would you care for a companion who is ready to offer you the manifold manifestations of his obedience; who will stand at times

⁵ The legendary son of Qaḥṭān, ancestor of the Southern Arabs. He was said to have been the first to use the Arabic language (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1160).

⁶ Ancestor of the great Northern Arab tribal confederations of Rabī'ah and Muḍar (see *E.I.* 2, V, 894-895).

⁷ I.e., the Iraqi caravan has reached Yemen.

on your left and at times on your right;⁸ who will give you his solemn oath that he will never betray you, or lie to you?

The old man replied:

Since the mantle of exile has enveloped us both, and the strand of intimacy has intertwined the two threads of our lives, I will agree to be your companion, and to do whatever you wish.

Then we descended into every valley and mountain pass and rode over every smooth and rough terrain, while I shared the remainder of everything I possessed equally with him. In my friendship, I found myself close to love and passion for him; I gathered the fruits of his sweet companionship, and extracted a flood from the ocean of his scholarship until, on a certain occasion, he said to me:

Have you ever heard of Hayyān ibn Bayyān?⁹

I replied:

Yes, I have. He is one whose ancestry is unknown, and knowledge of whose accomplishments is unavailable.

Then he said:

Don't you know that recognition is granted to one's accomplishments on the basis of one's wealth, and to one's nobility, on the basis of one's deeds? Now, you and I are in a land where our fathers are unknown, and in which we are a threat to no rival. Therefore, that name is appropriate to us, and that designation is applicable to us. As for a man's daily sustenance, whoever seeks it is blameless, whoever procures it is innocent, and whoever attempts to gain and earn it will not fail. No intelligent man runs out of tricks, any more than a lover neglects his beloved. Do you happen to have any money left, or has eternity destroyed Lubad?¹⁰ Today, I chanced upon a slave girl so amazing that she enters and dominates men's minds; one wondrously beautiful, dazzlingly perfect, whom a vendor sold only yesterday, while regret over losing her is already distressing him today, so that he has complained to me of his passion, and disclosed his fortune and wealth. Therefore, I agreed with him that we should conceal his prosperity, lest it be divulged

⁸ In his defense.

⁹ A name used to designate obscure individuals, equivalent to "Mr. Nobody."

¹⁰ On whom, see M11, n. 17, above.

hereabouts, and lest the girl's new owner should become reluctant to part with her at a low price. But a man who is doomed will inevitably be undone! If you have enough money to purchase the girl yourself, and to string her on the necklace-strand of your own property, her original owner will think nothing of handing over all his well-guarded and precious possessions to buy her back from you, and will gladly give you everything he owns¹¹ to repossess her.

The narrator said:

So I brought out for him all my remaining store of wealth, which I had inherited, rather than earning it through commerce, or by tilling the soil, and I said:

Proceed, difficult though this transaction may prove to be for you, and I will rely upon your oath and promise.

First, the old man took me to a youth who was radiant as a star, and who obeyed and complied with all of the old man's orders. Then, he spoke confidentially with the youth, thereby stirring him into action, and brought us into the presence of a girl like the full moon, to win whom, maternal and paternal uncles would have been sacrificed at once; a girl who, when she smiled, displayed a gap between her teeth,¹² which were as fair as hailstones, and who swayed with a figure like a sword fashioned by an incomparable swordsmith.

The narrator said:

The old man attempted to start up a conversation with her but, at first, she avoided him and showed signs of aversion to his company until, finally, her unruliness subsided, and it became possible to examine her body. And lo, she had breasts like apples that had been stamped with fragrant ambergris, a waist as narrow as a slender, tightly twisted cord, buttocks as broad as spreading sand-dunes, and flanks that swayed from side to side in the same way that hope and despair alternate with one another. She was gifted with as much pleasant speech as could be wished for, along with a coquettishness that was neither unpleasant nor unseemly. All the while, she manifested her annoyance at being in that place, and feigned

¹¹ Literally, ". . . give you the lean and the fat."

¹² Considered a sign of beauty.

sickness, though she was not sick. Finally, when we rose to leave, she signaled with a nod for us to turn toward her, and said [*ḥafīf*]:

Say to the man who, despite having become familiar with my good character and nature, ended up selling me when he became bored with me:

“Let God not ordain that I remain close to him, since my life, and all that is lawful to me, have become tranquil and serene in his absence.

Even if his love has caused me shame, it is hard for love to humiliate me.”

My enslavement is unlawful to humankind, yet there must be a reason why such a lawless act has been permitted.

I am the daughter of al-Suhà,¹³ and thus, whoever wishes to possess me, wishes to relive his youth, and to outrun his own shadow.

The narrator said:

Then we left, while I remained deeply impressed by her obvious merits, so that I surrendered my patience, and gave up any hope of ever owning her. But the old man acted as mediator between the youth and myself; he aroused sighs from my breast whenever he mentioned her, and he promised me that, as her price, he would pay me several times over what I would have to disburse to her current owner in order to buy her from him. He thus exploited all my weaknesses,¹⁴ until I surrendered the remaining store of my wealth to him, and said: “The best will produce only the best.” I was left with the expectation that the old man would keep what proved to be a vain promise of ‘Urqūb,¹⁵ upon the realization of which, I was reminded of the tale of Jacob¹⁶ so that, when the old man finally caused my despair to become so deeply rooted that my

¹³ On which, see M7, n. 19, above.

¹⁴ Literally, “he seized me by my weak tent-ropes.”

¹⁵ Name of a legendary personage renowned for never keeping his promises. See *M.A.*, III, 330, no. 4070.

¹⁶ Jacob adopted patience as his virtue when the death of Joseph was falsely reported to him by the latter’s envious brethren (Qur’ān, 12:18).

cup passed around the wine of sorrow, I contacted that youth, whose smile, as much as his joyful countenance and facial beauty, had so beguiled me.

The youth declared:

Woe to you, don't you realize that the girl was speaking to you in riddles, and that she was hoodwinking you in her verses, all the while that she was attempting to gain your confidence? She is the old man's daughter, and my sister, and both fortune and chance have deceived you with regard to her.

The narrator said:

So I hauled the old man before a judge, hoping for a favorable verdict from the latter.

The narrator said:

But, when the judge heard my story, he said:

Al-Sadūsī gives constant warnings. Did his cunning get the better of you? Have you never heard of him before?

I replied:

I most certainly have. In fact, I have both heard, and been the victim of his cunning, but he left me and traveled eastward, whereas I traveled westward, declaring: "I am the Pleiades and he is Canopus,¹⁷ so how will we ever meet?" Nor did I ever expect that I would eventually end up bankrupt and in dire poverty.

The judge replied to me:

Go, stranger, for you have been well and truly fleeced, and no one, near or far, can help you now, for there is no resident or stranger in the house.

¹⁷ The point is that, from the latitude of the Arabian Peninsula, Canopus is seen to rise in southerly Yemen, whereas the Pleiades are seen to rise in northerly Syria. This is an allusion to two lines of poetry by the Meccan love poet 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah (d. 100/719), (see *E.I.* I, III, 979), concerning the marriage of a lady he loved, named *Turayyā* ('Pleiades'), to a man named *Suhayl* ('Canopus'):

O you who are marrying *Turayyā* to *Suhayl*, by your life, how will the two ever meet?

She is a Syrian [or northern asterism] when she rises, whereas, when *Suhayl* rises, he is a Yemenite [or southern star].

See 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah, *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1961), p. 438.

The narrator said:

So, I turned away, overwhelmed by the agony of despair, and having been bequeathed remorse for my ruination, while declaring:

What a woeful loss of a sale! What painful damage and destruction!

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated, saying:

After having traversed the land in all its length and breadth, and having made fruitless demands upon my promise-breaking and procrastinating age, I arrived in Yamāmah,¹ in possession of neither lote-tree² nor panic-grass.³ On the basis of sheer conjecture, I left my lodging without any path to guide me, and plunged into darkness and gloom. While my soul was hesitating between anxiety and desire, I passed by a certain marketplace. In it, I saw a gathering of men whose circle was breaking up. Their dust was rising and swirling about in the air, and the blaze of their anger was spreading. I feared for my soul, and said: "This is a trap,⁴ no doubt about it," and I turned away, realizing that the situation was a serious one, when I observed that the people were rushing my way, and stretching out their hands and forearms toward me. Then they surrounded me and said: "Is it true that this old man deposited his goods and money with you?" I replied: "No, by the respect owed to the master Ibn 'Affān,⁵ I am not acquainted with this old man, nor do I know anything about him. I am a highlander, and he is a lowlander. I am a wayfarer, a hermit and son of a hermit, a member of a clan and tribe, adorned by my renowned accomplishments and by my noble rank. Fear God for my sake and for what I have affirmed, and bring me this old man, so that I may examine his appearance and find out what is on his mind."⁶ Then, with much toil and effort, they dragged him toward me roughly, where-

¹ A region in Najd (see *E.I.* I, IV, 1154-1155).

² *Rhamnus spina Christi* or *rhamnus nabeca*, of which one kind causes the eater to exude fragrance. It is a desirable source of food.

³ *Panicum dichotomum*, not much eaten by camels, except in times of drought, but used as thatch with which to stuff holes in Bedouin tents. It is, therefore, a less than desirable source of food (cf. M30, n. 29, below). The expression means "I arrived with nothing, neither good nor bad."

⁴ Literally, "a slip-knot" or "noose."

⁵ A possible reference to the third "orthodox" caliph, 'Utmān ibn 'Affān (r. 23/644-35/655), (see *E.I.* I, III, 1008-1011).

⁶ Note that the speaker has denied all knowledge of the old man from the start, when the latter has as yet not been produced for him to identify as unknown to him. This is another instance of narratorial inconsistency.

upon he lowered his veil and confessed his sins, saying to me: "You know me well, and people such as you do not praise in excess that which they do not know; they rise in society, but do not behave immoderately, they lighten the scales rather than weighing them down, they protect rather than scold. My predicament among these people is indeed remarkable, for there is nary a gentleman or a nobleman in the lot." And he whispered in my ear: "If you will relieve me of my tribulations, I will relieve you of yours, otherwise you will share this very same distressing plight with me, for the nights of Time are a borrowed thing, ties of friendship are a religious duty, Fate is ever changeable, the days are stages in a journey, as you treat, so will you be treated, and often does a slothful poltroon overcome a valiant hero."

So I replied to the assembled gathering: "By God, he is the master Abū Ḥabīb, a man with a clever mind; one with a true arrow, and a fertile understanding. He is a rider on camel-back, a dweller in the abode of fame, an inhabitant of the place of renown, a man both dear and similar to me. What has transpired between him and you, to cause you to tear his shabby garments to pieces, to disfigure his beauty, and to injure his reputation?" They replied: "He has played a childish trick on us, in the perpetration of which, he has raced in every hippodrome of deceit. He first prayed the evening prayer with us, uttering every form of elegant speech he could desire, thereby inclining our necks and sides in his favor, and stimulating the mountain streams and watercourses of our generosity to flow, by claiming that on the morrow he would depart, and that waystations would soon embrace him. Then, he asked us to lodge him for the night in the mosque, along with everyone else who was traveling up hill and down dale like himself, so that we offered him a generous supper, extended our ties of protection to him, delivered him from his hardship and exhaustion, and undertook to satisfy his hunger and to quench his thirst. But, when we arose for the dawn prayer, we stumbled upon the disgraceful nature of his betrayal, for we found that he had stolen the property of those who were with him, thus ruining their homes, sowing among them the seeds of suspicion and accusation, and making their future bewilderingly unclear to them, whereupon we took to the roads and trails after him, and appointed a tracker and swift rider to find

him. But he must have crawled into some caravansary to hide, depositing with its occupants the objects he had wrongfully obtained, for we came to despair of ever finding him, and remained thrashing around in the ropes of his snares, until he showed up in this very gathering, having veiled his face and concealed himself in his clothes, while simultaneously relying on, and pleading in the name of no other than the Holy Book itself. Then he began to deliver an admonitory sermon and exposition, adorned with information that was both new and old. He thereby inclined all of us to favor him by every imaginable means, so that we rushed toward him at a trot and gallop and, given the occasion, we greatly appreciated the cadences of his rhymed prose, and enjoyed the skillful way in which he led his words back and forth, until one among our company awoke from the sleep of our heedlessness, recognized our speaker, and stood up to reveal his identity, whereupon we surrounded him, and demanded from him the property that had come into his possession. But he claimed that he had deposited it with you and placed it in your charge." I responded to them: "By God, if that is so, then his victim has no one to avenge him, for he and I stand worlds apart. Let arbiters be appointed on the spot, to judge between him and you, so that verdicts may be issued against him. In this way, let the man who has been wronged appeal for justice against his oppressor, and let the man who is ignorant be distinguished from the one who is learned."

Al-Sā'ib said:

So they hauled him before the district judge, only expecting the latter to make available the downpour of the raindrops of his mercy, for they submitted their complaint to his judgment, and spoke justly rather than unjustly. But master Abū Ḥabīb began to declaim, and said [*rajaz*]:

O judge for whom the entire land of Oman yearns; both its soft earth, and its hard, rocky ground,

You are a pious man adorned by your faith, just as a necklace is adorned by its pearls.

Will I find a guarantor to protect me from a hostile Fate, or will I be cut off from, and deprived of such a man?

What would have been the legal opinion of the learned jurist al-Nu'mān,⁷ when a hungry, thirsty man arrived before the people

Dazed, and suffering from a burning thirst, if they had shown him no sympathy,

And even 'Utmān⁸ had refused to grant him water? Am I to die thus of emaciation, while these people remain fat and prosperous?

Shall a guest have no shares among them, while they are hosting each other as boon companions?

Would that I were Salmān⁹ in their home, for they have betrayed their lofty promises and lied to me.

I made a deal with them over jewels, of which the precious ones were extremely valuable, but the prices agreed upon were not honored.

There are unfulfilled oaths outstanding between your people and myself, plus an agreement to the effect that their right hands shall return what they possess.

They are a group whom Time has deceived, nor are they safe from the twists and turns of Fate.

Indeed, their mature men are no more than boys, who know not the true nature of the days and times.

⁷ According to a marginal note in one of the manuscripts, this is the jurist al-Nu'mān ibn Tābit, Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 149/767), founder of the Ḥanafī school of jurisprudence (see *E.I.* 2, I, 123-124).

⁸ From a Jew, the third "orthodox" caliph, 'Utmān ibn 'Affān (on whom, see n. 5, above) purchased the well of Rūmah, the water of which he generously made available to the Muslim community. See Yūsuf ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī ma'rīfat al-aṣḥāb*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Cairo, n. d.), IV, 1039-1040.

⁹ Salmān al-Fārisī was a Persian slave who, after having served many masters, who sold him from one to the other, was eventually acquired by the Prophet Muḥammad, whom he taught Persian military tactics, and who gratefully freed him (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 116-117).

Then Abū Ḥabīb readied himself for the dispute and unsheathed the Indian blade¹⁰ of al-Ḥajjāj,¹¹ by saying:

O just judge; O firm and well-twisted rope, endowed with a keen intellect and a sharp sword, I am, by God, neither unjust, nor reprehensible, nor blameworthy. Everyone possesses both an internal and an external aspect; an impure and a pure dimension. Yes indeed, I was summoned away from my people by the occasion of separation, and by the compulsion of Fate (which must always be obeyed), so that I alighted among these individuals as a guest, having come to them by night like a dream-image. I stayed among them as the beneficiary of their protection and hospitality only for a brief moment, before they discarded and rejected me, by failing to provide me with any seat or pasture within their shelter, whereas each one of them seeks shelter with his own friend and drinking companion, and with his new and his old acquaintance; each one of them seeks amusement from the third and the second lutestring, while failing to consider that I too could be unto him a third, if not a second companion; he takes pleasure in his cymbal and *rabāb*,¹² and socializes with his Zaynab and Rabāb,¹³ while failing to consider me, outcast that I am, rendered lonely by my exile from home, and sorrowful by reason of my faraway destination. How could the result of a satisfactory and righteous verdict, modeled on the obedient life of the Prophet, be other than that I be hosted for three days,¹⁴ and that I not seek fire from these people's flint in vain? Did they find no pleasure in my words, and no usefulness in my admonitory sermon when, from among the proverbs and wise sayings I produced, there were those that could have kept them away from

¹⁰ Swords made in India were proverbial for their excellence.

¹¹ Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714) was a ruthless governor of Iraq appointed by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65/685-86/705). He suppressed revolts against his master in Mecca and in Iraq, and delivered a famous speech in the mosque of Kufa, in which he threatened his enemies with dire consequences should they dare to rise against him (see *E.I.* 2, III, 39-45).

¹² 'Rebec', a musical instrument.

¹³ Women's names.

¹⁴ There is a *ḥadīth* according to which "a guest is to be entertained with food for three days," that is to say, a host is required by the religious law to offer hospitality to anyone requesting it, for that period of time. See *C.I.T.M.*, III, 538b-539a.

all judges and arbiters? Their crime, by God, is indeed ‘overtaking’¹⁵ them, for the steed of my argument is both Eminent¹⁶ and Overtaking.¹⁷ Am I not an intelligent person among them? Am I not a stranger among them; one whom Time has united with them; whom the vicissitudes of Fate have dressed in a filthy robe, so that I entertain kindly thoughts, cause the scant water of my well to flow, and ask: “May this stranger perchance take a first and second drink?” I only grant people favors in order to eat, I only delight them with my music in order to drink, I only seek to pasture among them in order to curry their favor, I only travel toward them in order to achieve success, I only draw near to them in order to be received, I only enter their water in order to sip, I only appear before them in order to quench my thirst, I only sing to them in order to stir my porridge, and I only toil for them in order to light my fire. These people kindly granted me lodging for the night; but then they sent every brave horseman and fainthearted fool against me. Indeed, theirs is an accusation contrary to the law of manly honor; it is based on a law not in current circulation; a law being invoked in the presence of you, a judge who races and contends for precedence in every virtue, who rules in favor of accomplishments and of noble descent, and takes from the neighbor who is a blood relative, only to give to the one who is not; who requires you people to clothe the naked, to follow on the heels of those who are devoted and attached to me, to protect the rights pertaining to knowledge, without tolerating any opposition to, or disobedience of those rights; who extends the bonds of friendship when Time withdraws them; who grants safety, when safety is hard to find. You people are behaving as though you have been the victims of assault, as if your poverty has been long-lasting, as if you have been torn to pieces in this land, as if you have traveled¹⁸ in troops and bands

¹⁵ In Arabic, *lāhiq*.

¹⁶ *Al-wajīh*. The name of a famous pre-Islamic stallion. See Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-Aʿrābī, *Les “livres des chevaux” de Hišām ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad ibn al-Aʿrābī*, ed. G. Levi Della Vida (Leiden, 1928), p. 9, and *passim* (cf. M.34, n. 9, below).

¹⁷ *Lāhiq*. The name of a famous pre-Islamic stallion. See Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-Aʿrābī, *loc. cit.*, and *passim* (cf. M.34, n. 9, below). Thus, the entire sentence is an amphibology.

¹⁸ Reading *jīʿtum* with D, rather than *jubtum* with W.

of horsemen, have been plundered of your acquired and inherited wealth, and have been deprived of your women and your children. Were it not for the superiority of this patron, namely the judge, and the first and second rains of spring that you have enjoyed thanks to his generosity, no drop¹⁹ would trickle down to you, and no rain would fall upon your courtyard. Instead, severe punishment would afflict you, and you would perish.

Then he began to recite [*rajaz*]:

O arbitrating patron, my case before you is clear-cut and obvious,

For the rulings in which you have given satisfaction are many—
may your lofty rank adorn this age!

Let the first and second rains of spring pour down upon you,
as jewels bedeck a young maiden!

How different is a carefree man from a griever in his grief.
Therefore, render your verdict against these people, O great judge,

Without considering whether they are from the tribe of Sa'd, or
from that of Balī.²⁰

¹⁹ Reading *qaṭratun* with D, rather than *maṭratun* with W.

²⁰ Two famous Arab tribes (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 701-702; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 921a). There is an Arabic proverb stating that "the Banū Sa'd ibn Zayd are to be found in every land" (*M.A.*, II, 459, no. 2797). It is taken to mean that people as obnoxious as one's own tribesmen are ubiquitous. As for the Banū Balī, they were an Arab tribe of Yemenite origin and, therefore, Southern Arabs. They were settled in Syria. See *E.I.* 1, II, 618-619. From Syria some of their members migrated to al-Andalus, where they dwelt north of Córdoba and in Morón. See Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1962), p. 443: "Dār Balī ['the settlement of the Balī'] in al-Andalus is the place named after them, north of Córdoba. They dwell there to this day, organized according to their various lineages, *while their women as well as their men are unable to speak Romance [al-lāṭīniya], and can only speak Arabic*. They are hospitable to guests and, to this day, refrain from eating sheep's tails. They also have another settlement in the district of Morón (emphasis, mine)." This passage provides us with the priceless indication that, in the early eleventh century, Andalusī women still spoke Romance rather than Arabic (with respect to which norm, the women of the Banū Balī are seen, by Ibn Ḥazm, as an exception). In turn, this language distribution according to gender seems to explain why *ḥarajāt* found in Andalusī *muwašṣahāt*, when they are expressed in the feminine voice, tend to have

Al-Sā'ib said:

First the judge paused in confusion. Then he took the accusers aback with all the fierce impetus of a tyrant, by saying: "I am impressed by the remarkable quality of your eloquence. The rights of persons like yourself will never be disregarded in my court. Release the accused, in light of the way he has behaved, along with whatever property he may have chosen and appropriated, for you, the accusers, are required to clothe every naked person, and the shame in which you have incurred for failing to do so, bears witness against you. Is a man such as this to be despised, when the banner and pledges of victory are in his hands? By God, if he were to deprive me of my very own clothes, and to deny that I am right or wrong, I would still consider such acts to be a minor offense on his part, and would refrain from imposing a harsh or difficult penalty upon him."

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the judge entered his dwelling, and exceeded all limits of kindness²¹ toward Abū Ḥabīb, by handing him a *dirham* and a *dīnār*, and saying: "This is the modest residue left in my exhausted well; it is hardly enough to extinguish the fire of your need, but it is all a poor man can afford, it represents a charitable act, and constitutes somewhat more than a trifling gesture. Perchance we will meet again after this encounter, and your leisure and stay among us will be prolonged, by which time you will have fulfilled the desire you so rightfully deserve to fulfill, for the Fate you have experienced on this occasion has been risky and dangerous, while your accusers are scum and rabble who have been supported for far too long a time by their wealth and prosperity. Overlook their offense, as do the noble; be satisfied with what is legally permitted; avoid what is forbidden, and go in peace, in the company of dawn and dusk."

Al-Sā'ib said:

an unusually high proportion of Romance words: Popular women's songs must have tended to be in Romance, and men's songs, in Arabic. On the *muwašṣaḥa*, see J. T. Monroe, "*Zajal and Muwašṣaḥa*: Hispano-Arabic Poetry and the Romance Tradition," *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, (*Handbuch der Orientalistik*, XII [Leiden, 1992]), pp. 398-419.

²¹ Literally, ". . . and burned to ashes what he had roasted for him."

So I returned with Abū Ḥabīb, magnifying and extolling him, for I was as much astonished at his situation as I astonished him, and said: "By God, how brilliant was your escape, and how admirable was the long and short of your exposition. What target did your arrow not hit; indeed, what deception did your intelligence and understanding not contrive!" Then he looked attentively at me and replied: "Consider the *dirham* and the *dīnār*. The one leads to anxiety, and the other, to hellfire. In former, as well as in more recent times, each of these two coins has destroyed people and, with the passing of the ages, the two have left us with a tale and story of which no one ever tires. Therefore, take them both as yours in payment of a debt; not as a reward, for I see in your behavior nothing to merit an equivalent or corresponding gesture of gratitude on my part. Go with right-guidance, and become unknown to me."

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I turned away from him, while my soul remained in his company, and my eyelids released their tears, letting down a veil over the emotion I held back and retained within myself.

Maqāmah 14

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

I halted in al-Anbār¹ like one burning from the itch caused by the bite of camel ticks, weary of wandering and exile, chopping up my camel girths and reins, suppressing my youthful desires as one hides objects in mantles, and resigning myself to drinking warm instead of cool waters.² Despite the above, my wealth had reached a state of maturity, and I would have been a prominent individual, had it not been for the discomfort caused by my travels, the troubles caused by wastelands and deserts, the feebleness of old age, and the warning provided by admonitions. Hence, I was fully repentant, for I anticipated forthcoming blame in the Hereafter. Therefore, meditation alone pleased me, and reciting the Qur'ān and invoking God alone delighted me until, on a certain occasion, I came across the sound of singing-girls, and found myself aroused by it, and visited by the pleasure it provided, for my soul was filled with rapture, so that its former sinful habits and customs returned to it. Therefore, I restrained its unruly steed, curbed its high-spirited courser, turned its reins away from temptation, and fully swerved its forelocks aside from sin, but it obstinately insisted on struggling against me, in order to follow the direction of certain groups and crowds of people. Thereupon, I declared:

I will provide my soul with a brief respite, by giving it a second drink. I will allow it but a single taste of sin, and then cleanse its mirror of rust, all the while that I lower a veil over it, lest it be observed and found out. That way, perhaps, its burning thirst will be quenched, and its ailment will be cured. Then I followed the trail of the sound I had heard, being cautious of any rumor that might arise, until I came to a garden abounding in growth, to a spacious meadow, to a very large, green, overspreading tree with thickly intertwining branches in its canopy; to a place containing cascading streams and watercourses, along with green fields and

¹ There is a town by that name in Iraq, on the left bank of the Euphrates, sixty-two kilometers from Baghdad, and another in Iran, near Balkh, capital of the province of Khorasan (see *E.I.* 2, I, 484-485).

² Of which the former are unpleasant, and the latter, pleasant to drink.

promontories. There, I approached an assembly that was arranged as neatly as pearls strung on a necklace, and that had gathered in a circle to show honor and respect. I made my way to one side and stood nearby, for friendship had generously granted its garment to the members of that assembly, and allied itself with them. I neither ceased offering to sacrifice myself for that gathering, nor to delight in the sight and sound of it, until one of its members noticed me, since my appearance and qualities were plainly visible. Thus, a noble youth, similar to the full moon, arose from among the members of the group and hastened to greet me and to offer me his protection, declaring:

Who is observing us without our leave, and mingling with us by means of his glance and ear? Is he a stranger who has parted from his loved ones, or one despoiled, whose ties Fate has sundered; whom passion has overcome and love has beset, so that he hovers warily around our waterhole, lest he be destroyed? Would you care to accept our friendship and put aside all your troubles? Your appearance impresses us, even though your origin and descent are unknown to us. Yet often does a lively spirit bear witness to, and defend singular virtues and intelligence. Let yours be the leadership of our assembly, for you are, among us, the star and full moon of good fortune, whom we will surround like lesser planets, as we hand wine cups back and forth, exchange melodies and tunes, and offer one another the perfume of refreshments and fragrant herbs.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

I accept your invitation, and call down blessings on your morning and evening meal, on this company of generous men who would avail me of such pleasures, and on your worthy invitation.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I joined them as does the herald of good tidings, and came to be a kinsman and partner to them, remaining among the noblest of boon companions and within the most delightful of drinking gatherings, sharing in their circumstances, and grazing in the fertile pasture of their intimacy, which we traversed both night and day, while plucking the fruit of joy, both when awake and when asleep, until there came a night in which we were awakened by somebody in grief, who was wailing in a high-pitched voice that clouded the

purity of our waters, and ensured that our sleep was to be interrupted. We listened to that voice, and heard its woeful lamentation, so we sent forth one who might inform us of its owner's predicament and acquaint us with the reason for his tears. Our informant beheld an old man whom nightlong praying had felled, and genuflection and prostration had bent down. With him was a youth who was imitating his movements, and who resembled him as one sandal does another. Then the old man motioned to our informant with a side-glance and spoke to him with a voice that was inaudible to us, saying:

Who comes this late, awhispering, when the night is dark and concealing? Who arrives when we have neither camel saddles nor pack saddles, and nothing but grief, sorrow, suspicion, and misgivings?

Our informant replied:

I belong to a group that commits sins, yet still expects a gift and share of God's generosity—may He be exalted; a group that is on intimate terms with sin, and mounts upon the back of misdeeds instead of mounting upon that of female camels and of other riding beasts, yet still expects presents and rewards from our Lord. We overheard your supplication and entreaty, and feared lest something might have frightened you, so we came in the hope of enjoying the good fortune of your vicinity and the blessing of your conversation.

Our informant said:

Then the old man turned away from me and said:

What a disgusting group of wayward men, sinful vipers and adders that you are! Base desires have seduced you, and erring ways have inflamed you. You have been deluded by the vanities of this world and have been led astray by the reins of error, while failing to reflect upon the consequences of your acts, and to distinguish between a waterhole and a morning mirage. As far as I am concerned, it was only after your foot had slipped, that remorse clung, and grief adhered to you, "but it was too late to repent."³ Behold, what a dreadful watering-place and destination this will come to be for you in the Hereafter!

³ Based on Qur'ān, 38:3, "but it was too late to escape."

Then the old man arose to go to his oratory, lifting and raising his voice in prayer.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Our informant returned to us, bringing news of the old man, and both magnifying and exalting his exemplary conduct. Thus, we were overcome by his words, we were provided with a subject for nightlong conversation, in the course of which the old man was often invoked, and we said:

He must be some holy man who has come to admonish us; some saint come to warn us about the wrath of God—may He be exalted!—and to absolve us.

So we all went toward him as the thirsty go down to the water-hole, being pleased to meet him, and auguring good not only from his face, but also from the remainder of his body. When we approached and drew near to him, he began to engage in *sufi* exercises, by waiting and delaying. Then, he shrank back, gazed attentively, expressed dread and fear of God, and declared [*rajaz*]:

What does the visitor bring? Is the suspect not ashamed of his sin?

Every sinner is as suspect as it is natural for a man with a broken leg to limp.⁴

Has the sinner no Guidance or Scripture, when every intelligent man eventually reaches the hour of his repentance?

Therefore, say to him who crosses the surface of deserts: "You are concerned only with camel-saddles and pack-saddles,

While you deem the secret concealed within you to be safe from the scrutiny of the angels who record your deeds."⁵

Neither scolding nor slander have dissuaded him. Oh, would that he had availed himself of censure,

And that his Lord's satisfaction might visit him!

⁴ I.e., if a man limps, he may be reasonably suspected of having a broken leg.

⁵ Reference to *Qur'ān*, 82:10-12, "But verily over you are appointed angels to protect you,—kind and honorable,—writing down your deeds: They know and understand all that ye do."

Then the old man said:

What business have I with sinners, when old age has lowered my veil, I am cured of life's allurements and comforts, and will become a disembodied, ghostly owl⁶ within a day or so? Arise, O Ḥabīb, for you are intelligent. Charm these people with the style of your preaching, let your lightning-bolt not fail to forecast rain, make them cross a ravine and river-valley of prayer, and be unto them a summoner and a guide toward righteousness. Then, perhaps, you will be welcomed by them, and receive the satisfaction of God's joy, for the years have detracted from my powers, manifold events have coincided,⁷ your thoroughbred steed is untiring, and no A'waj or Yaḥmūm⁸ can outrun him.

Then the old man left us and vanished, in fear and dread over our predicament.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So Ḥabīb arose and uttered his sermon with refinement, delicacy, precision of ideas, and clarity; adorning and embellishing his words, releasing and perfecting his talent, providing clear indications, and branching out in all directions, giving full meed while being all-inclusive, until he softened our hardened hearts and bent our calloused souls, so that we renounced all pleasures, and repented of the sins we had committed in our heedlessness.

Then Ḥabīb said:

I fear lest the empty deserts cause my master to get lost, lest ferocious lions take him by force, lest no grave or tomb enfold him, and lest I prove unable to heap earth over him after he has died of his wounds.

So he turned away from us, while we wished there had been no parting between him and us, for we had deposited a portion of our souls with him. But when we returned to the place from whence we

⁶ Pre-Islamic Arabs believed that a man's ghost took on the form of an owl, and that, if he died a violent death, the bird would hover over his grave until his death had been avenged.

⁷ Literally, "the belly-girth and the hind-girth of the camel have come together."

⁸ The names of two pre-Islamic thoroughbred horses. See Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-'Arābī, *Les "livres des chevaux" de Hišām ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad ibn al-'Arābī*, ed. G. Levi Della Vida, (Leiden, 1928), p. 6, and *passim*; p. 31, and *passim*, respectively (cf. M34, n. 14, below).

had come, we could not believe our eyes, for we found its locks broken, its valuables stolen, the containers and silver vessels in it removed, along with our saddle- and bridle-jewelry, while our mantles and veils had all disappeared, along with everything of value and refinement. A note had been left there, in which we found written [*mujtatl*]:

How excellent are certain brilliant, generous, yet gullible gentlemen

Who know not the calamities of Time, nor that wealth is merely a non-refundable form of booty.

You took pleasure in your desires, for their fruits were sweet:

You were stars and suns whom moons⁹ caused to circle around them,

While the third strings of lutes were in command, and the second strings carried out their orders,

And your souls had a commander constantly inciting them to do harm to themselves.

I am al-Sadūsī, and I conceal my appearance.

I plunge into human multitudes as though they were a flood, for they are of no threat to me.

No veil of diaphanous gauze has ever revealed me, and no threadbare garment has ever humbled me.

No tribe of Qays¹⁰ has ever honored me, and no tribe of An-mār¹¹ has ever dishonored me,

For I am the son of a freeborn man with protected pastures and intact honor,

⁹ I.e., "beautiful ladies."

¹⁰ A powerful tribe of the North Arabian, Muḍarite grouping (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 833-835).

¹¹ A tribe of South Arabian, Kahlānite ancestry. After the rise of Islam, its members scattered throughout the empire, and hardly any of them remained in their ancestral homeland (see *E.I.* 2, I, 73a).

So gaze with intelligent eyes that are unobstructed by any veil,
For many a thoroughbred steed cannot be confined within a racetrack.

The portions allotted to you by Fate are diverse, and gambling distributes them,¹²

So act for the good of your soul, and strive in so doing, as long as you live.¹³

Your Fate, as you can plainly see, is an ass.

Never despair over an object overwhelmed by destruction,

For your home lies in ruins, and is inhabited by others.

Do you not see that the lute weeps, all the while that the reed laughs,

And that the winecup is but a momentary pleasure that the hangover reproaches,

And that not even an iron nail is lost by a skillful or prudent person?

Sleeping eyes fail where waking ones succeed!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus I realized that this was one of his wicked deeds and dirty tricks,¹⁴ worthy only of him,¹⁵ and proceeding only from the likes of him.

¹² The order of this line and the previous one is inverted in D.

¹³ This line may also be translated: "So act for the good of your own self, and strive in so doing, as long as you live." The former meaning provides uplifting moral and spiritual advice, whereas that contained in the latter is cynical and worldly. This is, then, a malicious amphibology.

¹⁴ Reading *nabīlah min nabā'iti-hi* with D, rather than *nabīlah min nabā'iti-hi* with W, since the latter alternative does not rhyme with the preceding *ḥabīlah min ḥabā'iti-hi*.

¹⁵ Reading *siwā-hu* with D, rather than *sawādi-hi* with W, since the latter alternative does not rhyme with the ensuing *šarwā-hu*.

Maqāmah 15

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

I alighted in al-Zāb,¹ being separated from my family and friends and, among its inhabitants, I stayed with a people of whom nomadism had taken possession, among whom antagonism was widespread, and Bedouin arrogance, along with the violence of outlaws and brigands, had made its way. So I decided to leave for one of their towns, in order to avoid their quarreling and fighting. Thus, I went from tribe to tribe, and from the right to the wrong path, while the midday sun scorched me and full cisterns were unavailable to me; while the intense heat of the midday-mirage mocked me, and the voices of the owl and the crow² alarmed me, until I reached a tribe of Zuġbah,³ and asked its members:

May I have a drink or a sip? Thirst has so tormented me that it would even be a pleasure to drink mud.

They replied:

Would you prefer milk or buttermilk, for this is the gift we offer both to the nomad and to the sedentary person.

Then they brought milking bowls and said:

Come and have some milk.

So I sipped what was more effective in quenching thirst than pure, fresh, cool water, more pleasant to swallow than what is lawfully permitted, more desirable than honey-froth, and moister than the dew-covered flowers on the hills. Then I turned to the shade of a tent filled with men of noble rank, and commingled with those of lofty stature and high command, overhearing the tall-tales of Bedouin Arabs, the marvels of brigands, the secrets of tracking, the means of obtaining augury and divination from the flight of

¹ The name of two principal tributaries of the Tigris river, and of the region through which they flow. The Great Zāb rises in southeast Turkey, and the Little Zāb, in northwest Iran (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1180-1181). Also, a region in the North African province of Ifrīqiyah (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1181-1182). In light of what follows, it is more likely that the latter is intended here.

² Both are birds of ill omen.

³ A branch of the Banū Hilāl, settled in North Africa, between Tlemcen and Tripoli (see *E.I.* 2, I, 374a).

birds, how to commit acts of violence and perform the exploits of outlaws, how to subjugate others and seize their belongings, how the male ostrich is hunted in the desert, and the eagle, in the sky, what draws lizards out of their lairs and fish from the seas, and the conditions of herdsmen as they range far afield, traversing desert plains. While I was in the middle of all this, I heard a Bedouin with whom a sedentary person was debating, a Yemenite with whom a Muḍarite⁴ was vying for glory, so I shook off the cloak of slumber, untied the knot of the halter, and turned to listen to their elegant speech, for they neither ceased exchanging words, nor being possessed by the ups and downs of their argumentation, until their souls and breasts grew heated and they competed in the racecourse of glory, by invoking 'Abd al-Šams⁵ and 'Abd al-Madān⁶ until, finally, darkness descended and their words were interrupted, at which point the Yemenite was left in an awkward position, obviously defeated. Then I discerned an imposing, middle-aged man whose mien indicated high rank and lofty ambitions.

The middle-aged man said to the victor in the debate:

You have angered people and deserve their blame. Approach, nonetheless, that I may blunt the sharp edge of your tongue while also attributing your offense to the excellence of your rhetoric. But the latter is no more than speech and debate, in which mere words alternate and are exchanged, in which species does not differ greatly from genus, and the branch is closely connected to the root.⁷ Your argument betrays none but narrow partisanship with your tribe; it is nothing but an attempt to protect the latter, and to attribute good ancestry and descent to it. Yet all of us constitute the

⁴ I.e., a Southern and a Northern Arab, respectively. For the latter, see M3, n. 21, above.

⁵ This Pagan name means 'Worshipper of the Sun', and was borne by at least two pre-Islamic personalities, the North Arabian 'Abd al-Šams ibn 'Abd Manāf of Qurayš (see *E.I.* 2, I, 9a), and the South Arabian 'Abd al-Šams ibn Wā'il of Ḥimyar (see 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam qabā'il al-'Arab* [Beirut, 1994], II, 724).

⁶ The name means 'Worshipper of al-Madān' (a pre-Islamic idol, on which, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kūṭab al-aṣnām* [Cairo, 1924], p. 111). The name was borne by two Pagan individuals, one a North and the other a South Arabian (see *E.I.* 2, III, 223a, and 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam qabā'il al-'Arab*, II, 724).

⁷ Reading *qins* with Ḍ, rather than *qinš* with W (which is a faulty rhyme and a misprint).

single nation of the Arabs; we all distinguish the *nabʿ* from the *ḡarab*,⁸ we all vie with others for glory in our accomplishments, and we all carefully preserve the record of our genealogies. Furthermore, we all possess heroic aspirations and a proud pre-Islamic past that neither Islam itself, nor belief in the latter have been able to displace, nor have the days and the ages succeeded in erasing it. All of us are related to the Root of the Earth,⁹ and cry out to enjoy life.

Then the middle-aged man said to me:

O stranger, I can be kind to you, and am most worthy and deserving of being your host, so come with us to feast among milk-pails, drinking-goblets, milk-bowls, portions of camel-hump fat, a well-made bed, a hastily-cooked, well-seasoned stew, a slowly-cooked, unseasoned stew, meat grilled on a red-hot stone, riches carried away as spoils, conversation that includes a meal served to a guest, and torrents and outpourings of affection.

Al-Sāʿib said:

So we all went as he requested, his pasture and grazing-ground proved fertile, he lived up to his promise, and lavished kindness upon us from head to foot. We spent the night in the most enjoyable company, within the thicket and covert of his protective courage, until day broke, and the myrtle and the oxeye¹⁰ competed in exuding their fragrance. Then he led us to an empty desert in which we saw only long-necked gazelles, ash-gray ostriches, snub-nosed oryxes, smooth stretches of sand, camels grazing, and horses standing about tethered. Soon, he summoned his hounds to the chase and lavished his buttermilk and milk on them, while one hound hastened forward and another roused the prey from its lair; one released it and another restrained it, until sinews tensed in a proud gait, and the area became full of onagers and curvetting, long-tailed horses, male ostriches, and their chicks. We remained in that place while companionship was lavished upon us both in secret and in public, and we found the location to be so pleasant that we stayed there for ten days, conversing with one another, without any

⁸ On which, see M2, n. 12, above.

⁹ An epithet of Adam implying his mortality. See al-Mubarrad's "Epistle on Poetry and Prose," Appendix 2, n. 24, below. Thus the sentence means "we are all fated to die, like our collective ancestor Adam."

¹⁰ On which, see M5, n. 8, above.

ill effect, and exchanging original anecdotes that had neither been repeated before, nor had they become boring. Then we set out, parting as does the flower from the calyx and the sparrow from the pigeon,¹¹ while our host protested that we would never leave his protection, and never enjoy his hospitality merely on alternate days. Thus, we never saw one like him in noble generosity, or the like of his protection, which was an impregnable fortress and an inviolable sanctuary. He then mounted us on black horses and placed us under the charge of every bold young hero who pierces as does an arrow, and penetrates as keenly as does an idea. So we competed in running and racing against one another, and reached agreement and unanimity.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the master¹² quivered as do youths, and quavered as do singing-girls, saying [*basīl*]:

Your client is powerful because of you, O Siwār¹³—how excellent are your vicinity and protection!

Were wordly glory to be items of jewelry, you would possess the crown and the bracelet.¹⁴

You called¹⁵ the wild animals of the desert by force,¹⁶ and the flock and herd fell down.

Since you are a freeborn man, it should not be held against a shy, timid creature that it becomes tame,

And seeks the safety of your protection, for no ruin has undone your good fortune.

¹¹ I.e., the small from the big bird.

¹² Who, predictably, turns out to be al-Sadūsī. We have so far not been told explicitly that he is present, but might assume that he is the victorious Muḍarite of the earlier debate, and that he has been invited by the middle-aged host to join his group, along with al-Sā'ib.

¹³ The name of the middle-aged host. It means 'bracelet', and is punned upon in the next line.

¹⁴ *Siwār*.

¹⁵ Vowelizing *da'awta* with Ḍ, rather than *da'awtu* with W.

¹⁶ Reading *qasran* with Ḍ, rather than *fī-hā* with W.

Formerly, you destroyed every adversary characterized by courage and readiness to go on a raid.

Would that I knew—as I invoke glory—what became of Nawār¹⁷ after her separation from us.

O you who ask me, when the place where I might visit her is far away, while to every longing there is burning thirst:

Life lowers its forgiving glances, Fate is content, and powerful is the protégé of Siwār.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then Siwār quivered like a branch blowing in the wind, and held his head up high with a pride like that of the Man of the Ulcers,¹⁸ and said:

Would you care to choose a gift, even if it were to include all the livestock in my pasture?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the master spoke with clarity, not obscurity, and requested a black steed, a white camel, a clever servant-boy, a burnished sword, and a clean garment, and the host gave him what he requested, without any delay that might have caused him anxiety, and indicated that I was to receive the same, for he was trying to treat us both equally. Then we parted from the host as sparks leave the firestick, and the sword leaves India,¹⁹ after the host had made us swear an oath that we would return to visit him, thereby causing us to swallow the honey of his sweet qualities. Then the master said to me:

Do you recognize who I am; I, whom you have befriended? Am I, with whose lot you have fallen in, agreeable to you?

I replied:

No, by God, I neither know you, nor recognize you, even though

¹⁷ A woman's name conventional in Arabic poetry, and found, for example, in the *Mu'allaqah* of the pre-Islamic poet Labīd (see Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* [Bombay, 1893], p. 97, l. 16; p. 112, l. 55).

¹⁸ An epithet of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays, who was proverbial for his pride (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1176-1178).

¹⁹ Indian swords were proverbial for their excellence, and thus, highly prized in Arabia.

I have remained with you, and taken refuge in your company.
Then he replied [*basīl*]:

Ask Abū l-Ġamr how many a close bond, that was severed by the hand of Time, I have established with him.

Between you and me there have been many days and encounters, such that my trickery and wrongdoing have detracted from them.

How often have I caused unprecedented havoc among human-kind, such that neither Jurhum²⁰ nor Iram²¹ have experienced its like before me.

I am al-Sadūsī. I never scorn a favor even when wealth and sacred ties stand in the way of my accepting it.

I used to nurse my cunning in the proximity of men, until one noble-natured, righteous individual offered me his protection.

He is a man of easy disposition, generous to his beneficiary; a distributor of *maysir*²² portions, when the stingy refuse to participate in the game of *maysir*.

Because of that generous man, youth has turned fresh again, and yet, how can that be, when senility had folded its robe over my body?

The sanctuary of Siwār is protected against Fate, while I, his protégé, have found protection in his sanctuary.

If I had found the rest of mankind to be like him, neither my sparks nor my blaze would have harmed them,

But they turned their faces away, after I rebuked them, for neither joy nor nobility had encouraged them to be generous,

²⁰ Legendary custodians of the Ka'bah in pre-Islamic times, until their overweening pride caused God to destroy them (see *E.I.* 2, II, 603-604).

²¹ According to the legend of 'Many-Columned Iram' (alluded to in Qur'ān, 89:6-8), an 'Ādite king of Ḥaḍramawt named Šaddād built the city of Iram, which was destroyed by God because of the wickedness of its inhabitants (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1270). This and the above are Arab equivalents to the legend of Sodom and Gomorrah.

²² See M8, n. 1, above.

Nor did they realize that, since hope is a drawback to any valiant young hero, I am a blackness and a blight upon the face of Time.

Then I said:

How excellent is Abū Ḥabīb, and how noble is his acquaintance! How fertile are his highland and his lowland! How prosperous is the one who treats him kindly, and how wretched is the one who treats him harshly! Have you not generously granted us recognition of you, and brought us joy through the sight of your face and eyelids? How often have you peeked through your veil, abstaining from sins while entertaining evil thoughts, and yet clung to your special friend.

Then we parted, one of us going east and the other going west; one going far from his goal, and the other getting close to it.

Maqāmah 16
(*Rhymed in Triplets*)¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated to us and said:

I sojourned in Ghazna,² sipping the water of each of its rain-clouds, and walking over every one of its smooth and rough areas, prolonging my stay in its regions, gnawing at the pliant twig of youth, and strutting proudly, as I dragged my hem and sleeve's edge over al-Simāk.³ There, I confronted Fate when my thickets were moist, my mirrors were polished, my beginnings and endings were admired, and I was going down to drink from pools whose drops were blue, gathering the goals of my hopes, which were easy to reach, and bending down the branch of my aspirations, whose sides were pliant, as I plunged rashly into the dark night of error, adopted a flattering hypocrite as my dearest friend, and moved in the arena of heroism, either standing firm or escaping from danger, neither being aware of the true nature of Time and its vicissitudes, nor of its rejection and acceptance, nor of its bast and bark. I ascended to the cloud-covered peaks, grazed freely in the pastures of friendship, and wandered in the green fields and fertile plains of my hopes, until my life and wealth were consumed,⁴ al-Simāk and al-Ġafr⁵ changed their course, tawny and red gazelles bolted, the cloud sped away, the reins submitted, the sleeper awoke, remorse became inseparable, sorrow brought on despair, and the foot caused its owner to slip, whereupon I determined to depart, hoping I would be able to do so, inclining my flanks and breast toward repentance, and remaining with no abode to lodge me, growing accustomed

¹ Normally, *maqāmah* clauses rhyme in couplets (aa, bb, cc, dd, etc.). In this instance, however, the author has imposed upon himself the added difficulty of rhyming them in triplets (aaa, bbb, ccc, ddd, etc.).

² A city in east central Afghanistan, located on the Kabul-Kandahar trade route, near the border between Khorasan and India. It reached the peak of its prosperity from 350/962 to ca. 549/1155 under the Turkish Ghaznavid dynasty (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1048-1050).

³ For this star, see M2, n. 11, above. To trail one's robes over the stars means "to walk with a proud bearing."

⁴ Reading *naḥīda* with Ḍ, rather than *naḥīda* with W.

⁵ The name of a star in the left foot of Virgo.

only to light sleep, with no myrtle or oxeye⁶ to exude fragrance for me in their garden, while I mulled over death, remained on guard against passing away, and expected to hear the voice of the Angel of Death, until I happened to pass by a certain school that was crowded with men both on foot and on horseback, with guardians and sentinels, and lo, I beheld a master with a gentle voice, who was weeping and wailing, moaning and groaning. He was at one edge of the gathering he had attracted to himself, and had begun his lecture with clever items of warning and rare anecdotes of admonition, rising to the height and summit of speech as he declared [*wāfir*]:

Fun and gazing on amazing things attracted him, all the while that death and destruction were approaching.

He said: "I will repent⁷ in the month of Rajab," and Rajab arrived, but he did not stick to his principles.

Therefore, O deluded one, will veils avail you on the Day of Humiliation?⁸

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, the arrow of his speech pierced me, my fancy inclined me toward him, and I declared:

This is no rainless cloud nor stern, off-putting countenance; instead, he is a flowing raincloud, a fragrant perfume, and one inclining to compassion. Who will help me to meet him, and my eyes, to be filled with the sight of him; a pure and pious man in his stern disapproval of wrong?

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I stayed until his gathering had concluded, his bride had been unveiled, and his date cluster and palm shoot had ripened.

Then the master said:

O people, the more haste, the less speed. Righteous behavior can lead to corruption, a jackal can savage a lion, a highborn man does not disdain a lowly one, an intelligent man does not despise a poor one, a successful man overlooks not even the most insignificant

⁶ See M5, n. 8, above.

⁷ Reading *atūbu* with Ḍ, rather than *aṭūbu* with W.

⁸ Doomsday.

item,⁹ the superiority of wealth over poverty causes problems in this world, as do the nobility of the falcon over the hawk, and the pure blood-lines of black and sorrel horses. I am one of those who believe that poverty is a mark of distinction, that wealth is a sign of extravagance, and that a life of ease is a form of luxury. When disputation on this subject increased, allegations on either side proliferated, and arguments about it were aimed one against the other, I discarded wealth as one discards a worthless date-pit; I severed my ties to the misguided, I blunted the edge of his writing reed and inkwell, I set to work, I sundered the bonds of hope, I stopped singing *hazaj* and *ramal*¹⁰ songs, and I crossed a boundless, waterless desert, suffocated by its midday heat and hot wind, suffering from every specific and general form of exhaustion. In it I encountered three persons, all dazed and confused, swimming and wading through its midday mirage, and approaching and hovering near the waterhole of death. So I offered them the bonds of friendship, bore them upon my camels, and cast my arrows down before them, as a sign of peace. But I was unable to quench their thirst or satisfy their hunger, to lavish a ewe or a young spring camel upon them, or to alight in a summer or a spring encampment. Finally, I brought them to an inhabited area; to the site of a clan and a tribe, to the land of a leader and a ruler, but there was nobody in that tribe who was willing to restore a broken-down individual, to give rest to an exhausted one, or to release a captive from his fate, so that it would have become necessary to postpone well-being, the vast upland valley would have become narrow, and both the surfaces and patches of our garments would have been torn to shreds, were it not for one man alone among those tribesmen, who possessed wealth, honor, and prestige, as well as a firm tie and link to righteousness, for he sent his water to the weary wayfarers, he poured it out for them from¹¹ the bucket of his generosity, and he mustered his horsemen and infantry in defense of charity. Thus, he joined what had been severed, strung together what had been sep-

⁹ Literally, "the spot on a date-pit."

¹⁰ Two musical rhythms. See Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms* (Westport and London, 1981), pp. 94 and 276, respectively.

¹¹ Reading *min* with D, rather than *fī* with W.

arated, and united what had been dispersed, so that our wealth grew, his good deeds increased, and kindness made common cause with beauty. As a result, those miserly tribesmen had to remain satisfied with little as opposed to much, with the base as opposed to the noble, and with the rough as opposed to the smooth, whereas the three wayfarers dwelt under a shelter, enjoying their sustenance on a regular basis, both on even and on odd days, without having Fate seek them out in order to impose its vindictive or its vengeful streak upon them. Therefore, what recompense can equal that generous man's recompense, or what commerce can equal his commerce; rather, what accomplishment can equal his accomplishment and origin? Indeed, how can any act of mine compare with one of his, and where does my crown stand in comparison with his sandal? How different are the gazelle of the desert and the latter's male ostrich! The night traveler praises his own night travel,¹² the host lavishes his own hospitality, and the man who offers the bonds of his friendship, thereby strengthens his own ties and connections. Thus, on this day, I can observe the advantages of wealth and the wretched drawbacks of poverty, for the latter is the brother of restraint and captivity, it induces sorrow, and reveals faults and vices, it shoots its arrows and casts its stones from an unknown place of origin, disabling whomsoever entertains hope, restricting the doer of a deed, and bringing defectiveness to what is perfect, whereas, in contrast, wealth arouses the obscure, embellishes its bearer, and allows the camel to graze freely.

Then he pointed to some weak, destitute individuals and said:

As for these people, they have suffered from thirst for a long time, and both evening and daytime have abandoned them. In the interim, I have given you warnings and directions, taken the lead in rallying you, concealed and revealed matters, advanced fame and withdrawn it, lavished advice upon you without hoarding it up, done you a good deed without boasting, for each one of you is an intelligent and understanding man, a generous and continuous downpour, desirous and eager to do good. Therefore, a slight hint allows one to dispense with a blunt suggestion, while the generous

¹² Allusion to the Arabic proverb: "When dawn comes, people praise their night journey." See *M.A.*, II, 318, no. 2382.

man does not bestow a favor merely by bringing good news. My major concern is what is to become of you in the Hereafter, as well as what misfortune and good luck will offer you, and generosity and miserliness will provide you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he concealed himself in the crowd by plunging into its flood and thus retired to a sanctuary and protected area, while I kept him in my sight, but without being able to approach or draw near to him, although I followed in his tracks until, finally, I increased my pace and managed to catch up with him, saying:

Abū Ḥabīb, have you no fear or shame?

He replied:

O Sā'ib, what do you think of my melody, now that you have entered this place and wandered about in it? You have behaved justly rather than unjustly, in overlooking my identity,¹³ abandoning your initial impulse,¹⁴ and pretending not to know me, therefore, come with us so that we may spend the day in pleasant company, thus leaving the male to the female camel and the genus to the species.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I went with him until he led me to a house in which gaming and gambling were in full progress; a house filled with soberness and hangovers, along with the sound of the lute and the reed, and he said:

Choose—as you have been chosen—among these musical instruments and strings, for God is the Forgiver, the Concealer.

And while we were engaged in this conversation, I suddenly saw the three weak persons, upon whom he had managed to impose a worthless plan of action insofar as the goods they had obtained were concerned, thereby bringing down ruin and poverty upon them, for he had divided their property into shares, chalked it up to his own account and, with it, he had satisfied desire after desire of his for amusement. Then he invited me to join his drinking companions, but I said:

¹³ Literally, "lowering your eyelids."

¹⁴ Literally, "emptying your bowls."

I am hardly one for playing or drinking, having sealed the winecup with the lid¹⁵ of repentance, for I shun youthful folly, and no singer or musical performer moves me, now that I am well aware that death is drawing nigh.

Then he said, singing [*sarī*]:

Who will avail youthful folly now that you have given it up, O you who shun it? The musician has complained of your avoidance!

Let me give you my winecup today for, without a doubt, death will draw nigh tomorrow.

Do you not see that the winejug also fears death, since its tears flow from its spout?

Al-Sā'ib said:

I replied:

May your abundance not prosper, may your mischief not be successful, and may you not escape your own harm! Your origin is base, your scandalous speech is intolerable, while keeping one's distance from you in order to avoid you is an obligatory act. Will you never return to virtue? Is no one, be he awake or slumbering, safe from you? Do neither the departure of life nor the distressing nature of this age deter you?

He replied [*basīl*]:

How far from a wanton is a return to virtue, whenever a slumberer attracts the attention of his glance.

He is neither affected nor deterred by a painful Fate announcing its sorrowful news.

Let me first pay youthful folly its full due, after which you may reap my repentance and my return to virtue.¹⁶

Al-Sā'ib said:

¹⁵ Reading *fidām* with D, rather than *nidām* with W.

¹⁶ The line may also be interpreted: "Let me be the one who pays youthful folly its full due, while you repent and return to virtue." The line is, therefore, a deliberately ambiguous statement.

Then I left him, in view of the fact that he had decided to postpone his repentance, although my despair over, and hope for, him were in conflict with one another, since, in his case, the negative equaled the positive.¹⁷

¹⁷ Literally, “the lowland was equal to the highland.”

Maqāmah 17
(*The Studded*)¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I longed for my dearest homeland, and wished to repair to my beloved camelgrounds, wherein the goal of my youth and the playground of my loved ones was located; the place where the amulets of my childhood had been torn off² and the veils of my babyhood removed, “the land whose soil first touched my skin,”³ and whose midday mirage first hoisted my courage aloft.⁴ So I obeyed the call of my firm resolution, restrained those who criticized me, shunned all profits, explored deserts, vied in speed with al-Farqad⁵ in its heaven, and befriended the swift male ostrich in its wilderness. I became familiar only with the howl of the wolf, the neigh of the spirited steed, the reverberation of echoes, and the penetration of desert after empty desert, until I came to be fond of beasts of prey and became attached to the nobility of their natures. Hence I did not deprive the small lizard of its eggs, nor remove the baby ostrich from its nest, for I perceived that the hostility of wild beasts was minimal, that they were very straightforward as enemies, that they were very gallant as opponents, that their deception was minor, that they were very safe from misfortunes, that their protection was very generously granted when they were not actually rending one's hide, that they did not ignore one suffering from want, that they

¹ So called because, apart from the supererogative two-consonant rhyming of final words within each pair of clauses (*al-mahbūbi* / *al-mašbūbi*) this *maqāmah* exhibits a further two-consonant rhyming of penultimate words within each pair of clauses (*al-watani* *l-mahbūbi* / *al-'atani* *l-mašbūbi* [ab ab, cd cd, ef ef, etc.]).

² Children wore protective amulets until they reached adolescence, when these were removed. “The place where I rent my amulets” therefore means “the place where I grew up.”

³ A quotation from a poem by Riqā' ibn Qays al-Asadī. See Abū 'Alī al-Qālī, *Kitāb al-amālī* (No pl., 1916), I, 84.

⁴ The *sarāb* or midday mirage flattens images horizontally, whereas the *āl* or morning mirage elongates or raises them vertically. Thus there is a paradox, if not an inaccuracy, in the above statement.

⁵ One of two stars, *beta* and *gamma* of Ursa Minor. The word also designates the calf of a gazelle.

did not hold grudges, nor did they offend their rival, nor harbor resentment, nor make a show of criticism;⁶ on the contrary, each one went about its own business and caught its prey with its own teeth, leaving at dawn empty-bellied, and returning in the evening full-bellied, without surrendering to any hunter or fearing any demon. Finally, when I abandoned the desert, approached the settled land, joined groups of men in conversation, and perceived that I was in Ḥayf and Malal,⁷ I saw a rider slacken his reins while adjusting his turban, all the while that the midday mirage was elongating his image vertically,⁸ and the empty desert was ejecting him. Longing overcame my soul, but apprehension clouded my joy, until his form drew near, his distance became close, his faraway figure became distinct, and intimate conversation with him became possible. And lo, he was clothed in a threadbare garment, he displayed delightful speech, a clear tongue, a sharp-tipped spearhead, an unerring arrow, and a fertile intellect. He offered me a friendly greeting and spoke with affability, saying: "From whence has your appearance appeared,⁹ and what has your watering watered?¹⁰ There must be some good reason why a traveler crosses the desert, why one who wanders to and fro returns repeatedly to the stagnant waterhole,¹¹ why a solitary individual traverses the wasteland, why a naked man leads travelers, why an intruder penetrates the open road, and why a busying man keeps highwaymen busy."

Thereupon, I replied:

Mine are mere fortuitous circumstances, namely, a fate that ex-

⁶ *Naqd* ('criticism') also means 'cash'.

⁷ There are several places called Ḥayf, including one near Mecca (see *J.G.W.*, I, 230, and *passim*). Malal is also near Mecca (see *J.G.W.*, I, 144, and *passim*).

⁸ Since it is the *āl* or morning mirage that elongates images vertically, rather than the *sarāb* or midday mirage, which flattens images horizontally instead, here we have another example of narratorial inaccuracy, suggesting that the speaker is not telling the truth.

⁹ Reading *waḍaḥa l-wāḍiḥu* with Ḍ, rather than *wada'a l-wāḍi'u* with W, which does not rhyme with the following colon.

¹⁰ Reading *naḍaḥa l-nāḍiḥu* with Ḍ, rather than *naḍaja l-nāḍiḥu* with W, since the latter violates the requirements of the double rhyme.

¹¹ The word *al-ṣarāt* means literally "the stagnant waterhole." It is also the name of a stream flowing from the Euphrates in the direction of Baghdad. See al-Ḥimyarī, *Kitāb rawḍ al-miṣṭār fī ḥabar al-aqtār*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, 2d ed. (Beirut, 1980), p. 357.

poses one to risks, paths that branch out in different directions, goals that are difficult to attain, yearnings that long to be satisfied, a firm resolve that restrains, a joyous emotion that returns, a desire that leads on, a remote thing that draws near, and a rising star that sets. As for you, "What is behind you, O 'Iṣām"¹²—may the rope not become detached from your buckets?

He replied:

I am an arrow from an unknown source, an illusion that has wandered astray, a hovering bird, a wanderer floating in the mirage; one who first found a passionate beloved and then let her roam; who was roped like a freely grazing beast that is put to work. Behind me come some riders from Yemen; a company of eighty men going on pilgrimage to the Holy Sanctuary of Mecca, all determined to observe what is permitted by the Religious Law and all in a state of ritual purity.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I replied:

How different from Syria is Iraq, and agreement from disagreement! Would that in this tattered group there were someone to inform me about al-Riqqah the White;¹³ about al-Zawrā',¹⁴ al-Karḥ,¹⁵ al-Sarāt,¹⁶ and al-Marḥ,¹⁷ so that fighting might turn into reconciliation and isolated bands be reunited. I possess naught but the arrow with which I vie in shooting, the illusion with which I compete, the star against which I contend in night travel, the projectile I conceal, the darkness in which I cloak myself, and the sturdy she-camel I ride. I traverse the desert without a guide, I forecast rain from the sharp, notched sword of the lightning-bolt, I travel as does

¹² A proverb attributed to the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābiḡah al-Dubaynī, who addressed these words to 'Iṣām ibn Šuhayr, the chamberlain of al-Nu'mān, the last Laḥmid king of Ḥīra (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 840-842, and *M.A.*, III, 240, no. 3759). The meaning seems to be "What are you hiding?"

¹³ An epithet of Medina, as well as that of a town on the Euphrates (see *J.G.W.*, I, 74, and *passim*).

¹⁴ A district on the western edge of Baghdad (see *J.G.W.*, I, 678, and *passim*).

¹⁵ The name of a district in various cities of Iraq, among them Baghdad, Basra, and Samarra (see *J.G.W.*, I, 32, and *passim*).

¹⁶ A chain of mountains paralleling the coast of the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the Red Sea (see *E.I.* 2, I, 536a).

¹⁷ A river in Yemen (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 747a).

the lover, and fly as does the sparrow-hawk, to a homeland I have long been prevented from reaching, and to camelgrounds I have long avoided.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he flicked his tongue like a serpent, and offered an explanation containing both sections and passages in rhymed prose, licking his chops like a panther, while appearing to be as overwhelmed as is one who makes a mighty effort. Finally, he said:

How eloquent and stimulating is your statement, how fair is the sight of you, how polite are your manners, and how brilliant is your lightning-bolt! You have quenched the longing in my heart and shown originality in your composition, for I did not believe that the meadow of nobility could be so well watered, or that anything resembling your excellence could exist. I roam about the horizons, sniff my way through underground caverns, undergo hardships, plunge deeply into deserts, swallow bitter colocynth, arm myself against poisonous vipers, hoping only that my hand may eventually cling to a true and sincere friend; one full of affection and fairness, so that humankind will favor me with offspring, and Time, with a generous gift. I hope for a friend in whom I may see an attentive eyelid, a gnashing tooth, a drawn spearhead, a far-ranging eloquence, a penetrating sword, a contented leader; one to whom I may transmit my knowledge, and whom I may clothe in my forbearance, for if I find him to be trustworthy, and enjoy the fealty of his oath, then how welcome will he be for keeping faith with me and being solicitous of my secret! This will spare him any need to seek sustenance from the generous, to wait for the return of loaded caravans, to be humiliated in foreign kingdoms, and to plunge into dangerous deserts. Were it not for a certain agreement into which I have entered, and for a certain contract that I have made in private and in public, I would firmly undertake and resolve to appoint him my beneficiary, lest my good fortune go to waste, and I would further draw up a contract that would require both the witness and the witnessed to test the elixir, to mend the fracture, to extend hope, to procure the needful, to befriend the stranger, to clothe the destitute, to avoid luxury, to discourage extravagance, to encourage virtue, to be satisfied with what is sufficient, to be grateful to God, and to invoke His name continually. A mere hint can

replace a lengthy statement, while mere water can spare us the need for pure milk. He who puts his flock out to pasture does not hobble it, he who speaks eloquently is not always knowledgeable, he who breaks a promise is disloyal, and he who abides in a single place does not achieve his utmost potential. Not everyone who hears, understands, nor does everyone who receives advice, retain it. But I see that you have grasped the meaning and fathomed the purport of what I have confided to you, inasmuch as a single adviser spares one the need of any further advice, a single friend spares one the need of tens of them, a single pearl spares one the need of a unique necklace, and millet¹⁸ spares one the need of bread moistened with cold water.¹⁹

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon his words persuaded me as much as his prolixity wearied me. Nevertheless, he captivated me and beguiled my heart. I therefore said:

Indeed, these things you have mentioned are brilliant in their sufficiency and illustrious in their desirability; so much so, that the excellence of a swift steed is found wanting in comparison to them, as is the lavish donation of the very choicest part of flocks. Were it not for your firm resolve and necessary prudence, overwhelming desire, and consuming passion, I would turn away the reins of my thoroughbred steeds, and avert my lovelorn heart from you, yet the fragrance of your breeze, and the alternation between your amble and your trot are more useful than anything else one might desire, and more generous to men's souls and hearts. If only I could learn from whence you hail, and could inspect your axis and orbit.

Then he said [*mujtatt*]:

Far be those abodes, in which your enemies have alighted,
from you.

My kind has no home, and bears you no enmity.

In every land, a veil of majesty is drawn over me.

¹⁸ Reading *al-duratu* with D, rather than *al-darwatu* with W, since the latter does not rhyme.

¹⁹ Which is eaten by women to make them fat.

The leader of a camel-caravan urged you forward with his song, but his singing did not arouse you.

How often did the objects of your desire attract you, yet what did their appeal do for you?

You were deaf to them, yet did not the very echoes respond?

Your behavior is the result of your mindless attitude, by which mendicancy is disdained.

Have you not paid close attention to my words, the source of which is deceptive?

The earth may become fertile some day, and generous acts may well ensue.

In knowledge lies a cure, if in ignorance lies disease.

I have an obligation toward God, the moment for the discharging of which has arrived.

How can a fortunate one, to whom souls are sacrificed, be compared to me?

I seek the forgiveness of God for a sin, the commission of which was a mistake.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

By God, I shall not cease or desist even though the creditor should harrass me over the debt I owe him, for what are we to make of an important request, a fair intention, a lawful profit, an unerring arrow, a kindly guidance, and a breaking dawn? Therefore, accept me as an intimate companion who is not unreliable, as an ally who does not betray, as an assistant who does not flinch, as a helper who does not bar the door, as a bold person who does not hesitate, as an arrow that does not err, as a scion who does not disobey, and as a generous man who does not provoke.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus did he make me swear loyalty to him in the name of the Compassionate, while he too swore oaths of loyalty to me, so that we exchanged vows of sincere friendship and swore to be true to

one another. Then he led me toward the region of Syria,²⁰ rescuing me from the disrepute of the baseborn, making me suspicious of mankind, reminding me of the superiority of the horse's back to the camel's hump,²¹ making generous natures attractive, and the vices of flattery hateful to me, while holding at bay the vicissitudes of poverty and repelling the onslaughts of humiliation, promising abundant wealth and seeking refuge in God from exile and loss of property, until we reached the confines of Syria, and turned away from the oxe²² and the balsam of Mecca,²³ after having traveled for five nights, during which time we proceeded silently along our path, hardly having tasted any food, and hardly having eaten hastily of any trail mix along the way; hardly having slept a wink, and hardly having fasted, be it on fat or lean.²⁴ Then we halted next to a flooding river where we would be safe from any terrifying assailant. And when the barking of the dogs subsided and dawn appeared, my companion led beside him both a stout she-camel and a swift steed, skirting the encampment's bedding and its wooden structures. Then did I perceive the faint sound²⁵ he made, and wondered at his absence. And behold, he had already entered and crossed the river before reciting the brilliant first and second hemistiches of his poetry, for he now began to chant his odes and *raja*²⁶ poems, and to enumerate his promises and their fulfilment, declaring [*sarī*]:

Sā'ib, O Sā'ib, O Sā'ib, how long will your arrow continue to miss me?

²⁰ Earlier on, we were told that the stranger was leading a group of pilgrims to Mecca, whereas now, he is going in the exact opposite direction. This is another instance of narratorial inconsistency.

²¹ Horses were used in hunting and warfare, whereas camels were used in travel and transportation. The speaker is thus extolling heroic over mercantile values.

²² See M5, n. 8, above.

²³ *Amyris opobalsamum* is a fragrant tree growing in the middle, mountainous region of Yemen. The implication is, therefore, that the travelers have left behind the plains and mountains of Arabia.

²⁴ I.e., not having eaten anything at all.

²⁵ Reading *hiss* with D, rather than *jass* with W.

²⁶ A meter that was frequently viewed by medieval prosodists as having a low or substandard status (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 375-379).

How strange you are, for you are one whom no faultfinder has ever faulted.

How can you expect to obtain wealth from your friend, when he is so eager to obtain wealth for himself?

How many tricks and deceptions do I hide up my sleeve, such that those present and those absent are reduced to despair over them.

How many a firm resolve did the elixir break down, so that both those who come and those who go perished because of it.

O object of desire that detracts from mankind, so that no unerring marksman has ever hit its mark.

No holy man ever obtained it, neither did a sinner or a penitent ever obtain it.

How often have I deceived an intelligent, freeborn man, and how often have I, a gray-haired elder, beguiled men's minds for love of it.

No wonder you spent the night desirous of it, while a traveler traversed the heart of the desert.

Hence, how many a blind man like you did it mock, so that his body now dissolves with grief.

Has one who arouses suspicion not made you wary of mankind's trickery, even though you are a man who surpasses all mankind?

Al-Sā'ib said:²⁷

I then realized that these were the diabolical, inhuman deceptions of al-Sadūsī, and declared: "Some trials are quite easy to bear, tribulations can be very useful, and endurance is most appropriate and prudent in this instance." I turned away from him and added: "Not a sprinkling; not even a trickle of magnanimity is to be expected from him!"

²⁷ From this point on, the *maqāmah* lacks the penultimate 'studded' rhymes regularly encountered above.

Maqāmah 18
(*The Embroidered [Girdled]*)¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed me and said:

I was in the prime of my youth and adolescence, and in the tender flower of my amorousness, having removed my halter and all my restraints, and mastered eloquence and the art of prevarication. I triumphantly grasped the pennant in my firm right hand, and achieved my goal by every means, both lean and fat, for there was no mount of pleasure whose reins were not in my hands, and no path to diversion that I was not responsible for following. I knew only good fortune as my companion, and traveled by night accompanied only by good luck, so that if I had summoned the stars, the pearls of their necklace would have been scattered, or if I had crossed boundaries, my control over them would have been obvious. But eventually my life dried up, its wood withered, Time became harsh, the stars of its good fortune set, my gown wore out and became tattered, and my youth departed without bidding me farewell, so that waterholes and paths to water became troubled, riverbeds and mouthfuls of water became narrow, the Book of Reckoning² decreed an end to all companionship for me, my soul became contracted within the garb of anxiety, protective morning and afternoon shades shrank away, encamped nomads and tribes on the move avoided me, my friend and companion became cruel, and all my ilk and kind flew off. In what a wretched state of loneliness did I remain by reason of Fate, experiencing every kind of misery because of it, so that my nature insisted on hankering after travelers who drink rainwater, and my tears insisted on flowing before whoever arrived and departed, while I reproached myself for the delay in my repentance, and blamed myself for my tardiness in blaming myself, until I wandered by a circle whose group had congregated, a party whose tears were being scattered, and a standing orator

¹ Alternate titles found in different manuscripts. They are used to describe the fact that, in this *maqāmah*, the last three words of each clause rhyme with the last three of the following one (abc abc, def def, ghi ghi, etc.).

² In which all predestined events are recorded.

who had unsheathed a sword of rebuke, honed chapters and paragraphs of speech, and was saying:

How long will hope and expectation hinder you, when delay and postponement do not adorn you? Life hastes away like a fleeting courser; youth escapes like a runaway slave; delusion dupes you and comes to your encounter; joy bids you adieu and is hostile to you. Nay, by the Raiser and Builder of the heavens, the Taker and Receiver of our death rattle, you are very much confused; caught in the snare of disasters, and approaching the waterholes of death, to which you go down to drink as does the thirsty sand-grouse, and which you pursue as the ignorant pursue passion. And yet, none of your good deeds will be in vain, while none of your errors, be they small or great, will be exempted, for they are all recorded and contained in the Book of Reckoning; examined and tallied up in the final account. You behave as though you had been granted a safe-conduct by Fate, or as if you had judged the expanse of Time on the basis of your limited day and month. This is not so, for months and years have launched successive attacks against you, while new moons and changes of circumstance have afflicted you by turns. Every day you bid farewell to a beloved member of your family, and consign a close relative to the grave. You pile and scatter earth over him, and you prolong your lamentation as you mourn for him. Then you advance toward the satisfaction of your own pleasure, and toward the temptations of this world, and you are captivated by a gentle breeze and fragrant wind. Soon, you are attired in the world's rays and light, and you forget your dear one's death and life, neglecting to meditate on that one who has rested his head upon the earth and under the tombstone; who is cradled in an open, empty desert; who lies all alone, in his grave and resting place, by himself, either in the highlands or the lowlands, with no companion save constant right-guidance, and no friend save his own successful effort until, when death, the aggressor, pounces upon you, and your final end, the tester, tests you, you wake up and gaze around you with an exhausted glance, dangling like a weak consonant,³ and are of no more use than a candlewick or a worthless spot on a date-pit, since you have garnered nothing at all, whether it be

³ In Arabic grammar, "weak consonants" are those that disappear in pronunciation, although they are, etymologically, part of a word's root.

significant or beneath contempt. You despair, and yet, how can you go back in time and repent? You lament, yet far from you is the good intention of turning back from sin [*kāmīl*].

Far from the sin of the wrongdoer is regret, though in committing terrible sins, he strays from the right path.

They said: "He is free, allowed to roam over the broad earth." Yet how can he possibly be free, when he is bound by the shackles of error?

O sinner, you do not know how hot the live embers of *ḡaḍā* wood⁴ are, yet the thorns of the tragacanth will be soft as cotton in comparison with your forthcoming punishment.

Try to turn your grief into the repentance of one who would make a fresh start, for remorse and regret may well prove beneficial to you.

How excellent was the sorrow that joined Jacob to right-guidance, until Joseph summoned him to safety.⁵

Al-Sā'ib said:

In this way, his speech pierced my heart, while his blame penetrated my innermost mind, insofar as he reminded me of death and the hereafter, and made the medley of confusion seem as clear to me as the morning mirage, so that I decided to repent and turn over a new leaf; I forsook sin and slumber, looked for a gap in the crowd through which I might reach him, while avoiding the mob that thickly surrounded him. But the rising dust had hardly settled, and the intervening crowds had not yet departed, when some boys arrived, enveloped in ragged garments, and burdened down by beggary and poverty, before whom their leader was cooing like a male dove; their scout was proudly trailing the edge of his robe behind him, like a man of firm, compact build. He continually honored the master's questions, while approaching him, being modest in his words, and praising him, until he reached the group I was attending, and loosened the reins of his labored tears. Thereupon,

⁴ See M6, n. 14, above.

⁵ A reference to the story of Joseph, as it is narrated in Qur'ān, 12.

the master turned his head toward him, approached him, and said:

I remember the time we spent together, O you, who were once close to the summit and apex of excellence, and once promoted fortune and wealth. O you, who once grazed upon sweet-tasting plants, whence have you come, and what news do you bring? O impoverished man, where are your relatives, brothers, sons, and cousins? Your supporters are neither lowly nor few in number, nor is your sharp sword notched or blunted, nor is your tribe as lowly as the mushrooms that grow wild in the desert, nor is your day like a crack in a jug of water. How swiftly has Time aimed at you, without missing, and how speedily has deprivation summoned you, without delay. It has been innovative in its act; it has sped swiftly and come close in its destruction, nor is that time distant and by-gone, nor that reckoning singular and departed.

Then the newcomer said:

Those numerous and evident years and conspicuous nights and months of hope did indeed transpire, yet the days and stages of the journey followed upon one another, and the years and ages succeeded one another; they kindled a fire for discords, raised a beacon for tribulations, caused the simoon⁶ of Fate's misfortunes to blow, they aroused barren wonders, caused the teats of old feuds to flow, and aroused the swords of trials, so that they allowed no inherited or acquired form of wealth to endure and they beat the glorious and distinguished man that I am on the skull.

Al-Sā'ib said:

The master considered the poor man's situation to be lamentable, and marveled; he magnified and honored the man's status, and said to the assembly [*sarī*]:

A group has come to you requesting a gift, therefore, take advantage of their coming.

Time has severed their tent ropes, and slapped them on the nape of the neck for a long time, in order to rebuke them.

How often did it once make an inexhaustible flow of milk

⁶ A hot, suffocating, sand-laden desert wind of Arabia and North Africa (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 1056).

available to them, but today it forbids them its large drinking-cup.

How often are they seen serving their passions, hoping that their speed will lead them toward generosity.

Fate let them graze freely, yet how many a free grazer is such that Time has bound his foot in its fetter.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the onlookers sought to receive the unfortunate newcomers, so that the stigma of stinginess was stripped from their natures.⁷ The beggars collected the modest amounts of money they were offered, and removed their ragged and tattered garments. Then they plunged into that sympathetic group of bystanders, and disappeared in a sudden flash. In the meantime, the master was trapped before my watchful eyes, and captured by the reins of my noble steed, for I did not cease to follow him, trotting and approaching him, blaming and censuring him at length, until I caught up with him, although I never imagined I would do so, and I upbraided him ceaselessly. And lo, he bared a sharp fang, and revealed a renewed youth, so I asked:

Are you the cunning deceiver Abū Ḥabīb, the departing traveler endowed with white hair yet youthful flirtatiousness?

He replied:

Indeed I am, and turned away from me, saying [*ramal*]:

The former is the correct information about me, and the latter are my deceptions, so take or leave them as they stand.

All of Time is inventive, so imitate it with an invention of your own.

By God, what day goes by in which a brave youth does not encounter a disastrous calamity?

Whenever this age comes up with a wonder, I come up with an even more wondrous or more inventive one.

⁷ I.e., they became blameless by giving alms to the beggars.

Whoever proudly confronts Time with his nose in the air will end up confronting it with his nose cut off.

So descend, since you are intelligent, to the lowlands and to the low hills, to dwell among lizards and, at times, among strong young bucks.

Do not worry about how you obtain the objects of your desire, but restrain and control yourself before them.

Hide your claim to be So-and-So from So-and-So, for wretched is the luck of the claimant who is boastful.

The *dirham* a man gives—trust me in this matter—represents an honorable deed, redolent of musk or saffron.

Then al-Sā'ib said:

So I despaired of reforming him, ceased desiring his welfare, pitied his lack of good deeds and the length of his impudent tongue, and exclaimed:

If only he were given to success, and obeyed a sincere and solicitous advisor!

Maqāmah 19¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

When I took off the garment of youth, removed the splendor of its robe, came to be dressed in the tatters of old age, and found myself lost in the deserts and sands of confusion, I bade farewell to passion and youth, faced the blowing of the south and east winds, and came from the white-laned city² to the confines of the west,³ desiring to perform my religious duty, whereupon I devoted myself to the saddle-girth and the breast-rope of the camel, until I found myself in the land of Egypt, hoping for success and victory over my fate. Then, I began to tour its ruins and traces, and to examine its erased monuments and vestiges. While I was contemplating the Pyramids, and gazing at their forms and shapes, in order to humble and humiliate my soul, thereby making it hope for and expect pardon, and while the pearls of my tears were being scattered and their copious showers were being shed, I heard a loud voice, toward which people were flocking in bunches and groups, as that voice declared:

Where is the one who erected his lofty buildings, who ruled with arrogance, who disbelieved and rebelled, who deviated from the right path and abandoned his proper goal? Where is Pharaoh of the tent-pegs,⁴ and Kan'ān,⁵ the one endowed with military baggage and equipment? Where are his disobedience and obstinacy now? Where are his retinue and troops? They have vanished without a trace, while their group was shattered like a bone and, did it find a bonesetter? Every one of them is extinct in the place where he fell, be he a leader or a chieftain. Indeed, their extinction was just in its equality; a firm sentence, a brilliant judgment, a victori-

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 20 in D.

² A reference to Zaragoza. See "Preliminary Study," n. 142, above.

³ I.e., Morocco. A pilgrim coming from al-Andalus would, in fact, have had to travel south to Morocco, and then turn east on his way to Egypt, which is what the reference to facing the south and east winds seems to suggest.

⁴ A Qur'ānic epithet. See Qur'an, 38:12, 89:10.

⁵ On Kan'ān (Canaan), the eponymous ancestor of Northern Semites as he is viewed in the Arabic tradition, see *E.I.* 2, IV, 528.

ous fate, an overwhelming command, and a rapacious destiny. These are their remains and traces, where then are their bodies and forms? You walk past tombs and graves, yet fail to meditate on disasters and misfortunes. How amazing that anyone would be heedless of them or shun them when he is in the race-track and fairgrounds of death. O heir to dynasties and possessor of kingdoms, are you not a mortal and the son of a mortal, proceeding toward your inevitable destination, where you will be deprived of any helper or supporter? Soon, tribes and clans will forsake you, and festivals and good tidings will be bereft of you. Then, you will be interrogated concerning minute details, and you will be blamed for the victim you dispossessed and for the one you murdered. Where is the builder of the Pyramids? Rather, where is the committer of sins? You walk past the Pyramids as if you were moths, and busy yourselves in earning profits and in squabbling, little realizing that the Pyramids are a *memento mori*, that they are exhortations made both evening and morning, that they were erected for you by Time, as admonishing examples that the ages have rendered proverbial. How many a man says: "In the Pyramids lie admonitions, and beneath them lies a message that reports have recorded as a warning." Yet talk and information about them have sufficed him. Here they stand in your very midst, publicizing and pouring forth the wisdom of the Creator. You pay no heed to them, and fail to distinguish them from a dunheap. Of course not, for man stands in greatest awe of what is distant from him, whereas the arrow of the one who is near, and falls short of his aim, is most disappointing. Man deems what is distant to be marvelous, out of curiosity and expectation, yet despises what is near, feeling no hurry, biding his time. Everything is novel and strange, and whoever is summoned by Good Fortune hears and responds. By God, how would you fare, were it not for your humble obedience, and for the leaders in command of you, a shower from whose clouds protects you, and a postponement on whose part averts the ravages of Time from you, so that your bare neck has come to be adorned by them, until you have become fortunate thanks to your rulers' divine nobility and their 'Alid caliphate,⁶ for which the Lord of Majesty chose you as subjects, so

⁶ The Fātimids, who ruled Egypt during the time of al-Saraqūṣī, were Šī'is

that you might be favored with distinction, since Fate watches over that caliphate, and Good Fortune disputes and contends concerning it, arriving at and presenting decisive, incisive, and subtle arguments in that caliphate's favor, since God is not One to ruin His sincere supporters, or cause harm to the lineal descendants of His prophets?

Al-Sā'ib said:

And while he was ambling and galloping in his speech, and suckling and nursing on the milk of his words, a summoner from the Sultan summoned him,⁷ and we had no doubt but that a herald of death had announced his demise, for he was escorted away, while we followed after him, hoping for the Sultan's good graces toward him, yet fearing the wicked insinuations of the devil. He remained concealed from us for some time, and fully occupied himself with courting the royal favor. Then, suddenly, he reappeared before us, wearing a fragrant perfume, riding a splendid mount, dressed in luxurious clothes, bearing magnificent gifts, and having secured a lofty rank and an ample glory. I was among those who followed him, for I was familiar both with his summer and his spring encampments.⁸ Then he eyed me with his glance, turned the reins of his thoroughbred steed in my direction, and said to me:

Are you a Syrian at times, and an Egyptian at others; sometimes a Kufan, and sometimes a Basran?⁹

So I replied:

You damned bastard, I have never seen a genius who can invent lies better than you can, or a hungry man who can achieve your degree of satiation or quenching. Your talent is enough to last you

and, therefore, claimed descent from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the fourth Orthodox caliph.

⁷ For the Fātimid Caliph of Egypt to have overheard the speaker's sermon would be highly unlikely, since his palace was on the east side of the Nile, while the Pyramids are on its west side. This seems to be another instance of narratorial inconsistency. Furthermore, the preacher should have been summoned by the Caliph. The use of the word Sultan, which implies secular power only, to the exclusion of spiritual authority as invested in the caliphate, is rather peculiar, and may suggest a further inconsistency.

⁸ I.e., "I recognized him."

⁹ I.e., "one who harbors loyalty to no group."

as long as you live, and will bring you easement of your grief and sorrow!

Then he answered [*basīl*]:

When merriment and wine call, no amount of silver or real estate can survive.

With the passage of time, often do saffron-perfume and musk come to be despised by tar.

What am I to do, when my desire is urgent, but despite my youth, I quarrel with it?¹⁰

The very devotion of whoever devotes himself to the winejar and to young women will consume all his wealth.

How excellent is a freeborn man¹¹ who aims at my need with the arrow of his generosity, for then I will experience no need.

He scorns the entire earth in his generosity, while it richly deserves his scorn.

He has flung over his shoulder a mantle whose inscription reads: *Orthodoxy and Dignity*.¹²

His generosity weighed down my back to such an extent that my side and spine complained of the burden.

Al-Sā'ib said:¹³

So I said to him:

You have escaped and gotten away, but what were you awarded and granted? How intensely you have won over men's souls and desires, forcing kings and sovereigns to surrender. Your magic is evident, and your victim is easily duped.

Then he smiled at me, and said [*ḥafīf*]:

¹⁰ In *Ḍ*, this line is the last in the poem.

¹¹ *Ḍ* reads "a youth of Qurayš" (the tribe of the Prophet), instead of "a freeborn man."

¹² This and the previous line are inverted in *Ḍ*. For a Sunni speaker to refer to a Šī'i Imām as an embodiment of Orthodoxy (*hudā*) is the height of irreverence.

¹³ From this point to the end of the *maqāmah* some manuscripts record a variant version that coincides almost verbatim with the end of M28, and that has been included in italics, below.

Never reveal a secret, even if an oath requires you to do so,
For all matters have a left hand, and all matters have a right
hand.

A secret you reveal, and a promise you make, should be judged
equally.

Speaking the truth is an act of piety, yet where is the man who
does not lie?

Among men some are lean, and among men some are fat.

Every rough stretch of road is treacherous; where is the loyal
and the faithful man?

Don't speak to me of Time, for Time will be my guarantor.

Beware the onslaughts of Time, for Time lies in wait for you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I took his words to lie somewhere between good advice and
sound guidance, on the one hand, and blame and threat, on the
other, and responded saying:

May you be gratified by your cunning, and blessed in the pursuit
of your prey. The Sultan is an ocean of generosity; eloquence is
magic, and you are preeminent in it. Therefore, let the rainclouds
be generous to you, and let no promise made to you, or any rights
due you, remain unfulfilled.

Then he turned away from me well satisfied, and said:

May I not lack your acute discernment, God willing.

Alternate Ending

The preacher then added:

*The Sultan expressed his gratitude for my praise, he lauded my efforts, drew
me near to him, promised me power, and asked me to recite descriptive poetry,
which I did; he then engaged me in discussion, and I was fair in my opinions;
he sought my guidance, so I offered it to him; he asked me to improvise, so I
recited [basīṭ]:*

O you who have a high-ranking abode, and whose forefather is 'Alī al-Riḍā,¹⁴

It is enough for the one who has triumphed that you see him close to that glory.

The matter is a clear one, not obscure, for when dawn appears, it is very clear.

You are a rain unto mankind; a first and a second, lasting spring rain.

All the members of your lineage are guardians of Orthodoxy, and all of you are ornaments to mankind.

If the Banū Hāšim¹⁵ unveil their high rank, who are the Banū Tamīm,¹⁶ and who are the Banū Balī?¹⁷

I nurture, for the family of the Prophet, a love in comparison to which, every grief is insignificant.

I have plunged my bucket down a well whose water no bucket can exhaust.

Would that I had a share in that well's generosity, for you, O son of Orthodoxy, are wealthy.

The preacher said:

Then a fit of Hāšimi munificence overwhelmed the Sultan, a frisson of Fāṭimi enthusiasm moved him, and he said:

Give me more, O generous man, may both the coward and the brave sacrifice themselves for you.

The preacher continued:

So I said [baṣī]:

¹⁴ He was the eighth Imām of the Twelver Šīrah. See *E.I.* 2, I, 399-400. This creates a further inconsistency in the narration, for the Fāṭimids were Ismā'ilis, not Twelver Šīris, and claimed descent from Ismā'il ibn Ja'far al-Šādiq, not from 'Alī al-Riḍā. Either al-Sadūsī is lying about what he said to the Caliph, or he has gotten his Šīris hopelessly confused. A rough parallel to this gross confusion would be to have a Lutheran praise the Pope for upholding Bulgarian Orthodox doctrine!

¹⁵ I.e., a descendant of Hāšim ibn 'Abd Manāf, great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad. See *E.I.* 2, III, 260.

¹⁶ See M1, n. 12, above.

¹⁷ See M13, n. 20, above.

The pure and true one exalted you, and God honors and welcomes you!

O son of Orthodoxy and Glory, is it true that you are the hidden Imām¹⁸ whom Orthodoxy and Glory conceal in secrecy?

You are descended from noble clansmen, all of them pure and loyal.

Whoever compares you to humankind, compares the ocean to a few paltry drops of water.

Glory to you, O descendant of the Virgin;¹⁹ glory to you, for you possess no equal and no one possesses your worth.

Spring and summer are pleasant thanks to you, and they cause pure milk to flow,

Therefore, don anew the soft mantle of Majesty, as long as highborn and sincere men²⁰ endure.

The preacher said:

Then he gave me a garment, cheered my heart, profusely poured out his wealth, and gave me a servant and a mount. As for me, here you see me in this state, while "the night traveler praises his night travel."²¹

Al-Sā'ib said:

He gave me a cut from the largesse he had received, and said:

Beware lest you blow the lid; depart instead in safety and security, whether you turn left or right, if God Almighty so wills.

¹⁸ A reference to the Šī'ī belief in the twelfth Imām Muḥammad, who is said to have disappeared in 264/878 in a cave within the great mosque at Samarra. He is considered immune from death and in a temporary state of occultation. In due time he will appear as the Mahdī ('divinely guided one') to restore "true" Islam, conquer the whole world and usher in a short millennium before the end of things (see Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 7th ed. [London, 1961], p. 441; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991], p. 182). But this is a Twelver, not an Ismā'īlī Šī'ī doctrine. Fāṭimid caliphs regarded themselves as visible, not hidden *imāms*, and several even claimed to be the Mahdī.

¹⁹ I.e., Fāṭimah, daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad, and wife of 'Alī, from whom the Šī'ī Imāms claim descent. On Fāṭimah preserving her virginity by giving birth through her thigh, see *E.I.* 2, II, 847.

²⁰ *Al-ṣummu wa-l-ṣaḥf* may also be translated as "lofty mountains and boulders."

²¹ A reference to the Arabic proverb: "When dawn comes, the night traveler praises his own night travel." See *M.A.*, II, 318, no. 2382.

Maqāmah 20
(*Wine*)¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I had bidden farewell to youth and passion, drained its last remaining drops, decided to turn contritely toward God and to abstain from all sin, turned my heart and breast toward repentance, emptied out winecups and drinks of wine, and put away musical instruments and the din they produced, but when the strength of red wine assaulted me, and the war of my passion conceived after barrenness, I returned to it after having been divorced from it, meeting its frown with a jovial countenance, for it was as if wine were a charming young girl who was the very embodiment of passion and love, imposing trials and tribulations on her lover for, indeed, how she avoided him, refusing to reveal herself and appear, veiling herself in bubbles, while refusing her favors as lovers are wont to do! Yet from the interstices of her veil she emitted rays that left my heart distracted, for I saw no one superior to her, having encountered no one dearer to me before her; none more difficult to win over for one desiring her, or easier for every refractory sinner to obtain. I was reminded, by her brilliance, of the flowers described by Abū Tammām² and of Hammām's Nawār;³ of the remorse that overwhelmed him, and of the subsequent regret he experienced. Of little avail was remorse to al-Kusa'ī,⁴ or blame to al-Raba'ī!⁵ After some difficulty her rebelliousness and resistance subsided, and it became possible to unveil her without alarming her, for she lowered her veil, turned aside the reins of her former refusal, proved

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 19 in D.

² 'Abbāsīd poet (188/804-231/846). See *E.I.* 2, I, 150-155; Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām & the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden, 1991).

³ Hammām is the Umayyad poet al-Farazdaq (d. 110/728), who repented of having repudiated his wife Nawār, and mourned her inaccessibility to him, in his poetry. See *E. I.* 2, II, 788-789, and cf. M30, n. 62, below.

⁴ Allusion to a proverb "More remorseful than al-Kusa'ī," referring to a man who is reputed to have repented for destroying his bow after having failed to hit his target. See *M.A.*, III, 398, no. 4291.

⁵ Not identified.

delicious to her drinker and inhaler, and yearned for her suitor and lover, so that her spirit commingled with my soul, abandoning my life as a bough to the blowing wind, smiling so as to reveal clear teeth,⁶ and leaving in contempt the most honorable covenant and relationship. Hence, I did not cease to thirst passionately for monasteries, while moving among companions excellent as swift steeds and wild asses. I found myself halfway between soberness and a hangover, when I was driven to the banner of the wine merchant,⁷ at a time when night had let down the hems of its robe, lulled its censurers to sleep, caused its stars to set, put its meteorites to flight, lowered the flag of its Pleiades, dispersed its hidden stars like droppings, caused its shining stars to rise, caused its Milky Way to flow like a river that filled its basins, fertilized its thickets, obstructed its horizons, erased its tunnels, revealed its sultan to be a Black, donned its jet black mantle, unfurled its flags, and passed around both feathered and unfeathered divining arrows. So I knocked on a door of that monastery, engaging in battle with the waves of night's open sea, while none but the flash of white wine and the fragrance of an oblique wind guided me to it. Then, after a while, an answerer responded, saying: "Whatever brought you here must be remarkable." I replied: "I am a dissolute Sabian,⁸ and a well-to-do, wholesale purchaser of wine," while the lassitude of drowsiness slowed him down, and he swayed like a garden branch in motion. So I said: "I would sacrifice myself for you, O drowsy sleeper, and slayer with the lances of your glances, who reveal your beauty, but conceal your good deeds; withholding your virtues, whilst lavishing only your fetid waters." But he did not deign to reply, nor was he guided in the direction of proper conduct, other than by pointing to some winejars shining like luminous gaps between the clouds, greeting me with a winecup, bowing his head, beckoning with his

⁶ *Habab* can mean both 'teeth' or 'bubbles'. Hence this is a pun in which the bubbles on the surface of the wine are compared to bright teeth.

⁷ Wine-merchants used to raise a banner outside their establishments in order to indicate the availability of wine.

⁸ The Sabians were a religious group centered in Harrān, in northern Iraq. They were reputed to have converted from paganism to the Sabian religion for reasons of expediency and were, therefore, considered insincere and unreliable in their beliefs. See *E.I.* 2, VIII, 672-675.

glance, and overwhelming me with his refinement. It was not long before he was followed by a woman pale as to the only parts of her veiled face that were visible, namely those around the eye, and white as to her veils, such that she could hardly tell Ma‘add⁹ from ‘Adnān,¹⁰ since only the winejug or the winejars nourished her. Then she revealed a face like the dawn, showing no need of a light or a lamp. She greeted and welcomed me, dragged and trailed the train of the robe of her generosity, and swore by the Messiah, saying: “How about going to a spacious abode, and to a white wine pure as the eye of a cock and as healing as falling raindrops, or to a deep red wine dark as a crow, or to a yellow wine bright as the midday mirage, as well as to obedience and submission, acquisition and generosity?” So I went with her to an assembly with spacious courtyards, a lofty structure filled with many men of obscure origin, that had been preferred among all gatherings and honored for the beauty of its mantles. Broad were its courtyards; marvelous, its musical notes and melodies. Then I looked right and left and perceived only a violent blow or a clamorous sound; only winecups, the drinking of wine, music, and a din. Then she said: “Don’t you see that each man is with his own kind, and everyone is doing as he pleases? Therefore, choose whom and what you desire, for a man who is alone is unsociable. Turn wherever you wish, and tell me what you possess and what you have earned.” So I replied: “I am inclined toward mature, middle-aged men, avoiding rugged grounds in favor of smooth ones, and spare me every rude ignominy. As for what I have earned and possess, or divulged and concealed about my affairs: I do not draw milk until I have first patiently tied the camel’s teat to prevent its young from suckling,¹¹ I am generous without limits, and make no matter public unless I have first cautiously kept it secret, nor do I make up my mind about anything until I have carefully considered it.” Then I gave her the money and clothes I had with me, thus removing from her heart all misgivings and confusion concerning my ability to pay. Thereupon, she said: “I ask your forgiveness for my rudeness, and pray that one

⁹ Son of ‘Adnān. See M12, n. 6, above.

¹⁰ The ancestor of the Northern Arabs. See *E.I.* 2, I, 210.

¹¹ I.e., “I never order anything unless I am able pay for it.”

such as you will overlook my offense.¹² The only reason for my rudeness is that an old man came to us by night some time ago, claiming to be the lord of Oman. Then, after a few nights, he claimed that he was poor and had dependents, except that he was under the influence of wine, and lacking no form of merriment and musical entertainment. He possesses all the outstanding culture, elevated understanding, obvious refinement, flashing glances, clever anecdotes and education, and trains and fringes of the robe of knowledge that you might desire, hence he did not cease to attract all those assembled, to shake the dust from their saddle-blankets, to advance from one group of drinkers to another, and from one kind of reveler to another. But when we requested from him the money he had, in payment for our services, he refused his ‘candy’, got on his high horse, and turned his neediness into a retinue of supportive servants and a defending army, whereupon everyone with whom he had previously associated interceded on his behalf, and everyone whom he had deceived and duped became fondly attached to him. Thus, he remained a hostage to these winejars, sharing them with us as part of our group.”

Al-Sā’ib said:

Then I said:

I would like to witness some of his clever anecdotes and tales, to enjoy carousing in his company, and to savor the information he has to impart.

So she conducted me to an assembly-room covered with layers of rugs, containing furnishings embroidered down their length, a silver winecup, a jug, a servant-boy, and a Christian grandee. And there was al-Sadūsī, whose hangover overwhelmed him, while his ass was waiting for him. Then, after a while, he recovered from his drunkenness, regained consciousness, and indited, saying [*ḥafīf*]:

Give me a second drink, both of you, for the stars are motionless; either weary of night-travel, or drowned;

Spending the night in confusion without a guide, or as if their path and roadway were blocked.

¹² Here, the rudeness of the tavern-maid consists in asking for payment in advance, and thereby treating her customer with suspicion and disrespect.

Give me to drink from the hands of a gazelle-fawn whose charms
make for a delightful harvest. How excellent are the wine and
lip-dew gathered from him!

Whenever one group brings out wine, another group leaves
me, for love of him.

If he appears, his face is a full, shining moon or, if he bows, his
figure is a leafy branch,

So that there is a Spring, consisting of his cheeks, for my glance
to gaze upon, and a conflagration, ignited by the pupils of his
eyes, for my heart to burn in.

He possesses dignity, honor, and pride; the fact that his ances-
tor was Luḍarīq¹³ has made him conceited,

So that when the Christians tally their glories, he figures among
them as a boy of noble birth and descent.

The illustrious Caesars reared him, so that the Christian gran-
dee, in lusting after him, has betrayed them.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

¹³ He is either Roderic, the last Visigothic King of Hispania (see W, p. 198, n. 65), who was defeated by Tāriq ibn Ziyād at the battle of "Río Salado" (identified as Río Barbate), in 92/711 (the vanquished Visigoth's body was never found, and his disappearance generated legends), or Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, el Cid Campeador (d. 492/1099), (see D, p. 249, n. 1). The latter was a member of the predatory, prosperous, upstart, and self-made nobility of Castile and, therefore, far less illustrious than the Visigothic king Roderic. Below, the boy addressed in this poem is said to be descended from the Roman emperors (Caesars) and is thereby portrayed as being of royal blood. I am thus inclined to agree with W, that the Visigothic King, not the Castilian hero championed by D, who was of humble origins, since he was a miller on the river Ubierna, is intended in this context. On the Cid in real life, as opposed to the legend, see Joseph J. Duggan, "Legitimation and the Hero's Exemplary Function in the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland*," *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. John Miles Foley (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1981), pp. 217-234; "A False *Sentencia de Toledo*, the Legend of the Cid's Illegitimacy, and the Question of his Nephews," *Romance Philology*, XLVIII:2 (1994), 95-110; Samuel G. Armistead, "Dos tradiciones épicas sobre el nacimiento del Cid," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, XXXVI:1 (1988), 219-248; *La Tradición épica de las "Mocedades de Rodrigo"* (Salamanca, 2000).

Master Abū Ḥabīb, don't you recognize your drinking companion or remember your former acquaintance?

He replied:

Are you not Abū l-Ġamr, the man of rank and high command?
And he composed, saying [*ḥafīf*]:

I have not forgotten my sincere friend of long acquaintance, for the religion of the noble person consists in his keeping his obligations.

Nevertheless, wine has blunted the edge of my sword, whereupon they blamed me, though hardly aware of the full extent of my disobedience.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I spent days and nights with the master, mounting the summits and heights of merriment, while we were delighted with every gazelle-fawn and singer, and overwhelmed by every melody and song. The master fell passionately in love with that servant-boy, and made public his longing and desire for him. From among his clever utterances about the boy come the following words [*basīl*]:

O gazelle fawn whom coyness adorns, both the wandering and the encamped tribe long for you.

What talent and what beauty are yours, for which Talent and Beauty themselves long!

As soon as he became aware that I was lovesick, pride and coyness overcame him.

In love, a promise is tiresome. He has never known what avoidance and boredom are like.

I said to him: "By the Messiah, grant me a love union." He replied: "That is as impossible as the appearance of a weak consonant!"¹⁴

¹⁴ A consonant that forms part of the root of a given word, but that is elided in the word's pronunciation, and hence does not "appear" in it (cf. M18, n. 3, above).

How dear is invoking the Messiah, yet I, who am a crescent moon, will still play hard to get.”

They said: “A love union with an infidel is forbidden.”¹⁵ Perhaps, in a case of extreme passion, it might be permitted.

How excellent is the winecup offered by his hands, when his cool lip-dew mingles with it.

From among the master’s words about the boy come the following [*tawīl*]:

He is a tender youth, who only heeds merriment and passion, who has only grown up broaching the winejar.

I would lavish my very soul upon him, were he to lavish on me the goal of my desires, but he is, by nature, disposed to stinginess.

What is wrong with him, when my love for him could never be diverted, even if my love were to be divested of insecurity about him?

While he is gracious with regard to my love, he does not satisfy it in return, so what a delightful dissatisfaction and graciousness I enjoy!

From among the master’s words about the boy come the following [*basīl*]:

A full moon circled around a bright, late-morning sun. The moon embraced the sun’s breast.

The full moon circled around the sun as a spinster and a bride; how excellent was the winecup, since it was the bridal veil.

Even if a beloved’s betrayal were fitting, betrayal on your part would not be fitting, today,

¹⁵ In Islamic law, a Muslim man is permitted to marry a Christian woman. In this case, however, what is being proposed is not marriage, but a sexual union with a boy, which would be an act of sodomy and, as such, punishable by death, regardless of the boy’s religion. The word *basīl* means both ‘forbidden’ and ‘permitted’, hence this is a pun.

For I am a hostage in your hands, and my heart's core, in satisfying you, pours forth a blood requiring no revenge.

After I am gone, I fear lest my tribesmen should harm you, for their fighting men enjoy lofty rank and great power.

From among the master's words about the boy come the following [*basīl*]:

The cupbearer went his rounds with the wine, as bubbles rose to its surface, so that I said: "They are pearls," adding: "They are jewels studding a smooth hide."

He has a slender neck, like that of a gazelle stretching up its head to pick fruit from a tree, yet whom the ripe fruit of the *arāk* tree¹⁶ does not fill with desire.

He is a fresh branch on a sand-dune, whose flowers are a white lily and a red rose.

If he has become unique in his beauty, then I am unique in loving him,

And if Yazīd¹⁷ had ever seen him, Burd¹⁸ would never have filled Yazīd with desire.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Our stay was prolonged, to the point that disaster almost struck us. When my money was exhausted, "and the seeker and the sought were weakened,"¹⁹ our separation became necessary, our union was dissolved, and I left him in that state, making not the slightest move to leave or to depart, while his breast was neither cheered by, nor exposed to repentance.

¹⁶ A thorny tree, the fruit of which is eaten by camels and gazelles.

¹⁷ Yazīd ibn Rabī'ah ibn Mufarrig (d. 69/688) was an Umayyad poet. He is said to have invented the poems and romances of the Ḥimyarite kings. See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1907. Repr. 1956), p. 19, n. 2.

¹⁸ Burd was Yazīd's slave-boy and catamite. See W, p. 199, n. 79.

¹⁹ Qur'ān, 22:73.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I arrived in Baḥrayn, dressed in a tattered inner and outer garment, dusty and disheveled, with nothing to gather or disperse, since no oath of mine was honored, nor did the allotments of Fortune assist me, for my camel had lost its way and was limping, and the time I was living in exceeded all bounds and bore distressing results, demanding a reckoning of me, and prohibiting me from seeking refuge and acquiring wealth. Hence, I was trapped in the noose of indecision and the courtyard of hesitation, coming and going, wasting and snatching my life by stealth, until evening drew near, wells were depleted, nighttime and loneliness cast their shadows, and night's troops and allies congregated. Then, I made for a certain mosque, and found people alternating between kneeling and prostrating themselves, so I adopted the state of ritual purity, in the hope of being the recipient of generosity from generous men. Then, when the *imām*¹ had finished his profession of faith by declaring "I witness that there is no god but God, and that Muḥammad is his Messenger," and an indication that he would soon end his prayers and withdraw from us had proceeded from him, he began to supplicate and to implore, leaning against his coattails like an ascetic and a holy man, until people dispersed to their homes, since the moment for resuming their commercial transactions had once again drawn near, and night had lowered the cover of its darkness, letting fall and releasing its veil. Then the *imām* said: "What has brought you here, my good man? You will enjoy no hospitality or charity from us. All we engage in is humble prayer, as we spend the night in supplication, wearing sackcloth and woolen garments." I replied: "I have been robbed and plundered, I am a stranger who has been banished, whom a night raid has overwhelmed, distances have toyed with, lands have tossed back and forth, and both earned and inherited wealth have forsaken; I am spending the night in your company in order to impress upon you the extent of my poverty."

¹ I.e., 'the prayer leader'.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the *imām* welcomed and received me, crying and weeping, and asked me: "From whence have you come, and what misfortune have you left behind you?" So I answered: "I have proceeded from one land to another, until I wore out the straps and girths of every camel-saddle, treading on such lands without fearing the tribes of Dārim² or Daws,³ being well disposed toward every nation and tribe, feeding my sturdy she-camel on *šilliyān*,⁴ and *najl*⁵ grass, until I went down to the land of Yemen, where the vicissitudes of Fate overwhelmed me, for there I was struck by a disastrous misfortune, and was afflicted by an inflexible companion named Abū Ḥabīb; a wicked and deceitful man, who led me down every erring path, distracting me from every clan and tribe, and stole everything from me, be it leafless or leafy, until I was left choking on water and saliva alone, and remained more naked than *nab'* wood,⁶ and more heavily burdened than the water-laden camels of irrigators. Then he parted from me as fast as sparks part from the firestick and good parts from evil, leaving me in the greatest need of a friend who would feel sympathy and compassion for my plight, for I had sworn a lasting allegiance to him, and shared all that I possessed with him. Among the temptations his deception led me to incur in, and his Satan and Devil made me long for, was cultivating the friendship of honorable men, mingling with authority, obeying my censure, cultivating pleasures abundantly, tolerating harmful activities, and ignoring insults, until every tie and connection to good was wrested from me, and the friendship and attachment of a certain slave-girl bright as the sun was turned against me, a slave-girl who would deserve to be ransomed both today and tomorrow, whose waist swayed like a willow branch; who spoke with the eloquence of Ṣaḥbān,⁷ who used pleasant expressions, while eschewing idle talk

² A sub-grouping of the tribe of Tamīm (see *E.I.* 2, X, 172-176).

³ A sub-grouping of the tribe of Azd (see *E.I.* 2, I, 811-813).

⁴ A leguminous plant considered among the best herbage for the pasturing of camels. See M38, n. 9, below.

⁵ A plant of the family known as *ḥamd*, on which camels pasture.

⁶ See M2, n. 12, above.

⁷ A first/seventh-century man from the tribe of Wā'il who, it is said, addressed an assembly for half a day without repeating the same word twice. He thereby became proverbial for his eloquence (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 830).

or trivial speech; who possessed a beauty beyond compare or measure, to the point of having a smiling mouth full of teeth like the petals of camomile blossoms, an impudent coyness, a bashful cheek, a timorous glance, a character more generous⁸ than dew-covered flowers, and more hostile to the liberal man than Fate. I revealed both my secret as well as my public affairs to Abū Ḥabīb, and dealt sincerely with him for a year and a month, whereas he trotted and galloped, taking advantage of the situation, letting me down and disappointing me, causing me trouble and deceiving me, while simultaneously drawing me toward him and endearing himself to me, as he both slandered me and stirred up hostility against me, depriving me of the cool shadow of the love-union by sowing discord, for he alienated those close to me and held back the clever from me, savaging me as does a lion, while proceeding as does a hyena, deceiving and duping me, cutting off and renewing relations with me until, when he had ascertained that I was finally empty-handed, he forgot my *rajab*, and *ṣafar*,⁹ he crawled into a burrow of deceit, parting from me without saying goodbye. I would have forgotten every other friendship because of my love for him, even if he had led me through every mountain-pass and highland of hardship, for Abū Ḥabīb was sweet-natured, generous-mannered, easy to love, far from affectation, easy to get along with, for his soul was natural and temperate. I have been deprived of my wealth and robbed of my beauty, yet I have never felt anything like the sorrow I felt at being parted from him, even though he betrayed his oath and promise to me. Therefore, I continue to track him down, while amusing myself with what he composed, in verse and prose, for it is as if he were youth that has shunned me, a love that has been extinguished after his departure, a dream-image that has visited me by night, a lightning-bolt that has flashed, a meteor that has struck me, or an arrow that has pierced me. Yet I do not know into what burrow he has crawled, or in what horizon he has set. When he

⁸ *Andā* means both 'more generous' and 'moister', hence the pun implied in this image.

⁹ Two months of the Islamic lunar calendar. The meaning is 'he forgot me entirely'. The two words can also mean 'respect' and 'covenant', hence the sentence is an amphibology, and could be translated: 'He forgot his respect for, and covenant with me'.

departed without saying goodbye, he left a note in which he had written down the following [*ḥafīf*]:

Oh for a Time whose contemporaries are now apart, in which the bond of love has been severed!

The place where you can meet me again, should you ever wish to do so, is Egypt, among countries, or Baghdad.

It is hard for me to part from a freeborn man; yet no sunderer has frightened me into avoiding him.

He is one whom a painful passion has deceived in love, yet the torment of passion brings pleasure.

That part of your Age that was pleasant, was pleasant when wealth assisted you, for wealth always prevails,

Since the cloud of the wealthy is a downpour that flows in abundance, while the cloud of the poor is a thin, misty drizzle.

Passion, as you well know, is the best part of life, while the nights of youth are sweet and delightful,

But wealth is the most favorable mediator, whom a keen slanderer will never bend.

Passion is satisfied to see that, because of it, you have an emaciated body and a broken heart.

This faithfulness of yours is an unusual sentiment indeed, and the people who have experienced it in their time are few in number.

Farewell to you, O goodly Sā'ib,¹⁰ for the hour of scurrying away in the dark has arrived.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the *imām* exclaimed: "There is no might and no power save in God," and he added: "To God do we belong, and to Him will we return,"¹¹ sighing, lamenting, and saying: "I think such treat-

¹⁰ *Sā'ib* literally means 'he who wanders', or 'he who strays', hence the phrase *yā sā'iba l-ḥayr* could also be rendered 'O you who stray from good'.

¹¹ Qur'ān, 2:156.

ment can only come from the *jinn*, not from humankind, for how can the like of such abuse be ascribed to a friend or companion? Abū Ḥabīb has been most ungrateful for the favor you bestowed on him, 'but man is very ungrateful, indeed'.¹² Think no more of him, but console yourself instead, as any intelligent person would do, and clean the rust off your vision with a clarifying glance, for you will surely find an excellent substitute for the friend you have lost, if you will let me be your guide and guarantor; you will surely find a substitute who will be one half of your soul, and a slave in the firm control of your right hand." Then he took me to a spacious lodging, full of inhabitants and friends, prepared a bed for me, and declared: "What a great effort your soul has made, while constantly remaining in a state of sleeplessness and insomnia! Sleep like a bride, without fear of a hostile individual or an inimical person, for you are well protected, insofar as I will stand in front of you, as your heroic defense and the fierce war waged for your protection."

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I trusted his kindness, not suspecting his flaw and defect, for I had a purse full of unstrung pearls and the precious remains of my choice objects,¹³ which I handed over to him, saying: "Take and put them away." But, when sleep conquered and took possession of me, and became pleasant and sweet to my eyes, the *imām* split at dawn, thereby doing what was not strange or unusual on his part, and leaving a note saying [*basīl*]:

You lavished your unstrung pearls on me, and were generous in granting me your most precious valuables.

How long will you be deluded by one who seeks your ruin?

You misjudged the loyalty of a friend upon whose soft bedding you slept,

¹² Qur'ān, 17:67, 22:66, 42:48, 43:15.

¹³ If al-Sā'ib was begging in a mosque in Baḥrayn, as he claimed at the beginning of the *maqāmah*, but now turns out to possess a bag of pearls and other precious objects, this suggests that he is little better than al-Sadūsī, only more gullible. His possession of pearls is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Baḥrayn used to be famous for its pearl fisheries and industry.

While Time would have kept you away from me, had you only heeded my warning.

If I am fascinated by what is scanty, how do you expect me to behave with what is both valuable and abundant?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus I knew that he was that wretched master, that oppressive and twisted individual—may he not prosper and may his pearls remain unstrung! After he was gone, I remained hoping to see a night-visiting dream-image of him, or a vision of him traveling in the midday-mirage, while I entertained hatred and suffered from pain because experience had been of no benefit or use to me, while the wound inflicted by scraping the scab off a previous wound is extremely painful. Then the inhabitants of that place announced to me, saying: “We knew that you were our *imām*'s prey for the night and victim of the year. He seeks shelter with us by night, and makes us trail behind us a full sleeve and train of idleness for, as you can see, we are men of pleasure and buffoonery, and masters of care-freeness and midnight revelry, whom he amuses with his novelties, and entertains with his strength and vigor. How many a person does he leave abandoned, complaining, weeping, and writhing within the snares and nets of his deceptions!”

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I resigned myself to the patience of the sorrowful, and returned home with the luck of the wretched.

Maqāmah 22¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

When the comforts provided by my wealth came to an abrupt halt, and all my camels, both those abounding in milk, as well as those scant in providing it, withheld their entire flow; when a stumbling fortune tripped me up, and a scattering Fate dispersed what I had gathered; when I could perceive no face that was not frowning; when I could bend down no bough that was not dessicated, and when I encountered people who were like treacherous wolves and deadly adversaries, scowling and grimacing, harboring no fraternal instincts or friendly feelings whatsoever, then the onslaughts of poverty flung me to the land of Ahwaz.² One day, as I was wandering about, with my anxiety apparent from top to bottom, a youth bright as a burning star accosted me, one with a likeable nature and attractive appearance, for he was related to the best of neighbors and descended from the noblest of families. He began to kiss my hand, to extol my ancestral halls, and to address me thus:

Sir, O Sir—how great is He who named you! My dear Sir, O Sā'ib, do not be suspicious of me. I am a close neighbor of yours, as well as a follower of, and an enquirer after your Fate. I know your past and present, and I jot down all the news and information about you that I can find. You left me when I was a mere baby, neither vigorous nor strong, but I advanced, crawling on all fours, until I grew up and reached adolescence, for I have an ambitious soul, an all-consuming aspiration, and an attachment that impels me to trot and gallop, while at the same time it humiliates and abases me. I became amorously attached to my paternal cousin, who was the perfect match for me and the goal of my hopes, since beauty had arrayed her in its gown, glory had raised its shrines in her honor, charm had cast its mantles over her, and luxury had given her its fresh, cool water to drink. The letters she wrote to me

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 23 in D.

² A city in southwestern Iran, on the Kurun river, and which, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was an important Arab trading center (see *E.I.* 2, I, 305-306).

afforded me constant pleasure, the ties of her affection for me aroused my desire, and my hopes drew her near to me, all the while that an auspicious lightning-bolt greeted me on her behalf, the crests of love's waves broke, and its ties and bonds were strengthened, until passion entered and spread within me; it overcame and pierced my heart, dwelt in my mind and soul, and robbed me of my composure and equanimity. As a result, gossip about her surfaced and spread, our affair became the talk of the town and attracted much attention. Immediately, an impenetrable veil was lowered between us, as a result of which, commitments intensified, eyes gleamed, debts were denied, eagerness was aroused, and confusion sought right-guidance, for my uncle had already promised her to me, and both my closest friend and my most distant acquaintance had supported me in my attempts to win her. But then our ties were sundered, my anxiety was aroused, my fire was kindled, and a beacon was raised to family strife, for my uncle persuaded her to look with favor upon another close relative—would that he had been a stranger! At that juncture, my misfortune increased, insult was added to injury,³ I became the target of vituperation and the object of surmises, so that I departed aimlessly, not knowing what to do; neither averting nor resisting my misfortune, while my imagination played tricks on me, and coming and going came to be all the same to me, for I had made of passion⁴ my badge, as I consoled myself with my poems, for the loss of my cousin.

So I said:

Recite for me from your compositions about her.

Then he replied [*ṣarī*]:

Would that I knew—though the goal of my hopes is often misleading—whether Nu'm⁵ has any knowledge of my longings,

Or whether she complains, after having lost me, of an ardent passion, or whether she is protected instead by Consolation.

³ Literally, 'the scab was removed from an open wound'.

⁴ *Wajd*. This word is found only in D.

⁵ The lady's name.

It was not I who revealed my love; instead, it was the tears that flowed down over my collarbones that divulged what lay concealed within my breast.

I said:

Give me more.

He said [*sarī*]:

Woe unto me, because of an unjust judge who failed to conduct his investigation with compassion,

And to recognize the extreme to which passion can arouse an agitated, palpitating heart.

Being jealous, he even harbors suspicions about the full moon in the dark, that is always seen to flee, fast as a runaway slave.

By agreement and consent, he severed his ties with me, when my passion for him had grown strong.

May God not give him any pleasure for breaking his ties with me, and may he spend the night lonely and hopeless.

My passion and longing for him deeply disturb me, whom the plight of poverty fails to trouble.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

By God, won't you give me more?

So he said [*sarī*]:

I remember a certain speaker who said, once his heart had withered, after having bloomed and borne leaves:

"Who can avail a lover perplexed by passion, and possessed by confusion and depression as a result of his love?"

The world darkened before his eyes, after having pleased him, and after having engulfed him in its light.

I seek God's forgiveness for an archer who shot his dart, then absconded, after having committed such a cruel deed.

Neither the fear of thunder nor of lightning have turned or parted me from you,

Nor did I complain of my love, when I suffered anxiety over it,
save with prolonged, glistening tears,

Nor, in my love for you, have I asked God either for a physician's medicine or for the charms produced by a maker of amulets, with which to cure the disease of my passion.⁶

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I took pity on, and felt sympathy for him; I was deeply moved by his words and applauded him. Then he said to me:

O Sir, in this vicinity, I met a noble youth who generously offered me his hospitality. Would you care to meet him? He has spacious quarters, as well as many visitors and friends; his guests' bowls are always full, he is himself quite an eyeful,⁷ he befriends the destitute and the sorrowful.

Then did my foot carry me swiftly toward him, and my penury bring me into his presence. He welcomed me warmly, courting over both rough as well as smooth terrain in the kind fulfilment of his hospitable duties, while turning toward me the countenance of abundance, and providing me with precise wording. In the middle of the room there was an old man who was honoring,⁸ amusing, and amazing him⁹ with his clever anecdotes, while occasionally extolling him, and inducing and encouraging him to engage in pleasures, until, when gloom had intensified and conversation was interrupted, when veils were removed and lutestrings were strummed, when wine was tempered and drinking companions appeared, when a first part of the night had gone by and strangers felt lonely, when polite persons behaved shamelessly, both glances and words emitted subtle hints, vows and commitments were forgotten, the repetition of melodies was requested, and words were uttered, I saw him to be a kind old man, possessing a quick glance and precise speech.

He declared to me:

⁶ The above three poems are not only in the same meter, but also rhyme in the same final consonant, namely *qāf*. In contrast, the penultimate rhyme-consonant differs from poem to poem.

⁷ Literally, 'he fills bowls [*jīfān*]', and eyelids [*jīfān*]', i.e. 'he is both generous and handsome'. Hence this is a pun.

⁸ Reading *yurajjibu-hu* with D, rather than *yurajjī-hi* with W.

⁹ Reading *yu'ajjibu-hu* with D, rather than *yu'ajjī-hi* with W.

Sā'ib, O Sā'ib, did you not know, O freeborn man, O noble one, that "one stranger is kinsman to another?"¹⁰

I replied:

Of course! But is our acquaintance a longstanding one? Can you remind me of it?

He answered:

Praise be to God, "your preoccupations have caused you such distress"¹¹ that you have forgotten your friend!

Then I examined him more closely, and lo, he was al-Sadūsī, so I said:

Abū Ḥabīb, are you grazing and eating from this pasture; drinking and slaking your thirst from this waterhole? The place from which you drink is a good one; the location from which you sip is a sweet one, your thirst has been quenched, and you have had the upper hand. Therefore, be moderate without attacking, be satisfied without hindering, graze at liberty without losing control, approach people without encroaching upon them, joke without getting out of line, knock men down without wounding them, be respectful without causing trouble, facilitate matters rather than complicating them, profit without being greedy, be true to yourself, yet extol your ruler, and beware of annoying people, avoid false accusations and vain pretensions, all the while bearing in mind that your tale is widely divulged and that information about you is well-known, that behind you lie many years, while in front of you lies Death.

Then al-Sadūsī said:

Lighten up, leave me alone, calm down, let me be, and listen, for how many tears have I shed over you.

Then al-Sadūsī sang [*basīl*]:

I would be loyal, and benevolent, and would perform small acts of kindness, if the inhabitants of this age would only treat me with compassion.

I was not created with a natural disposition for betraying or

¹⁰ Quoted from the second hemistich of a line by the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays. See Imru' al-Qays ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ibn Abī Šanab (Algiers, 1974), p. 410, l. 3.

¹¹ Arabic proverb. See *M.A.*, III, 497, no. 4592.

annoying people, yet those two habits of mine may not be faulted,

For the inhabitants of this age have withheld their abundance from me, hence, in this age, I am satisfied by getting away with acts of petty larceny.

Be satisfied and content with what lies within a small, azure pond, and renounce vast oceans, when small ponds prove useful.

I have an untouched garden of gratitude for wealth, in which the fresh fruit of praise is up for grabs.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I was once in Marw,² where I allied myself to virtue and honor, followed a straight and narrow path, chose a companion and a friend for myself, parted from the intimate acquaintances of youth, and became attached by various ties to virtue, so that I followed the righteous and the abstinent, avoided cushions and beds, observed my obligatory religious duties, and performed supererogatory works; I witnessed dawns³ and sunsets, took warning, from which I received enlightenment and, when treated unjustly, refrained from seeking revenge.⁴ One day, when I was in a gathering where an admonitory sermon was being delivered by a certain ascetic, and we were discussing avarice and stinginess, all the while mentioning its characteristics, as we pursued and treated our discourse exhaustively, suddenly an old man dressed in threadbare garments, who was proclaiming his poverty and destitution, began to importune us with his begging, and to remind us of our final destination, saying:

You are praising the very vice that you condemn while, at the same time, singling out for criticism that in which all of you participate. How ugly it is for a man to forbid an act that he himself commits so that, if an ignorant person asks his advice, he expresses an opinion that is not backed up by his own deeds. What thing is more hateful to a man than the empty chatter of his tongue? He says what he does not do, and puts himself where he does not belong. Whoever lays claim to piety, yet has been denuded of its garment, approves of shame and disgrace. I hear knowledge that you have perverted, words that you have distorted, a theory that I

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 24 in D.

² An ancient city in Turkmenistan, in a large oasis of the Kara-Kum desert, on the Murgab river. From 30/651 to 206/821 it was the seat of the Arab rulers of Khorasan and Transoxania, and one of the main centers of Islamic learning. Later, from 511/1118 to 551/1157, it was the capital of the Seljuk Empire under the last sultan, Sandzhar (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 617-618).

³ Reading *ṭawālī'a* with D, rather than *ṭawālīḥa* with W.

⁴ Qur'an, 26:227.

will subject to close scrutiny, and an opinion that I will deconstruct [*munsariḥ*]:

I hear words, but see no acts, hence, in avoiding the latter, how can you look forward to any hope for the future?

You have donned the robe of hypocrisy, completely wrapping yourself in its folds; how evil you are, though contained and enfolded by that robe.

God has a sleepless eye that watches over you, while He guards all grazing camels, both the tended and the untended, from your marauds.

Your ignoring me will do you no good, if it is avarice that you are obeying. How unattainable is a safe haven,⁵ when the dictates of caprice are being observed! Where is your responsiveness to me, though my wonder at you is constant? I see eloquent tongues, but blemished skins; I hear wise words, but see deaf and dumb listeners! How unattainable is a safe haven, indeed! Avarice is the greatest of diseases and the natural disposition of the wicked. It is at the top of the admonisher's list, and is a disgrace to the object of his admonishment; it tarnishes beauty and diminishes perfection; behind it lie greed and covetousness, and before it, madness and confusion; it considers itself rich when it is poor, and deems itself all-important when it is insignificant. It lies beyond all hope, and has no share⁶ in any form of glory. Have you no vigilance? Will you never wake up? Do you not observe my want and my need? Will you not heed these, my pearls of wisdom? Do you not perceive my nakedness and my hardship? You wear clothes, but tightly fasten your pursestrings; you hoard your leftover food, delight in the melodies of lyrics and songs, but ignore a stranger who puts up with the buzzing of gnats and flies, who avoids the stinging of scorpions and serpents, who seeks refuge in a home narrower than the eye of a needle, and in words more painful than the excruciating torment inflicted by lashes; a home in which no fire is struck by the firestick, and which is not lacking in lamentation and obstinacy, for its night is pitch black,

⁵ Literally, 'a spring encampment'.

⁶ Literally, 'no male or female camel'.

while its mistress is frantic. Oh, my Lord, unto You will we return, and You are well aware of the similarity between wolves and men! In Your hands lies repentance, and from You proceeds all contentment. Oh, my Lord, You are well aware that I have been overtaken by misfortune without slandering others, that I have been fed without slandering my hosts, that I guide men along the right path without making much of it,⁷ that I am a passerby who does not attack, that I deter men from sin without deceiving them, that I beg without plundering, and that I earn my living without fraud. Therefore, give these people a share of Your compassion without exposing them to future hardship. Oh, my Lord, do this, and divest them of the robe of hypocrisy, while dressing them in the robe of life and modesty. Soften too, their pitiless hearts and bend their hardened souls.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then was each man in the audience given wings by these words, as if he had been released from his bonds, so that he began to harbor misgivings and doubts about himself, while considering his own water to be nothing but a midday mirage, so that he generously and liberally gave of his property, carefully choosing and selecting a gift. The old man earned the approval of the ascetic as well, since the latter did not know that the old man was about to inflict his corruption and calamity upon him, for the ascetic took the old man to his house as a guest, latching on to him as if he were a dream come true, finding in his company all the praise of God he could desire, and producing and performing good deeds for him. Meanwhile, the old man began to become involved in the ascetic's pious works and spiritual exercises, while avoiding the soft beds that had been made for him. The ascetic had some sealed deposits and hidden goods that had been entrusted to him, which the old man looked for the chance of stealing, after having done which, he sneaked into the gloaming and slipped away, leaving a note in the house, on which was written [*sarī*]:

O pious ascetic who, because of your good deed, will be exalted by the Exalter,

⁷ Literally, 'without announcing it aloud in song'.

Forgive, this day, your brother's deed, for a kind brother sometimes causes harm,

And question Abū l-Ġamr, concerning how many a ruse I have concocted, that no man can avoid.

What can you possibly gain from doubting—when your own virtue⁸ bears witness and intercedes in favor of the truth—

That you do not know the true nature of Fate or of mankind, for you are a gullible novice among men?

It is no wonder that whoever associates with human beings is slapped down by one of their deceitful blows.

⁸ *Faḍl* also means 'excessive behavior.' Hence, this is a pun.

Maqāmah 24¹

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I entered Isfahan² in the company of a man from the tribe of the Banū Nabhān,³ whom I had known well for some time and with whose loyalty and trustworthiness I had become familiar, so that I confided to him both my private and public affairs, for I believed him to be the pinnacle of my age and time. His nature was sweet as wine or pure honey, and his characteristics were as delightful as joy or ecstasy, not to mention his prudence, integrity, understanding, and intelligence, so that his firestick was always seen to kindle fire, and the edge of his sword always managed to penetrate the hide. He impelled his arrow to its goal, and guided health toward the curing of disease. Thus, he and I together were like health plus youth, and love plus affection, save that he was suffering from an amorous attachment and a Najdi⁴ passion that deprived him of his very soul, so that he wandered about, in the possession of love, like an object that had been stolen and plundered. One day, he appeared before me sighing with sorrow, and moaning deeply, while his ribs enclosed burning embers that emitted sparks from the very intensity of his longing. I was familiar with his behavior, and well acquainted with his affairs, hence I was aware that certain nets had enveloped him, that certain calamities had destroyed him, and that he had been shot down by the arrow, and caught in the trap of beautiful ladies. Therefore, I discreetly and indirectly ventured to ask him about his condition, paying no heed to his claims and protestations, until night grew dark, its squadrons arrived, his soul became agitated, his anxieties were aroused, his thoughts grew tender by reason of his misfortune, his rainbearing clouds lavished

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 25 in D.

² Capital of Isfahan province, in central Iran, on the Zayandeh River. Under Arab rule it served as a provincial capital until it was captured by the Seljuk Turks who made it the seat of their empire in 442/1051 (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 97-107).

³ A sub-grouping of the Banū Ṭayyi' (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 838-839).

⁴ Najd was the birthplace of 'Udri poetry, which sang of a hopeless, unfulfilled, and frustrated love (see M4, n. 7, above).

their complaint, he began to sing and recite love poetry, to retire and withdraw from me, saying:

What a plight did God Almighty ordain for man because of beautiful women, when He tempted men by means of them! What tales do dawn and evening travelers carry! How urgent it is for an intelligent man to lower his glance,⁵ avoid being charming, restrain and divert his soul from loving the fair, in order to avoid the misfortune they can cause! Today, I entered the slave-market with a yearning soul and a tender heart, where a slave-girl—and what a slave-girl!—was put up for sale; one whose beauty penetrated and flowed into men's souls; one who played with men's passions and fantasies as *maysir* players⁶ do with gambling arrows, and who deposited in men's hearts, a love for her by which they were distracted from all other loves. She left a flame in my heart and heaped affection and yearning for her in me and, indeed, had you been near her, you would have overheard her conversation, as she agreed and disagreed with her master, responding to him in rhythm and rhyme, when he said to her:

O product of my upbringing, do not forget my love and affection! O sister of my son, you are never far from my heart! O offspring of moons, how much love do I conceal for you [*sarī*]!

How will I hide and conceal my feelings, when it is said: "Umm 'Ammār⁷ has departed?"

How lonely I will be made by the departure of a lady who does not care whether she is separated from the generous and the brave.

Who will avail a singing gazelle-fawn who has grown up amongst ladies fair as bright stars and moons,

Or who will avail the cymbal and the rebec, or the melodies of the lute and the shawm?

⁵ Thereby avoiding the temptation of being induced to sin by the beauty of the lady.

⁶ A pre-Islamic game of chance. See M8, n. 1, above.

⁷ The lady's name.

Fate has made you become the possession of another, for Fate has precedence in the matter, as well as its own course of action.

Then she proceeded to answer him in the same rhyme [*ṣarī*]:

O you who complain of love, but do not complain, when it is said: "Umm 'Ammār has departed,"

Woe unto you, O lover; you will be patient despite the absence of ladies fair as stars and moons!

Now that you have abandoned them, how embarrassed will love be, over the attitude of the generous and the brave,

Why do you, along with your cymbal, with the invocation of your passion, and with the melodies of your lute and shawm,

Demand a separation from me, and then complain of it, if Fate has precedence in the matter, as well as its own course of action?

As for your having brought me up properly, shown me kindness, out of love for me, made me second only to your son, and a dweller in your heart, a companion to ladies fair as stars and moons, and one to whom you entrusted your secrets and confidences, I reciprocated by pleasing you with my beauty and kindness, while nothing distracted me from you or made me forget you until, when Time struck you down, and a price seduced you, you exposed me to the baseborn, degraded my virtue, divulged my secret, and broached what was sealed, for you did not appreciate my value, or really gaze upon the sun or moon of my beauty. Thus, if there were a true flame in your heart, no gold coin would have tempted you to sell me—how far is a paltry silver coin from love, or water from a lizard!⁸

Al-Sā'ib said:

The distracted lover continued:

And if you had seen her, she would have both awed and delighted you, O Sā'ib, so that you would have shaken down the branches

⁸ Lizards were reputed to avoid water. See Abū 'Uṭmān 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kūṭab al-ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1975), VI, 127, 282.

and leaves of your tree in order to harvest its fruit for her; you would have stood vigilantly before her, on guard against death itself, entertaining no other desire than to protect her.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I then became aware of the passion from which my friend was suffering, I traveled with him, up hill and down dale, I kept on consoling and offering him hope; I dissuaded and encouraged him. On the morrow, he took me to the girl and showed her to me, and lo, she was just as he had declared and described. Nay, by God's faith, he had not even come close in rendering justice to her beauty. So I approved of his purchasing her for a high price, he obtained her in the face of every rival bidder who had made her price go up, and he signed a written contract of purchase with her master, in the presence of witnesses. Once her master had pocketed the high price my friend paid for her, she was handed over to the jurisdiction of the market inspector. When the latter saw her, he said:

Are you not the Sadūsī girl? You have surpassed, by far, both *jinnis* and humans! Fortunes and hearts have been ruined on account of you, sedition and revolt have been stirred up because of you, relations have been broken off in your presence, and minds have gone astray over you. This is the daughter of Master Abū Ḥabīb! How many amorous relationships and how much love poetry has he inspired by means of her! Widen up before her, and regain the intelligence you have forsaken, for the wound Abū Ḥabīb inflicts sheds blood that cannot be avenged, since he is very powerful.

Then the girl turned to me and declared [*sarī*]:

O you who glance with desire at a girl, there are glorious lances standing between her and you.

How many an individual has aspired to her, yet no aspirant has ever possessed her.

You were enticed, in her—for passion is deceptive—by a bolt of lightning⁹ flashing from her mouth.

How high is the price for the glance of a lifetime, a glance that involves no possession on your part, nor any compliance with your desires!

⁹ I.e., the gleam of her bright teeth.

Maqāmah 25¹
(*The Judge*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

The promptings of error urged me to the land of Rayy,² where I dwelt with an empty belly and was clothed only in a shirt, being painfully aware that I was a stranger and, therefore, behaving with caution; that I was a hostage and, therefore, refraining from wandering about, all the time glancing at things without aspiring to possess them, and listening without coveting, for the freeborn individual experiences periods of difficulty and ease, while Fate brings both haste and delay. Eventually, I passed by a mosque in which legal arguments and disputations were taking place, and proofs were being adduced. And lo, I beheld some litigants bringing their case before a witty master empowered by authority and command. Hence I observed his rulings, carefully examined their nature, and found that they bordered on buffoonery and were a source of embarrassment. I remained there until dusk appeared, the weaned baby camel yearned to rest beside its mother, the old man's court was emptied, and his bailiff was silenced, while the master eyed me most cautiously, and with a keen glance, as I stood clothed in a threadbare cloak, concealing my inner rags within my outer tatters, until he was all alone with his secretary, concentrating and focusing on demanding a reckoning of the day's earnings, and haranguing the prison-warden, as follows:

O brother of buffoons, it has come to my attention that you have been gambling with people both morning and evening, and that winedrinking and intoxication have become lawful to you, and for that you should beware. I have not heard you excuse yourself for this conduct of yours. What has induced and encouraged you to incur in it, thus freeing and exempting you from your proper responsibility? Won't you acquaint us with what you have done, and hand over to us the money you have collected and withheld from

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 27 in D.

² It was the ancient Rages, a city in northern Iran, in the province of Tehran. Today, it is a suburb of the city of Tehran (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 471-473).

us, the money you have misappropriated while, at the same time, excluding us from any share in it, little suspecting that you would be discovered? May God not absolve and save you, or encourage and grant you indulgence, until you surrender everything that lies within your control, and relinquish all that you possess, otherwise I will resort to the iron and a brand new lash, and you will learn from your sins, and drink from the bucket of humiliation.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did the prison-warden cringe before him like a scolded boy, expressing the confusion of the foolish. He first spoke clearly and then was reduced to incoherence, all the while repeating his words and stammering, as he said:

All that has occurred and taken place, has reached you and come to your ears on account of your secretary, who claims to be on your payroll.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the old man was filled with rage and wrath, his serenity was disturbed, and he railed:

How dare you? How long will you continue to commit such an outrage and speak such slander? You have all colluded in deceiving me! Oh, who will give me Hāmān³ and Iblīs,⁴ either of whom is far better than you?⁵ Am I to be disobeyed by those who are supported at my own expense? Is there anyone connected to me who is not led astray by ill-gotten gains or even by modest crumbs?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the secretary confronted him with an insolent face and an unsubmitive attitude, saying:

At the same time that you are concerning yourself with the significant and the insignificant, that you are investigating the useful and the useless, and that you are looking on us with eyes inflamed by anger, while simultaneously receiving full payment of your debts from us, and making us suffer hardship, without affording us ease,

³ He is the minister of Pharaoh, mentioned in Qur'ān, 28:6; 28:8, 38; 29:39; 40:24, 36, and portrayed as a superlatively wicked man (see *E.I.* 2, III, 110).

⁴ I.e., Satan.

⁵ The point here is that the judge considers his two assistants so evil, that he would rather have Hāmān and Satan, two figures proverbial for their wickedness, as his assistants.

we are all too well aware of your own defects, yet we disregard your faults. And although we may overlook your imperfections, we will not tolerate your holding back vast sums of money, for you are one whom nothing, be it large or small, can ever satisfy, and from whose injustice neither the baseborn nor the noble are secure. You take a cut from every inheritance, crowd others out in accumulating wealth, extract rain not only from a rainbearing, but even from a rainless cloud, and strike, in every legal case, with a sharp as well as a blunt sword; you spy a *dirham* and mount a camel that is out of control; you observe a *ḍīnār*, and rush headlong into Hellfire, having no concern for shame; you fail to return what you have borrowed, although you stand on the very brink of the crumbling shoreline of your life, and at the very end of your nights and days; you falsely claim and attribute knowledge unto yourself, when you have no awareness or understanding of it, therefore, it will work to your own detriment, rather than acting in your favor, so “woe unto you, and again, woe unto you.”⁶ It is as if God’s cunning had encompassed both you and us, and His anger and rejection had included all of us, for such are the crimes of human beings, be they sedentary or nomadic; be they obscure or prominent; they lead only to punishment and to a debt that must eventually be paid off; they lead only to a Day of Reckoning and of Assembly, *miṭqāl* by *miṭqāl*,⁷ and tribute by tribute. As for the oppressor, his trail leads down to the waterhole of death, whereas “every region, O Umaymah, has its place of perdition,”⁸ the pasture of injustice is unwholesome, and the road has caused both you and us to stray.

Al-Sā’ib said:

Then the old man became afraid and was ashamed; he hurried

⁶ Qur’ān, 74:34-35.

⁷ A gold coin prevalent in the Almoravid Empire (see *E.I.* 2, II, 297-299). It is also a unit of measure (approximately 4.68 grams in modern times). The term *miṭqāl ḍarra* (a ‘*miṭqāl* of a speck of dust’) occurs frequently in the Qur’ān, e.g. 10:61 and 24:3: “not the *miṭqāl* of a speck of dust escapes God’s attention,” and 99:7-8 “God witnesses an act of good or evil, even as small as the *miṭqāl* of a speck of dust.” The above text is therefore a pun, insofar as the word *miṭqāl* evokes both Qur’ānic diction (suitable for the Day of Reckoning), and also the idea of coinage to be used in more pedestrian commercial transactions.

⁸ An Arabic proverb to the effect that every living thing must eventually die. See *M.A.*, III, 133, no. 3424.

and scurried to appease his secretary, he hesitated like one who is under a cloud of suspicion, he was inclined to be conciliatory; he softened and mellowed his words, shed and made his tears flow, distinguished and sorted truth from falsehood, and said:

A man such as you rejects iniquity while reminding us of righteousness; you are rightly guided and guide us rightly; you are illuminated and enlighten us. You have uttered words that are useful, and that do not refute; rather, they leave an impression on, and inspire us. Nevertheless, need sometimes makes lawful what is normally forbidden, while destitution tarnishes the noble; flesh not ritually slaughtered, along with blood, must sometimes be eaten,⁹ and “remorse is part of repentance.”¹⁰ I settled in this region as a stranger, without having been invited here by any intelligent or clever man. Therefore, I resorted to litigation and railed against falsehood. I traversed the region, land after land, and crossed its length and breadth, finding no host to invite me, no invitation to accept as a guest, and no freeborn or noble man, and when I saw that things were in such an appalling state, I concocted this blame-worthy scheme, and resorted to every talisman and amulet for, were I to have established personal connections in the region, and made matters proceed according to their rightful course, by avoiding sin and behaving scrupulously; by wrapping and shielding myself in resignation, I would have perished, rather than acquiring the wealth I now possess, and I would have reverted to my initial leanness, while my ascetic lifestyle would have availed me not, for I once used to hesitate, when I was naked; I once used to be cautious, when I repressed my wrath; I once lived in seclusion, when I was isolated; I once shut myself away, when I was restless. Yet all matters have an exoteric as well as an esoteric aspect;¹¹ among men, some travel and others are sedentary. This brings with it results and consequences,¹² requirements and misfortunes.¹³ Hu-

⁹ Islamic law forbids the consumption of these two items.

¹⁰ Allusion to the *ḥadīṭ*: “Remorse is repentance, and one who repents of a sin is like one who has not sinned.” See *C.I.T.M.*, I, 283b-284a; VI, 391b.

¹¹ This statement implies that the speaker is used to applying *ta’wīl* and, therefore, adheres to Mu’tazili methods.

¹² *Tawābiʿ* also means ‘female demons’. Hence this is a pun.

¹³ *Ẓawābiʿ* also means ‘familiar spirits’. The entire sentence is a possible allu-

mans are mere traces erased by further traces, and faces upon which alien marks are stamped. They include a destitute beggar, an arriving guest, a palace official in service, a chamberlain and gate-keeper, a postman and traveler, an announcer and a guardian. As for the receipt given upon payment of the land-tax, I use it to pay for my candle and my lamp; as for the tax on the content of wine-jugs, I devote it to purchasing the fruit of orchards; as for the bribery of adversaries and supporters, I use it to bring abundance to my assembled company and to my dining table, while letting whatever bribery is extorted provide me with comfort and intoxication. As for merriment and buffoonery, a full discussion of the two would be an endless story; as for the funds belonging to pious bequests, there is no harm in my misappropriating them; as for the fine that must be paid for infractions of the law, it is the legacy left by ancestors to their descendants, and from which the means of my subsistence derive—and what a blessing that is! As for Wednesday, I have reserved it for prayer, but I often conclude it with music, merrymaking, and sexual intercourse, for I am fond of the lowest and highest strings of the lute, I am very much a womanizer, and I enjoy listening to the rippling of water, and raising my glance to the sky. I ask God's forgiveness for the female pudenda and blood that I have violated. Yet do you consider this to be a mortal sin on my part, or do you find one like myself to be experienced? As for this careworn sleeper¹⁴ and silent victim of plunder, who has been felled by Time and abandoned by Wellbeing, how do you know what his ultimate destination will be,¹⁵ and who his father and mother are? I suspect and imagine that his paternal or maternal uncle will inform me about him. Come, let us give him this small share of our ill-gotten gains, disregarding both the serious individual and the one who jests, healing the careworn sleeper's fracture

sion to Abū 'Āmir ibn Šuhayd al-Andalusī (381/992-426/1035), *Risālat al-tawābi' wa-l-zawābi'* ('*The Treatise of Familiar Spirits and Demons*'), trans. James T. Monroe (Berkeley, 1971).

¹⁴ I.e., al-Sā'ib, who has, presumably, fallen asleep in the mosque where the corrupt judge is conducting his business.

¹⁵ Here, the speaker contradicts the Mu'tazili certainty about people's fate, despite the fact that he had begun his argument using Mu'tazili terminology (see n. 11, above).

and releasing him from his captivity, for perhaps through him we will be forgiven our sins, and the links in the chain of our evildoing will be broken and removed from us.

Thereupon they agreed with him, anticipating the fulfilment of his promise, and called out to me:

O man, O man, have you no ears? Have you no tongue? How deep is your slumber! Gifts have come your way! Show your face, how excellent is your place of residence!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I awoke from my slumber,¹⁶ took control of my halter, joy crept within me, while he, the deceiver, deceived me by handing me something and saying: "Take it as plunder," adding:

Remain under my protection and you will be safe from the fire of my wrath; take refuge in my bosom and you will be spared my oppression; yet if you depart from the shadow of my protection, the sole of my foot will trample you, for I have spies, guards, outspread nets, and ropes that can cling to strangers such as you, and that can bequeath the humiliation of captivity.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I therefore acquiesced to his words, as does a man in need, remaining neither encouraged nor discouraged, and when night grew dark and gloomy, he disclosed and informed me of his name, saying to me:

O Sā'ib, have you returned to God? For I have repented, while under my supervision there are some deposits, trusts, pious bequests, and goods, of which I will make you the guardian, giving you a free hand to dispose of them. I will make you the beneficiary of every will, and give you power over possible and impossible cases. Then, when our money-belt is filled to abundance, we will peer through the opening in the veil,¹⁷ we will amicably divide all this property into two equal halves, and we will journey back to our homeland as do birds, replete with every kind of good fortune, for

¹⁶ Since al-Sā'ib has been asleep during the lengthy discussion between the judge and his henchmen, it is difficult to understand how he is able to report the details of their conversation! Hence, this is another logical contradiction in the text.

¹⁷ I.e., the veil worn by travelers in the desert. The expression means: "We will travel away."

wealth, as you know, is an incentive to the noble, a defense of the women's quarters; it guides the arrow to its target, sharpens the intellect, brings lofty heights within reach, and bequeaths glory, while our current advantageous situation is merely temporary and will, no doubt, eventually redound to the benefit of another, for people have perceived our evil intention and the ugliness of our crime, and possibly lie in wait, spying on us in places from which they can discover our methods and intentions, while you, just as you were when I knew you before, are now destitute, and an old follower, who has years of experience and has tasted both quenching and thirst.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I stuck by him in that situation, until news of him spread and was dispersed, his enemy scowled and bared his fangs at him, and he was scorned as one is scorned by an oppressor, he was dragged down from his eminent position as a man of learning, and became the target of barbs and the object of suspicion, so that news of him reached the Sultan, who examined, tested, and dismissed him, going to the extreme of banishing and driving him away, all the while heaping insults upon him, so that the former judge remained out in the open, exposed to the sun, veiled in adversity, and said to me:

O Sā'ib, you are a trustworthy person and I am a hospitable one, while the best secret is the one that is concealed, and in the likes of this situation a sincere friend is to be relied upon, "for the breasts of the noble are the tombs of secrets,"¹⁸ and it is to you that I frequently appeal for help, nor do I keep anything to myself nor monopolize it so as to exclude you from it.

Then he turned away before daybreak, stabbed the breast of the North and slit its throat with his gaze, and said to me: "This is a note that will divulge my intention to you, informing you of my design and purpose." In it was written [*wāfir*]:¹⁹

¹⁸ A quotation from *Ḍū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī* (d. 245/859), the primary author of *sufī* doctrine (see *E.I.* 2, II, 242). See Ismā'il ibn Muḥammad al-Jarrāḥī, *Kaṣf al-ḥafā' wa-muẓīl al-albās 'ammā iṣṭahara min al-aḥādīṭ 'alā alsinat al-nās*, ed. Aḥmad al-Qilāṣ (Aleppo, n. d.), II, 30.

¹⁹ Erroneously given as *hazaj* in W.

The man of error says: "I have left my belief²⁰ behind in Rayy.
Although I am called a hungry man, how satiated and quenched
I really am!

Others beside myself strive for virtue in an age that proves that
right-guidance is only to be found in erring,

For whoever triumphs yet does not plunder deserves the branding
iron.

What sets you apart from Qays and Ṭayyi',²¹ O wealthy man?

If wealth had not brought him happiness, then what would
Ġaylān²² have had to do with Mayyah?²³

Hence what difference does it make whether I experience glory
or humiliation; whether I speak clearly or stutter?

Grieve not for a dead man, neither rejoice for one who is alive,
And if Fate conceals a crime, vie at length with Fate in con-
cealing your own.

Be steady as the sun in your two states, namely, those that
project morning and afternoon shadows,

As you wander from land to land, and from tribe to tribe,

For the prudent, wide-awake man at times reveals and at times
conceals himself."

²⁰ Or: "my legal opinion."

²¹ Two distinguished Arab tribes (for the former, which was Northern, see M14, n. 10, above; for the latter, which was Southern, see *E.I.* 2, X, 402-403). The implication of this line is that wealth equals nobility.

²² Ġaylān ibn 'Uqbah, known as *Dū l-Rummah* (d. 116/735), was an Iraqi poet from the late Umayyad period, famous for his love songs and imitations of pre-Islamic poetry (see *E.I.* 2, II, 245-246).

²³ *Dū l-Rummah's* beloved.

Maqāmah 26¹
(*The Fools*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

When the mantle of my youth was new, and the blade of my vigor was burnished, I practiced only kind deeds and was familiar only with the arts and sciences, for I sought to enlighten myself with the lamp of my understanding, and to follow the ways and methods of right-guidance. Then, one night, while I was with some companions like unto rising stars and leafy branches, after we had grazed in meadows of learning and sipped from cisterns of intimacy; after the dog's whining had subsided, its deathly howl had risen high, it had covered its snout and folded up its left side; when the forelocks of the night were turning white, when its citadels were surrendering, though its robe still remained a deep black; when its youth had reached maturity, when the guide of the stars had become confused, when the sick one among them had fallen asleep, when the one swimming through night's gloom had swum, when the grazing one had roamed freely, when the tired one had reached the point of exhaustion, when their travel slowed down, and after we had expatiated, in the course of our conversation, on many different branches and varieties of knowledge, going back and forth in our discussion, suddenly we heard a knock at the door, that clothed us in the armor of apprehension, for it alarmed those who were safe and aroused those who were hidden. We went toward it, asking:

Who is the night traveler who knocks, the one who appears, only to conceal himself again?

Then we heard a hidden voice, and a question inquiring, and it asked:

Would you be willing to take in a traveler who has lost his way; a comrade who is neither faithless nor treacherous, one who desires a place to stay in order to spend the night; one who will be content merely with a place to lodge overnight; one who is a blade whom trials have blunted, a thoroughbred steed whom night journeys and

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 28 in D.

riverbeds have humbled; one who has adopted Time as his garment in one situation after another; one who has forged ahead in possible as well as in impossible situations; one whom camel saddles and baggage have passed on from hand to hand; one whom barren lands and sterility have taken turns in embracing? Perhaps you will enjoy his remarkable conversation, discover in him the noblest of patricians, delight in an intimate relationship with a close friend; one who comes to stay and seeks refuge of his own volition. Would you be willing to take in a persecuted stranger, an intelligent man of letters who can turn your night into day, cause you to pick flowers from his conversation, and to gather myrtle and oxeve² from his witty anecdotes; one whose information is not tiresome and whose lessons are not to be dismissed? Bestow your friendship on one whose strong she-camel has brought him to a halt,³ and whose friendliness has aroused your attention; one who has extended his hand toward you, in the hope that you will alleviate him. Bestow your friendship on one whose social ties Fate has sundered; one who has become the outcast of his age; a fugitive from his shelter, whose foot is his only means of transportation,⁴ and whose destitution is his only companion, for when day breaks, your divine reward will be recorded in the Book of Destiny and, when dawn spreads, yours will be the benefit.⁵

Al-Sā'ib said:

We rejoiced at the presence of that needy night-traveler who was knocking on our door and gate; we were lavish in our hospitality toward him, we admired his arrival by night, we followed the way in which he dealt with subject after subject, and we forecast rain from the lightning-bolt of his brilliance, which was neither disappointing nor deceptive. We thus continued to walk and stumble over the hems of the robe of conversation, speaking at times in verse and at times in prose, and marveling at how magnanimously

² See M5, n. 8, above.

³ I.e., 'one who has reached you on a camel'.

⁴ Note that the speaker, who claims, above, to have arrived by camel-back, now contradicts himself by claiming to have come on foot!

⁵ I.e., 'the recording angels will write down your good deed, for which you will be rewarded in the afterlife'.

Time had at first treated him, yet at how totally Deprivation had later adhered to him, so that he had acquired no fortune from Time, and obtained no favor from Fate. Finally, dawn broke, the lamp emitted its death rattle, night was interrupted, and the white thread became distinguishable from the black,⁶ whereupon slumber overcame us, our tongues became mute, sleep made us nod off and aroused its footsoldiers and cavalry against us, for that night-traveler had shown us the sincerity of his character, and caused the wells of his knowledge to flow for us, so that he succeeded in bequeathing to us a fondness for his companionship, and in imposing an obligation on us by reason of his polite behavior. Hence we promised him much wealth, and favored him with the precious gift of our generosity, for we trusted him, who did not trust us, so that we slept confidently, whereas he did not, and when sleep had overcome and conquered us, taken over, and become pleasant and sweet to our eyes, “he crawled as does slumber,”⁷ and flew away with the plover, after having laid hands on some clothes and objects of value, and having broken the seals and locks that were to be found in our place of assembly, leaving a note in which was written [*munsariḥ*]:

O you who stray through darkness and gloom, as you climb
from valley to mountaintop,

Convey my greeting⁸ to al-Sā’ib, although he is more deserving
of war than of peace,⁹

And say to him: “How often are you found asleep as dawn
becomes visible and rushes to attack the darkness.

⁶ Qur’ān, 2:187. During the month of Ramaḍān, believers are expected to begin their daily fast at dawn, from the moment there is enough light to distinguish a white from a black thread (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 417-418).

⁷ A quotation from a homoerotic poem by Abū ‘Āmir ibn Ṣuhayd al-Andalusī (381/992-426/1035). See *E.I.* 2, III, 938-940. As the poet is approaching a drunken boy to whom he ultimately makes love, he declares: “I crawl toward him as does slumber, and rise toward him as does a sigh.” For the Arabic text, a translation, and a discussion of the poem, see *Risālat al-tawābī’ wa-l-zawābī’* (*The Treatise of Familiar Spirits and Demons*), trans. James T. Monroe (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 41-42.

⁸ *Salām*. The word also means ‘peace’.

⁹ *Salām*.

Both peace¹⁰ and my greeting¹¹ deceive you, and how often did Salmā¹² once deceive you in *Dū Salam*.¹³

If you fear death from the sword—may you be protected from death—then beware of the pen.

Each of the two is a sharp cleaver in its own right, and each is a winner when feathered and unfeathered arrows are drawn in divination.¹⁴

How it distresses us—for we love you dearly—that you have spent the night suffering from the harm we have inflicted upon you!”

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then we knew that he was that wandering vagabond, that eloquent master of speech, Abū Ḥabīb, and we spread out in pursuit of him, shaking off the dust of the roads in search of him, for we intended to hold him accountable for his wanton shamelessness. Eventually, we found him in an inn, making a trained donkey dance while he played a shawm. Around him were riffraff and rabble whom he had captivated with the arrows and darts shot by the bow of his art, for his cleverness had seduced them, and his playing on the shawm had aroused them, so that some applauded in amusement and clapped their hands as they sang—for his rhythm was pleasant, and his pursuit of a modest livelihood was astonishing—while others behaved like fools with impaired intellects, and played and danced. When he saw us aiming for him, and entertaining the purpose of confronting him, he hastened towards us, greeted us,

¹⁰ *Salm*.

¹¹ *Salām*.

¹² A lady's name.

¹³ A valley on the road between Basra and Mecca abounding in the *salam* tree (*mimosa flava*). The allusion is to the first line of a poem by the 'Abbāsīd poet Abū Tammām (d. 231/846), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 153-155) in which he praises his patron, the general and governor of Damascus, Mālik ibn Ṭawq al-Taḡlibī (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 751b, 1289b; VIII, 393-396): “Greet [*sallim*] the springtime habitation of Salmā in *Dū Salam*. . .” (see Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ed. ʿIlīyā al-Ḥāwī [Beirut, 1981], p. 508). Abū Ḥabīb's poem thus plays upon the various meanings of words derived from the root *s-l-m*.

¹⁴ A reference to divining by drawing arrows of different lengths from a quiver. See M8, n. 1, above.

and confessed his shame over his prior behavior, while accepting all responsibility for his wrongdoing, and declaring:

O eminent ones, O dwellers in high places, O heroic youths, O manly brethren, do not unveil one who is concealed, and do not provoke the wrath of one who has not avenged his insult. Otherwise, be aware that everyone here present has fallen under my control and is enthusiastically invoking my name. Therefore, refrain from coming to blows with these baseborn persons and thereby exposing yourselves to dishonor. Count up your losses, and beware these vile and lowly ruffians.

Al-Sā'ib said:

But his entreaty did not move us, nor did his skill influence us, and we began to go up and down the list in rebuking him, and to lighten and thunder in menacing him, whereupon he gave orders to the rabble that surrounded him, saying:

Go get them, O sons of drinking-cups!¹⁵

Then did they drive us away from their sanctum, lavishly cuffing and slapping us, and uniting against us all those who came and went, until we ended up loathing both the robbed and the robber, while people either reveled in our misfortune and blamed us, or found fault with us and rebuked us, saying: "Why do the highborn (but foolish), the clever (but depraved), those who go to (and from) knowledge, struggle against the baseborn and the wretched?" Meanwhile, Abū Ḥabīb was running around, performing and dancing, thereby manifesting his lowliness and inferiority, while proclaiming [*mujtatl*]:

I would sacrifice my very soul, not to speak of my donkey, for certain callow youths

Who cast a mantle over me, when I was dressed in tattered garments,

Yet who were unaware of the true nature of my intention, and ignored my hidden purpose.

Thereafter, I associated with an entirely different class of people, by means of whom I defended my rights.

¹⁵ I.e., 'revelers'.

These people sacrificed themselves on my behalf, to protect me from every unruly wrangler.

Each one of them is a quarrelsome young rowdy debauched by wine or gambling,

Whom I call, while he summons another, who follows his own inclination and advice.

O goodly Sā'ib,¹⁶ I have become fond of the shawm,

Moreover, is it a sin for me to have fallen in love with ladies whose faces are fair as moons,

When I have been tormented all my life by modestly veiled ladies

Like unto the full moon in beauty, yet related to a brave group of men who are wont to guard their womenfolk?

I am al-Sadūsī; my enslavement lies in the hands of the tavern-keeper,

As do my comfort and my pleasure; my drunkenness and my hang-over.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he drank up his cup of wine, and expressed his boundless devotion to us, after having contaminated us with his notorious evil, so that we came to consider being rid of him a blessing, and avoidance of his skullduggery to be a form of vengeance that finally allows one to sleep in peace. We praised God for what had taken place, we were grateful to Him for our wealth and prominence, we were filled with thorough disgust at ourselves, and set no further date to meet again.

¹⁶ *Yā sāl'iba l-hayr*, can also be translated 'O you who stray from good'. Hence, this is a pun. Cf. M21, n. 10, above.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I was in one of the lands of India, and with me was a companion, one of the notables of Sind,² who had set foot in capital cities, exploited the times, experienced both hardship and ease, and walked out into the violent gale and the gentle breeze. He had passed beyond the limits of middle age, gone down to the waterhole of life, and drunk repeatedly from it, while Fate had caused him to wander about, both in rugged and in smooth terrains so that, by reason of his intelligence, I used to walk in the light of dawn; by reason of his opinions, I was illuminated by a lamp; by reason of his conversation, I enjoyed fresh, cool water; by reason of his learning, I enjoyed lawful magic, so that I was impatient when absent from him, so extreme was my longing for, and fondness of him. He had much to say about Abū Ḥabīb, referring to him at times as being clever, and at times as being intelligent, whereupon I would frequently challenge my friend's assertions concerning that trickster, by pointing out his blameworthy features to my friend, by informing him of the betrayal and deception that had been inflicted on me by Abū Ḥabīb, of the extraordinary doings and contrivances of his that I had witnessed, of the many times he had gotten me in trouble and, through his cunning, made me his prey, of how often I had overlooked his defects and forgiven his offenses, entertaining the hope that his understanding might bring him the benefit of a happy outcome to his efforts, that his struggling and contending against Time might eventually guide him along the right path, but my companion from Sind used to make excuses for Abū Ḥabīb, being of the opinion that behind his behavior lurked something both to be warned against and excused; that his reprehensible acts were fewer than his virtuous ones, that they were the result of the confused dreams he experienced during his sleep, of the excess of his eloquence, of the slackening of the tether and halter of his control;

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² Roughly the area of what is today Pakistan (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 632-638).

that he only yielded to temptation, strayed, or turned aside from his goal when he was constrained by dire need, and when he complained of having been wronged; that he only deprived of their property those persons who possessed stores of jars, wealth, or fire-sticks and flintstones, yet who had been stingy in sharing their superfluous possessions with him, who had scorned him for his rags, and concealed their secret from him, who had eked out their charity to him, drop by drop, who had arrogantly held their noses in the air while boasting of their own good fortune, who had taken pride in their pot-bellies and the liquid sloshing about within them.³ Oh, how just and fair was Abū Ḥabīb's behavior, and how bold and daring was his opinion! Was loyalty not due to him, as surely as an *imām* would eventually be brought back?⁴ Abū Ḥabīb's "trace does not mean that one will get to see him,"⁵ and "one cannot cut his fruit or palm spathe."⁶ It is hardship that renders flesh not ritually slaughtered, as well as blood, lawful to eat;⁷ it is need that puts one's hand and foot to work; it causes white-haired gazelles to be butchered, and brings remorse and grief. Abū Ḥabīb has merely been branded by the same age that has stifled him, and by the same era whose mouth falsehood has broken and whose front teeth it has smashed. How much of my money has he spent and squandered, and yet how often has he climbed and looked out from the topmost place in my heart. Oh, if only Time would give us the pleasure of meeting him, and delight us with the sight of his countenance and of the location where he resides . . .

Al-Sā'ib said:

All the two of us did was to disagree until, suddenly, we came upon a threadbare old man with a long beard and mustache who

³ Portliness was a sign of prosperity and, consequently, of social standing and importance.

⁴ A reference to the Twelver Šrī belief in the twelfth Imām Muḥammad. See M19, n. 18, above. The point here is that the Sindī notable is being portrayed as a Šrī.

⁵ An inversion of the Arabic proverb: "Do not seek a trace after having seen the one who left it." See *M.A.*, III, 107, no. 3509.

⁶ A *ḥadīth*. See *C.I.T.M.*, V, 545b.

⁷ The consumption of both these items is normally forbidden by Islamic Law, but they may be eaten to avoid starving to death. It is to this loophole in the law that the text refers. Cf. M25, n. 9, above.

had bound his head in rags and was proclaiming his poverty and indigence, while calling out in a voice thinner than the air and more tiresome than hardship, saying:

O men of good health and possessors of abundant wealth, behold a man who is decrepit and suffers from a burning hunger, one who is homeless and has been robbed by the fates, whom years and epochs have paralyzed, whom concerns and circumstances have sorely tried. None but his heart and tongue remain, as well as his skill and proficiency, yet seldom have the latter sufficed him, since he has been rejected in this place. How heedless is youth of gray hair, and how useless to a warrior who is sluggish in battle is a trimmed arrow, and he sang [*ḥafīf*]:

You, old man, are like a warrior who is sluggish in battle, and has no control over Death.

Our fate is far away, yet whenever it wishes, it can draw near.

God is the only guarantor I need to please, for He has guided me along the right path;

He is an irreversible decree that has neither deterred nor forsaken me.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then my companion from Sind said to me:

O Abū l-Ġamr, I perceive the tune of our master Abū Ḥabīb. Have you been in contact with him lately, for the like of this old man arouses my suspicion?

I replied:

This man is Abū Ḥabīb indeed, therefore, remove the mote from your eyes. "You only have to mention an absentee and you will see him;" "you only have to desire a friend and you will be far away from him."⁸

Al-Sā'ib said:

My companion from Sind could not refrain from going toward

⁸ The former of these two Arabic proverbs is equivalent to: "Speak of the Devil and he shall appear." See *M.A.*, II, 11, no. 1473. The latter is not featured in *M.A.*

Abū Ḥabīb and shaking his hand, arguing and expostulating with him, turning him away from the direction in which he was heading, and allowing him to mingle with my companion's own kith and kin. Then, I too turned toward the old man, as had my friend, approaching Abū Ḥabīb as my friend had done, we all gathered in one place, and the possibility of our friendship was enhanced. We reassured Abū Ḥabīb, offered him our sincere friendship, and requested the favor of his company. So he treated us with the greatest of respect, put us at our ease, and went to great lengths in honoring us with various and sundry acts of friendship, to such an extent that he descended and traversed the mountain pass of good deeds, and made use of eloquence and elaboration in the fire-and-brimstone sermons he preached to us. Often did he spend the night awake in oration, wearing the garment of the gloom, until we assumed, without a doubt, that he had wrapped himself in the outer wrap of goodness and placed the undergarment of prayer next to his skin as a form of precaution and protection.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Our companion from Sind owned some treasures and gifts that were protected by locks and bolts and, on a very dark night, after having laid his hand on as many of those treasures as he could carry, and without stirring about so as to arouse suspicion or spread alarm, Abū Ḥabīb made off as fast as an arrow, after he had barred and locked the doors behind him,⁹ and left a note on which was written [*sarī*]:

As Time goes by, a betrayer will inevitably show up; one who goes down to drink from the cistern of Time and then returns.

I ask God to forgive a lapse from which neither the unjust nor the reckless man have been spared.

For a while, I managed to restrain myself, out of piety, yet the bad habits of the betrayer never forsook me,

For no one can change man's nature. How can that be, when the wisdom of God Almighty created man's nature?

⁹ Since doors must be barred from the inside, it is difficult to see how Abū Ḥabīb could have done so from the outside, after exiting. This is another inconsistency in the narrative.

Lo, man is fashioned according to his nature, as is the case with the neighing horse and the braying ass.

Therefore, forgive your devoted Sadūsī for his behavior, even if he afflicts you forever with unexpected misfortunes.

Consider the whale: A brave young hero's guile will join its fate to that of the full-grown, white-footed mountain goat.¹⁰

A man's perfection must inevitably wane. Therefore, forget what has been said about Quss¹¹ and Mādir,¹²

For rectitude as well as error are the brave young hero's fate, as waning is the fate of the full moon.

Fate brings different circumstances to people, sometimes rising only to produce amazing and wondrous things,

For it sometimes offers the brave young hero a chance. Therefore, outrun others to plunder your booty and be quick to do so, while you are about it.

Do not prove incompetent in any situation. Incompetence is for those who lurk in hiding and for the slothful.

Al-Sā'ib said:

O my Sindi friend, I warned you about al-Sadūsī, from beginning to end, saying: "How deserving and worthy of hatred is he; he cannot be controlled by any camel-halter or bridle, and cannot be made to honor any oath or agreement."

¹⁰ I.e., he will kill them both.

¹¹ He is possibly Quss ibn Sā'idah al-Iyādī, a man proverbial for his eloquence (see *E.I.* 2, V, 528-529).

¹² He is possibly Mādir Hilāl ibn 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa', of whom it is reported that after he had watered his camel, a small amount of water remained at the bottom of the cistern, so he voided his excrement in the cistern and plastered the tank with that excrement, being too miserly to allow others to drink what was left of the water (see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* [Beirut, n. d.], V, 163a, s. v. *mādir*). The story is given as an explanation for the Arabic proverb "More blameworthy than Mādir" (see too, *M.A.*, I, 196, no. 568). Mādir, in turn, is proverbial for miserliness.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

On a certain occasion I went to one of the towns of Oman,² where I stumbled upon the master, Abū Ḥabīb, who was sitting in front of the shop of a physician and engaging him in a discussion concerning diseases and symptoms, debating with him about complaints and maladies, and disputing with him³ on the subject of the human temperament and its nature. Often did Abū Ḥabīb make the physician pause to consider the genealogies of Muḍar⁴ and Rabī'ah,⁵ while his speech caused him to wander to definition and description;⁶ verb and noun.⁷ In the meantime, the physician was unable to respond to Abū Ḥabīb's arguments, and abandoned his moderate stance, for he falsified and altered the facts available to him, and invented all his claims, be they reasonable or absurd. When Abū Ḥabīb beheld and saw me, he rose and turned toward me, rendering his intransigent nature friendly and indulgent, for he began to embrace me and shake my hand, pushing people away and rejecting all of them except for me, while saying:

This is a well known lord, an excellent person, one who is unexcelled; this is a man who is noble both as far as his paternal as well as his maternal uncles are concerned; this is a man who is extraordinary in his affairs and circumstances; this is a man of exalted ancestry, who has garnered virtue; this is a man who has rights over other people, whereas, whoever falls short⁸ in the respect this man is due, is full of hypocrisy or disobedience.

Then he said to me:

O Sā'ib, do you know that this region belongs to your paternal

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² See M4, n. 1, above.

³ Reading *yujāri-hi*, rather than *yuhār-hi*.

⁴ See M3, n. 21, above.

⁵ See M3, n. 21, above.

⁶ I.e., to the subject of philosophy.

⁷ I.e., to the subject of grammar.

⁸ Reading *li-l-qaṣīri*, rather than *al-qaṣīru*.

cousin⁹, and that he is related to you both on your father's and on your mother's side; that a single genealogy includes both of you, and that a single honor and virtue connect you to him?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he led me to a man who was surrounded by a large entourage; one whose stature was tall, whose courtyard was spacious, whose torrent-bed was wide, whose ambition was far-ranging, and whose religious beliefs were orthodox; a chieftain obeyed by his people, possessing gifts and estates, whose curtain was easily penetrated, whose chamberlains were polite, whose supplicant was answered, whose every act was a marvel.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Abū Ḥabīb spoke with the great man in private for a long time, and sought to obtain what he desired, by mentioning me to him.¹⁰ Thus, the great man was overwhelmed with enthusiasm for me, he divested himself of his arrogance and condescension toward me, and he said:

Welcome to a dear relative and a rare man of letters! Welcome to you, who are newly arrived, welcome indeed! Spacious be your dwelling place, and smooth! To which clan do you belong, from among the Banū Hāšim?¹¹—May you be protected from every enemy and oppressor!

Confusion and shame overwhelmed me, and I did not know whether to speak slowly or in haste, so I said:

I am not a tribesman of the Banū Hāšim, nor a descendant of 'Abd Manāf,¹² yet I would not be putting you off or contradicting you, were I to declare that it is 'Adnān¹³ who connects your clan to mine, and that it is within that family tree that lofty twigs and branches elevate us both.

⁹ Reading either *hādā l-quṭru li-bni 'ammi-ka* or *hādā quṭru bni 'ammi-ka* rather than *hādā l-quṭru bnu 'ammi-ka*, which is ungrammatical.

¹⁰ If Abū Ḥabīb is speaking in private to the grandee, how can al-Sā'ib know what transpires during the conversation? This is another instance of logical inconsistency in the text.

¹¹ I.e., descendants of Hāšim ibn 'Abd Manāf, great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad (see *E.I.* 2, III, 260).

¹² He was the great-great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad (see *E.I.* 2, III, 260).

¹³ See M20, n. 10, above.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the master, Abū Ḥabīb, interrupted, saying:

Shame on you for denying your relationship to your clan and rejecting your biography! Al-Sā'ib is indeed a member of the Banū Hāšim, to the very core! He is no member of Qays¹⁴ or Tamīm!¹⁵ Rather, he is descended from those very members of Qurayš¹⁶ who settled in the bottom of the valley of Mecca! Lo, how can anyone confront or contest this statement of mine? Yet he is far below your rank, and stands motionless when compared to the sweeping range of your orbit. Nonetheless, one's origin is one's origin, one's kin are one's kin, one's head is one's head, one's feet are one's feet, one's courage is one's courage, and one's daring is one's daring.¹⁷

Then I grasped what he was up to, and understood the scheme that had entered his mind and had occurred to him.

Then Abū Ḥabīb said:

O noble lord, a sacred bond has gathered us to your abode and a blaze has touched us, while you are neither weak nor miserly.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the great man prepared skewers of hastily roasted meat for us, and called for a flock of plump, hornless, young sheep, as a result of which, dish after dish appeared, and boon after boon was granted, while we remained in that state, drinking a sweet, as well as an acidulated wine, conversing privately with strong and powerful men, hearing melodies and songs, and mourning both their inhabitants and their habitations. We remained in such a state for days, months, epochs, and ages, until the time came when Abū Ḥabīb grew bored, and the cisterns of his cool, refreshing water were exhausted.

He said to me:

O Sā'ib, let no misgivings about me alarm you. Man is led by the bridle of Fate, while "virtue is tied to the forelocks of horses."¹⁸ As

¹⁴ Qays 'Aylān was one of two major tribal subdivisions of Muḍar (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 833-835).

¹⁵ See M1, n. 12, above.

¹⁶ The tribe inhabiting and controlling Mecca at the time of Muḥammad, of which he was a member (see *E.I.* 2, V, 434-435).

¹⁷ Reading *al-iqdām*, rather than *al-aqdām*.

¹⁸ Allusion to a *ḥadīth* (see *C.I.T.M.*, VI, 469a).

for me, God knows that I am neither unjust nor malevolent. Although these people have monetary assets and ready cash, yet they are sleeping and napping, in gross dereliction of their pious duty, whereas I have been called by the summons to depart, and by my habitual leanness for, in this world, one finds oneself torn between reality and the absurd. Nevertheless, this lord of ours is an impressive one, hence I cannot break my oath to him or fail him, in my response to his endeavors on my behalf. Were I to request his permission to depart, he would twist single strands into a firm rope to detain me, and lower his curtain before me to refuse me, neither granting me leave to go, nor acceding to my request to do so. Yet I must shake down the flanks of his generosity, and cause the teats of his favor to flow, if I am to obtain a traveling-allowance and fill my provision-bag with food, so that we may depart from him in peace and safety, without alarming him by announcing or notifying him of our devious intention. Perhaps we will some day return to him, and a strong she-camel or a thoroughbred steed will bring us back to him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

To carry out his scheme, Abū Ḥabīb waited for a moment when he found the great man to be in a kind¹⁹ and affable mood, whereupon he called upon him, and entreated his sympathy, then he came out to us, having kept his intentions hidden and having received the gifts he desired, whereupon we asked him:

What fell to your lot, and for what purpose did you return to and tarry with the great man?

Abū Ḥabīb replied:

He was very grateful for my proximity to him, and very pleased with my conversation. *He asked me to recite descriptive poetry, which I did;*²⁰ he asked me about the battle-days of the Arabs,²¹ and I was fair in my opinions; *he sought my guidance, so I offered it to him; he asked me to improvise, so I recited [basīl]:*

¹⁹ Read *istaraqqa*, not *astariqqu*, etc.

²⁰ Both this sentence, in italics, as well as the long italicized passage that follows, coincide textually with the one found in some manuscripts of M19, above.

²¹ Legendary tribal wars of pre-Islamic Arabia (see *E.I.* 2, I, 793-794).

O you who have a high-ranking abode, and whose forefather is 'Alī al-Riḍā,²²

It is enough for the one who has triumphed that you see him close to that glory.

The matter is a clear one, not obscure, for when dawn appears, it is very clear.

You are a rain unto mankind; a first and a second lasting spring rain.

All the members of your lineage are guardians of Orthodoxy, and all of you are ornaments to mankind.

When the Banū Hāšim²³ unveil their ornaments, who are the Banū Tamīm,²⁴ and who are the Banū Balī.²⁵

I nurture, for the family of the Prophet, a love in comparison to which, every grief is insignificant.

I have plunged my bucket down a well whose water no bucket can exhaust.

Would that I had a share in that well's generosity, for you, O son of Orthodoxy, are wealthy.

Abū Ḥabīb said:

Then a fit of Hāšimi munificence overwhelmed the great man, a frisson of Fāṭimi²⁶ enthusiasm moved him, and he said:

Give me more, O generous man, may both the coward and the brave sacrifice themselves for you.

Abū Ḥabīb continued:

So I said [basīt]:

²² See M19, n. 14. Either al-Sadūsī is lying about what he said to the ruler of Oman, he has gotten his Šī'is hopelessly confused, or this passage (repeated in M19) does not belong here.

²³ See n. 11, above.

²⁴ See n. 15, above.

²⁵ See M17, n. 20; M19, n. 7, above.

²⁶ The twelfth-century ruler of Oman would surely not have been a Fāṭimid. This suggests that the duplicated portion of the text really belongs in M19 and has, in some yet to be explained way, been recycled here. See n. 22, above. Are we, as in so many other instances, dealing with a deliberate mistake designed to indicate the narrator's unreliability?

The pure and true one exalted you, and God honors and welcomes you!

O son of Glory and Orthodoxy, is it true that you are the hidden Imām²⁷ whom Glory and Orthodoxy conceal in secrecy?

You are descended from noble clansmen, all of them pure and loyal.

Whoever compares you to humankind, compares the ocean to a few paltry drops of water.

Glory to you, O descendant of the Virgin,²⁸ glory to you, for you possess no equal and no one possesses your worth.

Spring and summer are pleasant thanks to you, and they cause pure²⁹ milk to flow.

Therefore, don anew the soft mantle of Majesty, for as long as highborn and sincere men³⁰ endure.

Abū Ḥabīb said:

Then he gave me³¹ a garment, cheered my heart, profusely poured out his wealth, and gave me a servant and a mount. As for me, here you see me in this state, while "the night traveler praises his own night travel."³²

Al-Sā'ib said:

Abū Ḥabīb gave me a cut from the largesse he had received, and said:

Beware lest you blow the lid; depart instead in safety and security, whether you turn left or right, if God Almighty so wills.

²⁷ See M19, n. 18, above.

²⁸ See M19, n. 19, above.

²⁹ Read *ṣafi*, not *ṣamī* and, see W, p. 255, n. 42, and compare with W, p. 185.

³⁰ See M19, n. 20, above.

³¹ Read *fa-'adfā*, not *fa-'afḍā*, and compare with W, p. 185.

³² See M19, n. 21, above.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

We set out in a group, traveling in a caravan, until we came to the city of Qayrawan,² in the company of a band of murderous desert Arabs and wolflike brigands. We reached it after having worn smooth the surface of the road, at which point the medley of nomadic groups and bands departed from us, one after another. Destruction had overtaken the city, Bedouin Arabs had made off with its power,³ diminished its cistern and pool, and shaken its Ḥawarnaq and Sadir.⁴ I therefore halted before those ruins and tracings, and felt nostalgia for those vestiges and tattoo-like markings, for I remembered how many ladies in their howdahs had departed from it, and how many foes had stabbed it in the throat, how many playful maidens and resolute chieftains, well-watered gardens, henna-stained fingertips, neighborhoods and private enclosures, honors and nobilities, free-grazing herds and livestock, benefits and blessings used to be found in those ruins, hence my heart became hardened against those uncouth former traveling companions of mine, and I rejected them as uncivil allies for, when they passed by the ruins, they had failed to stop or turn the reins of their camels toward them, or to greet them as one should greet effaced encampments⁵ that are redolent of, and smiling from, former opulence. Instead, it was as if they had come upon an unknown region or followed one another down to a desert water-hole. Only

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 22 in D.

² In northeastern Tunisia. The city was founded in 49/670 by the Arab conqueror 'Uqbah, and was the seat of Arab governors in North Africa until 183/800. It was the first capital of the Fātimids (289/902-308/921) and a major center of commerce and learning. In 448/1057 it was destroyed by Hilālī Bedouins (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 824-832).

³ A reference to the Hilālī Bedouins (see *E.I.* 2, III, 385-387) who sacked and destroyed the city in 448/1057.

⁴ Two legendary castles built by the Laḥmid king Nu'mān I (r. ca. AD 400) in the vicinity of Ḥira, in Iraq (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1133).

⁵ A reference to the literary convention of saluting the abandoned encampment, that is often found at the beginning of pre-Islamic *qaṣīdahs*.

plunder and oppression were of interest to them, and only dyes and tattoos⁶ were attractive to them. Therefore, I watered the ruins with tear after tear, and viewed them as one warning example after another, for how many a sheltered woman had been humbled in them; how many a virtuous one had been overpowered in them; how many a forbidden thing had been made permissible; how many a structure had been torn down; how many a lofty building had been leveled; how many a mediator had been rejected; how many a curtained bridal canopy had been torn to pieces; how many an eardrop and anklet had been plucked off; how many a secure person had been terrorized, and how many a concealed person had been flushed out amid those ruins. While I was expressing my sorrow by invoking God's unity and greatness; while I was contemplating the ruins and deriving a warning from them, I suddenly heard an alarming voice proceeding from among them, whose echo responded, alternated, and took turns with it in resounding. It said: "O ruins, where are your residents? O spring encampments, how numerous are your lodgings! O abodes, is there a dweller within you? O aerie, does anyone nest inside you? Are you dumb or are you deaf? Are you possessed or are you touched by lunacy? How long shall I ring a bell, only to summon or address one who is mute? Indeed, some calamitous event must have smitten this vicinity, worsened its state, and made years and years elapse, until these ruins have come to see red-thighed, rutting male ostriches, along with wild asses, replace moon-like beauties and sagacious men; tawny gazelles hiding in their coverts replace fair-skinned maidens; wild vultures replace virginal beauties; snub-nosed, hairy he-goats replace slender, short-haired purebred horses, and the hoot and the howl of two kinds of owl replace, indeed, the wail of the lute and the neigh of the steed. Woe for all your men! Woe for your ample domain! Woe for your hardships! Woe for your playgrounds! Woe for your stallion-like chieftains! Woe for your Arabs and your non-Arabs!⁷ Contrary winds have toyed with your domain, the downpour of heavy rains has erased your traces; decay has trailed the

⁶ I.e., they are attracted to women who bare their flesh and are, therefore, of easy virtue, in contrast to the narrator's idealized literary substitutes.

⁷ Literally, 'your Rūm'. The term was used in the East to refer to the Byzantines but, in al-Andalus, to the Northern Christians, particularly the Leonese and Castilians (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 601-606).

edges of its robes over you, caused its torrents to flow through your valley, pitched its tent, remained in your courtyard, and worn smooth your camel-park and your abode.”

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, I was alarmed by that speaker and said: “Hail, you who halt at midnight or at midday to break your journey with a brief nap!” I went forth, in his direction, in order to win his friendship and rest my sturdy she-camel. And lo, he was of a tall build and stature. He invited me to remain and stay, and began saying: “My good man, tarry here, rather than hastening off, and be at peace rather than in fear. Let me put you in touch with your comrades, and comfort you in your weeping and wailing. These ruins are marvels, indeed, but the nights are meant for riding nobly bred coursers of ancient lineage, rather than that camel upon which you impose the arduous task of running at a broad pace or a swift trot, or for seeking right guidance from the nocturnal dream-image and blowing breeze, as you do. You heedlessly pass these ruins by and ignore them, while the stars rise and set over them. Go to yonder sepulcher and you will find in it the sculptured image of a peacock, and behold statues like fair-skinned beauties who will speak to you with no need of a tongue.”

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I descended from my camel at his bidding, placed its halter in his hand, tossed him my provision-bag, and went to contemplate those graven images, after I had doffed the clothes of my weakness and debility. I stayed there for a long time, wandering back and forth, for his words had filled me with perplexity and confusion. But when I sought him in the place where I had promised to meet him again, he was missing and I could not find him. Soon I discovered that he had written on a gravestone, with a bright and shiny piece of charcoal [*tawīl*]:

When companionship interferes with your journey, do not remain weeping for it before each and every ruin.

Cease remembering Hind and Rabāb,⁸ for your only concern should be in putting riding-camels to the trot.

⁸ Two ladies' names, of the sort that populate the *nasībs* ('amatory preludes')

Is the earth's entire surface other than an empty desert? Hence what is so important about a ruined encampment between Buṣṣā⁹ and Jāsim?¹⁰

If raging storms whose violent winds cause destruction, have recently blown Qayrawan and its inhabitants away,

Why, formerly, they toppled the thrones of 'Ād and Jurhum,¹¹ when death trampled their territory underfoot.

O Sā'ib, let my smiling not deceive you, for how much weeping hides behind a cheerful smile.

When the world you live in scowls, revealing the fang of distress, hope will show you mouths serenely smiling.

Go now, all the wiser for the tribulations I have inflicted on you, for my beauties glow upon the cheek of Time.

Mourn not for what has befallen you, but kindle instead the shining spark of prudence amid these ruined habitations,

And avoid avaricious men, for disgraceful experiences affect one, at all seasons, because of them.

Indeed, al-Karaj¹² is not the whole world nor is all mankind Qāsim,¹³

of many pre-Islamic poems. D reads: "Cease remembering what has elapsed as far as you are concerned . . ." which echoes the sentiment expressed in l. 8, below.

⁹ There are two towns by that name: One near Damascus, and another near Baghdad (see *E.I.* 2, I, 1275-1277; *J.G.W.*, I, 588, 665, and *passim*).

¹⁰ A town on the right of the main road to Tiberias. It is eight leagues from Damascus (*J.G.W.*, I, 333, and *passim*).

¹¹ Two illustrious pre-Islamic tribes that are reputed to have been destroyed by God for their wickedness (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, I, 169; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, II, 603-604).

¹² A city in Iran, halfway between Hamadhan and Isfahan (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 598).

¹³ This is the second hemistich of a line of poetry either by Maṣṣūr ibn Bādān or by Bakr ibn Niṭāḥ. The entire line goes:

Let me traverse the open spaces of the earth, for al-Karaj is not the whole world nor is all mankind Qāsim.

Qāsim built and ruled the city of al-Karaj during the third/ninth century. The

But rather, our daily bread, in the hand of the Distributor, is all that is of value in this world.

Thus I knew that he was that cunning master and predatory wolf, Abū Ḥabīb—may he not prosper!—who was as odious to me as he was dear.¹⁴

poet recited a eulogy to him, but did not obtain a reward equal to his expectations and, therefore, departed in a huff, reciting the above line. See Ibn Ḥallikān, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary (Wafayāt al-A'yān)*, trans. Baron MacGuckin de Slane (Paris, 1843), II, 502-507, at p. 504 (hereafter abbreviated *I.K.B.D.*).

¹⁴ Left unexplained is how al-Sā'ib leaves the ruins of Qayrawan, in the middle of the desert, where he has been left stranded without a camel and without his traveling provisions. This omission arouses a strong suspicion that the narrator is being portrayed as unreliable.

Maqāmah 30
(*The Poets*)

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

In the person of the master Abū Ḥabīb, I had been afflicted with a companion who hardly visited his injuries upon me infrequently, and whose affronts did not justify the sincere friendship I felt for him; with a man who sent calamities my way and set snares in my path, as if he knew none but me and was concerned with none but my comings and goings. Despite that, I yearned to meet him, I sought to prolong my encounters with him, I forgave his lapses, I associated with him despite the seriousness of his shortcomings, I nursed the wounds and injuries he inflicted on me, and I asked Time to provide me with his learning and knowledge, so that I might peer into the secrets hidden within his heart and soul. In sum, I sought out his shape and form in every person who approached me.

One day, when I was in a trackless wilderness, in the company of emaciated travelers, deeply engaged in conversation, handling the reins, and stroking the manes of horses, I heard mention of the battles of al-Naqā¹ and al-Danā'ib² coming from the rear of the caravan, and I thus lent ear to the splendid exposition of a well-controlled tongue. When the noonday heat became so unbearable that even intimate friends withdrew from one another, we turned toward a bend in the valley, dusted off the remains of our traveling provisions, pitched our tents, and settled down to sleep. But it was not long before someone cried out to us loudly and stirred together his porridge from our meal,³ for he begged with the insistence of

¹ A pre-Islamic battle between the tribes of Ṭa'labah and Bakr. See Ibn Rašiq al-Qayrawānī, *al-'Umdah fī mahāsin al-šī'r wa-'ādābi-hi wa-naqdi-hi*, ed. Muḥammad, Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, 3d ed. (Cairo, 1964), II, 208.

² A pre-Islamic battle, either between the tribes of Taglib and Bakr, or of Ḡassān versus Laḥm and Najrān. See Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *Kitāb al-'iqd al-farīd*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn, et al. (Cairo, 1965), V, 218.

³ Allusion to the Arabic proverb "Juwayn stirred together his porridge from another's meal," applied to those who are generous with the money of others (see Louis Ma'lūf, *al-Munjid fī l-luḡah* [Beirut, repr. 1966], p. 81b, s. v. *jadaha*). In other words, the newcomer helps himself liberally to the belongings of the travelers.

the destitute, and took with us such liberties as are taken by the shameless. Therefore, we scattered some dates before him, whereupon he glanced⁴ at them as if they were red-hot embers.⁵ So I said: "May God grant you a long life! What is your desire, for my pasture will be a fertile one for you? What is your command, for you are of goodly aspect and comely appearance?"

He replied [*mujlatf*]:

Of what importance is my comely appearance to me, when you provide such good news?

My gift of speech is subtle⁶, so understand well the request about which I am hinting, for I would give myself in sacrifice for you!

This freeborn man standing before you is hinting for traveling provisions, and you lack not for a hint.

Everybody grants one traveling provisions, but nobody grants one friendship;

All men offer one honey in their words, but they all deny one the hive.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I scrutinized him, only to discover that he was al-Sadūsī, news of whose comings and goings, at the promptings of Fate, my soul had so desired to obtain, so I said: "Greetings, O absent one, who have shown up and are finally present; I have felt overwhelming grief and regret at parting from you, for you occupy an important place in my soul. Do not bring disgrace upon learning by begging, thereby demeaning yourself. Let me share my property with you, and support you in my comings and goings, for I am affluent, and it is my duty to perform a good deed."

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I gave him a camel on the hump and withers of which to

⁴ Reading *lamaḥa* with Ḍ, rather than *lama'a* with W, otherwise the sentence would be ungrammatical.

⁵ I.e., inedible.

⁶ This phrase may also be translated: 'my girdle is light', i.e., lacking money. Hence this is a pun.

ride, I went along with him under the risings and settings of the stars, and I found none who was a more delightful informant or a better storyteller; none whose lance was sharper, none whose reins were more compliant, until we paused in the vale of poetry and versification, where I was able to debate against his eloquent tongue and powerful grasp of the subject.

I was of the opinion that poetry was the choicest fruit of all knowledge, and the greatest of all talents, so I said: "What is your opinion of the Wandering King?"⁷ He replied: "He wore a crown and diadem. As the guest of al-Mu'allā,⁸ he enjoyed extensive good fortune. He was Hunduj⁹ Abū l-Ḥārīṭ¹⁰ rather than a mere wage-earner or ploughman;¹¹ he was neither a successor nor an heir; he was extremely eloquent in seeking out royalty, after having at first been negligent and remiss in doing so. Let it suffice you to know that he held aloft the banner of poetry, and led *qayls*¹² and *dūs*,¹³ that he did not compose poetry out of need, that he opened the locks and gateways of speech. It has even been claimed that 'poetry began with the tribe of Kindah and ended with the tribe of Kindah',¹⁴ though everyone is entitled to his own opinion."

I asked: "What about the Murdered Youth?"¹⁵ He replied: "He grasps the smallest detail.¹⁶ He is Ṭarafah, and what a *ṭarafah*!¹⁷ Time cast the evil eye on him with its glance when it gazed on

⁷ Imru' al-Qays, the most famous of the pre-Islamic poets, and composer of a *mu'allaqah* (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 254-255). He was descended from the ancient kings of Yemen. Banished by his father, he left his home and wandered from tribe to tribe leading a wild life, hence his nickname. He died *ca.* AD 550 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1177-1178).

⁸ The name of his host in the tribe of Ṭayyi'.

⁹ The name means 'an eminence'.

¹⁰ The name means 'a lion'.

¹¹ *Ḥārīṭ*. Here and below, the author puns on the names of the poets.

¹² The title of the pre-Islamic kings of Ḥimyar (see M4, n. 5, above).

¹³ Kings of Ḥimyar whose names began with *dū* (see *E.I.* 2, I, 194-195).

¹⁴ Kindah was the name of the tribe to which Imru' al-Qays belonged, and also the name of the neighborhood in Kufa where al-Mutanabbī (see n. 141, below), considered by some to be the greatest Arab poet, was born.

¹⁵ Ṭarafah ibn al-'Abd was another famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poet, who is said to have died prematurely (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 662-664).

¹⁶ Literally, 'his is the cleft of the datestone, as well as the pellicle therein', both items being symbols of what is minutely detailed.

¹⁷ *Tamarix gallica* or French tamarisk, whose wood is unsuitable for carpentry.

him,¹⁸ uprooting both his *attl*¹⁹ and his *ṭarafah*.²⁰ He attained full mastery before he became an adult; he was energetic before reaching maturity; he stood out before wearing the sword suspensory, he departed this life before he had exhausted his hidden talents, nor did he have the time fully to express his thoughts or reveal his ideas."

I asked: "What about Ibn Abī Sulmā?"²¹ He replied: "He is Mount Ajā' or Mount Salmā;²² a flower in full bloom,²³ not a bud;²⁴ a flooding river, not a babbling brook; he is a master of aphorisms²⁵ and polished sentences, a cumulus-cloud of pure language thundering on the horizon; he carefully revised his poetry, so that his seed was fertile; his rhyme, deliberate, and error humbly submitted to him."

I asked: "What about Ziyād, of the tribe of Ḍubyān?"²⁶ He replied: "He was a thoroughbred steed competing in an arena whose racehorses pursue their goal without quenching their thirst, not even on a trickle or a puddle. He is Abū Umāmah, and what an *abū umāmah*!²⁷ He was afraid to die, kept his oaths, and trusted neither *ṭalh*²⁸ nor *tumām*²⁹ to conceal him for, in his fear and confusion, he thought that what was behind him was in front of him."³⁰

¹⁸ *Ṭarafa-hu*.

¹⁹ *Tamarix orientalis* or Oriental tamarisk, producing an excellent wood highly prized in making bowls.

²⁰ French tamarisk.

²¹ Zuhayr, another of the famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poets (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1236-1237).

²² Both in Najd (see *E.I.* 2, I, 203).

²³ *Ṣahar*.

²⁴ *Zuhayr*. Here the author is punning on the literal meaning of the poet's name.

²⁵ Vowelizing *ḥikam* rather than *ḥukm*.

²⁶ Al-Nābiḡah al-Ḍubyānī, another famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poet. He was alive in the period spanning AD 570 to 600 (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 840-842).

²⁷ The name means literally 'a possessor of three hundred camels'.

²⁸ *Mimosa gummifera*, a shade-producing tree.

²⁹ *Panicum dichotomum*, a kind of grass used for stuffing holes and gaps in tents and houses (cf. M38, n. 16, below).

³⁰ The poet attended the Laḥmid court of Nu'mān III of Ḥīra (r. AD 580-602, or 585-607) in Iraq (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 119-120). When he fell out of favor with that monarch (according to one legend, for praising the beauty of the queen in a poem), he fled, in fear for his life, to the rival Gassānid court in Syria.

When his king, Nu'mān,³¹ threatened him, and his desire for survival drove him away, he displayed all the artistic excellence and refinement one might desire, both with his heart and with his tongue."

I asked: "What is your opinion about the tribesman of 'Abs?'"³² He replied: "He is a *jinni* clothed in human skin; the valor³³ of chevaliers! What an expert and a master he is when he describes blows of the sword and thrusts of the lance, and concerns himself with ladies' howdahs and camel-litters. He is everything one can hope for in a knight of gentle birth, or a commoner of merit.³⁴ When he composes love poetry, he is greatly appreciated; when he composes poetry of self-praise he revels in his pride."

I asked: "What about 'Alqamah,³⁵ the master-poet?'"³⁶ He answered: "He is both a sturdy she-camel and a camel-saddle; he is both abundance and dearth. He struggled and was defeated, he asked a favor and was granted his request, so that he won the freedom of Ša's.³⁷ After hopelessness and despair, he obtained many buckets with 'one bucket',³⁸ by asking forgiveness for the offense

³¹ Nu'mān III.

³² 'Antarah ibn Šaddād, another famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poet of the sixth century, as well as a valiant warrior. Later on, he was turned into the hero of an extensive popular epic (see *E.I.* 2, I, 521-522).

³³ 'Antarah. Once again, the author is punning on the literal meaning of the poet's name.

³⁴ The poet's father was a noble Arab, but his mother was an Abyssinian slave.

³⁵ 'Alqamah ibn 'Abadah was active in the first half of the sixth century. He was another famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poet (see *E.I.* 2, I, 405).

³⁶ *Al-fahl*, literally, 'the stallion', but also a figurative term for a poet of the first order. It was 'Alqamah's surname.

³⁷ The poet's most famous poem is one that he addressed to the Ġassānid prince Ḥārīṭ al-A'raj (r. ca. AD 529-569), (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1020-1022) asking him to free some prisoners of Tamīm (the poet's tribe) among whom was his own brother or nephew, Ša's.

³⁸ This alludes to the third from last line of the poem addressed to Ḥārīṭ, in which the poet declares:

And upon every tribe you have conferred a benefit, therefore, Ša's deserves a bucket of the dew of your generosity.

Upon hearing this plea, Ḥārīṭ responded: "Yes, and many buckets." See al-A'lam al-Šantamarīyī, *Šarḥ ḏiḡwān 'Alqamah ibn 'Abadah al-Fahl*, ed. Ḥannā Naṣr al-Ḥittī (Beirut, 1993), pp. 23-32.

that had been committed. God, how Umm Jundub³⁹ inflicted a misfortune⁴⁰ on him! She arbitrated in the dispute, thereby strengthening and consolidating her attachment, but she remained unsatisfied with her infidelity, and so she concealed her true feelings, while having been scorned caused 'Alqamah no harm once the Wandering King had departed."

I asked: "What about the poets of Huḍayl?"⁴¹ He replied: "They represent a little palm tree laden with dates, or a little rubbing post for itching, mangy camels;⁴² they are murderous outlaws, rapacious destroyers, severe and harsh individuals; they are masters of pure speech and eloquence; both quarrelsome and peaceful heroes."

I asked: "What about A'sà of Bakr?"⁴³ He answered: "He is everything one can desire in the way of original ideas and innovative thoughts. He totally deflowers ideas; he summons rhymes and they swiftly respond to his call. He is Abū Baṣīr, and what an *abū baṣīr*!⁴⁴ He is endowed with keen insight, if impaired physical vision, and is both acceptance and rejection, sobriety and drunkenness, the song of a wineseller and the suffering of a hangover. In the pre-Islamic period, poetry came to an end with him;⁴⁵ after his passing, the saddleblankets of every camel-saddle were shaken out and dusted;⁴⁶ he did not leave to his successors a single promise to make, or oath to swear, that he had not already made and sworn."⁴⁷

³⁹ She was from the tribe of Ṭayyī', and married Imru' al-Qays while he was living among that tribe. 'Alqamah engaged in a poetic duel with Imru' al-Qays, as a result of which the latter divorced Umm Jundub, who had served as arbiter in the duel, and judged against her husband. Then 'Alqamah married her. See 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar al-Baġdādī, *Ḥizānat al-adab wa-lubb lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥaṭīb, et al. (Cairo, 1931), III, 256-258.

⁴⁰ *Umm jundub*. This is another pun on a proper name.

⁴¹ A tribe living between Mecca and Medina to which a number of famous pre-Islamic poets belonged (see *E.I.* 2, III, 540-541).

⁴² I.e., abundance and relief.

⁴³ Another famous pre-Islamic *mu'allaqah* poet, who was born before AD 570, and died after AD 625. He was blind (*a'sā*), (see *E.I.* 2, I, 689-690).

⁴⁴ "A visionary" (literally, 'a father of vision'), a term often applied to the blind. This is another name-pun.

⁴⁵ The poet is reputed to have lived a long life and to have survived into the Islamic era, whose new religion he adopted.

⁴⁶ As a sign that the journey (in this case, the literary period) was over.

⁴⁷ Since Classical Arabic poetry is based on traditional topoi or commonplaces, the idea being expressed here is that al-A'sà already said it all, leaving nothing new for later poets to add.

I asked: "What about Ḥassān al-Ḥazraǵī?"⁴⁸ He replied: "He is beauty and excellence, loyalty and faith, piety and belief. He is Abū Tābit, and what an *abū tābit*!"⁴⁹ He puts to shame every chieftain and person of distinction. How generous is he, that pure and supremely wise man who was upheld by the Holy Spirit in his defense of the Faith. He struggled for a long time to win greatness by defending the Prophet; he supported and protected the Faith, so that he earned Paradise and won God's satisfaction."

I asked: "What about the master Abū 'Aqīl?"⁵⁰ He responded: "He was of noble ancestry, like unto a burnished sword. He was Labīd, and what a *labīd*!"⁵¹ He was honey, not colocynth, and a judgment that does not perish. When he spoke, he was truthful, and when he was generous, he was most liberal with his shower. He was the first to feed the people when the winds blew,⁵² and to limit the period of mourning to one year."⁵³

I enquired: "What about al-Ḥuṭay'ah?"⁵⁴ He said: "He can be violent and then recover from his anger. He is Abū Mulaykah, Jarwal, and what a *jarwal*!"⁵⁵ He is a string of smooth pearls, not a

⁴⁸ He was a panegyrist and supporter of the Prophet Muḥammad, often referred to as his "poet laureate," and is said to have died during the caliphate of Mu'āwiyah (r. 41/661-60/680), at some time between 40/659 and 54/673 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 271-272).

⁴⁹ 'A man of constancy'.

⁵⁰ He was Labīd ibn Rabī'ah, a famous *muḥadram* or 'Transitional' poet, i.e., one who was born in the pre-Islamic period, but lived to see the rise of Islam. He composed one of the seven *Mu'allaqāt* (see *E.I.* 2, V, 583-584).

⁵¹ 'A horse's nosebag full of fodder'.

⁵² In the pre-Islamic period, the poet is said to have vowed to feed the people as long as the east wind blew, and continued to impose this same charitable duty upon himself after the advent of Islam. See Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Šīr wa-l-šū'arā'* (Istanbul, 1866; repr. Beirut, n. d.), pp. 50-55, at p. 51.

⁵³ A reference to a line by the poet that goes:

Weep for a year, and then, may the name of peace be upon you, for whoever weeps for an entire year may be excused.

See Labīd ibn Rabī'ah al-'Āmirī, *Dīwān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Kuwait, 1962), p. 214, l. 7.

⁵⁴ A 'Transitional' poet unrivalled in invective. His name means 'the dwarf' (see *E.I.* 2, III, 641). He survived into the reign of Mu'āwiyah I (41/661-60/680), (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 263-268).

⁵⁵ 'A rock'.

jarwal,⁵⁶ a river, not a brook. He was wise and intelligent in his discourse; good summoned him from nearby and embraced him closely, when he declared: 'The recognition of what takes place between God and mortals does not perish'.⁵⁷ But then he became immoderate, exceeding all bounds in invective poetry, by ascending and looking out from the pinnacle of evil. But in any circumstance, his share of talent is highly desirable, and one cannot ignore the standing of one such as he."

I said: "What about the poet from the tribe of Numayr?"⁵⁸ He replied: "Shame on him for being a slanderer concealed in the hide of an irreproachably honorable little man;⁵⁹ one dwelling between Buṣrā and ʿUbayr.⁶⁰ He was Abū Jandal, 'Ubayd,⁶¹ master of minute details. Camelherders glory in him, yet even second-rate poets reject him. He contended with poetry's bounding main, and ventured boldly into the beginnings and ends of poems, but was overcome by sleeplessness and insomnia so that, instead of finishing them, he smoothed his bed and couch in preparation for sleep."

I asked: "What about al-Farazdaq⁶² and Jarīr?"⁶³ He responded: "They are cotton and silk, a camel's nose-band and its muzzle.⁶⁴ They are Abū Farās and Abū Ḥazrah,⁶⁵ they alternate like the high and low tides, they are two horses winning all bets. Neither of them

⁵⁶ 'A stony stretch of land'.

⁵⁷ This is the second hemistich of the following line of poetry by him:

Whoever performs a good deed will not lack his reward, for the recognition of what takes place between God and mortals does not perish.

See al-Ḥuṭay'ah, *Dīwān*, ed. Nu'mān Muḥammad Amīn Ṭāhā (Cairo, 1987), p. 51, l. 15.

⁵⁸ A tribe from Najd (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 120).

⁵⁹ *Numayr*. The word also means 'a little leopard'.

⁶⁰ Towns in Syria, near Damascus (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, I, 1275-1277; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, II, 1021b).

⁶¹ His name was 'Ubayd ibn Ḥusayn, Abū Jandal, a 'Transitional' poet famous for his descriptions of camels, for which he became known as Rā'ī l-Ibl ('the camel herdsman'), (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 400-401).

⁶² Hammām ibn Ḡālib, generally known as al-Farazdaq (d. 109/728) was a famous satirical poet from the Umayyad period (see *E.I.* 2, II, 988-789).

⁶³ Jarīr ibn 'Aṭīyah (28/640-110/728), another major Umayyad satirist, was a contemporary of al-Farazdaq, with whom he exchanged invective verse (see *E.I.* 2, II, 479-480).

⁶⁴ *Jarīr*.

⁶⁵ Surnames of the two poets.

has ever been degraded or vilified. As for Hammām,⁶⁶ he is a heroic lord, the clouds' first rain, a cloud bursting with water, a sea whose depths cannot be fathomed, a racehorse whose racetrack cannot be coursed; he carves on solid rock and speaks of glory. As for Jarīr, he is a swift steed who gains precedence, whose rider runs over rough ground, then comes to the smooth; who speeds up, then slows down; who encounters difficulties, then overcomes them; who utters many words, then only a few; who is obscure, then clear, and who is harsh, then gentle. He scoops out his utterances from the boundless main, only to produce words of enchantment; he vies with the delicacy of the breeze, only to produce diction that is wondrous and graceful."

I said: "What is your opinion of Ġaylān?"⁶⁷ He responded: "He embodies the superiority of the tribe of 'Adī⁶⁸ to that of Qays 'Aylān.⁶⁹ He is Abū Ḥārīt, and what an *abū ḥārīt*!⁷⁰ He is one who endures when he is hungry; who suffers when he is oppressed. When he described the halting-places and stages of journeys, ladies traveling in howdahs and female riding-camels, maidens and beloveds, deserts and mounts, tribes and encamped travelers, afternoon and evening shadows, and when misfortunes struck him down, and bearers of lucky and unlucky omens crossed his path, so that he composed love poems and elegies to Mayyah,⁷¹ he provided full satisfaction. Therefore, accept him as the descriptive and lyrical poet that he is, without expecting him to be a satirist or a panegyrist."

I said: "What about the Maḥzūmī Abū l-Ḥaṭṭāb?"⁷² He answered:

⁶⁶ A surname of al-Farazdaq.

⁶⁷ Ġaylān ibn 'Uqbah, known as Dū l-Rummaḥ (d. ca. 110/728), was an Umayyad poet famous for his imitations of the traditional Bedouin *qaṣīdah* (see *E.I.* 2, II, 245-246).

⁶⁸ Dū l-Rummaḥ's tribe. It is North Arabian (see *E.I.* 2, III, 386a).

⁶⁹ A major North Arabian tribe to which numerous important Arab poets belonged, including (only to mention those featured in this *maqāmah*) al-Nābiḡah al-Dubyanī, 'Antarah, Labīd, al-Ḥansā', al-Ḥuṭay'ah, and al-Nābiḡah al-Ja'dī (see *E.I.* 1, II, 652-657, at pp. 656-657). The implication of the above passage is that Dū l-Rummaḥ, by himself, is better than all the poets of Qays 'Aylān put together.

⁷⁰ The term means 'a lion'.

⁷¹ The name of the lady to whom he devoted his love poetry.

⁷² Named 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah (d. 100/719). He was an Umayyad poet

“How welcome is he, insofar as he ‘is equivalent, in nobility of ancestry, to perfume’!⁷³ He is ‘Umar, and what an ‘*umar*!’⁷⁴ He is the subject of evening conversation, and the describer of greater and lesser pilgrimages.⁷⁵ He devoted himself to Suhayl and the latter’s *Turayyā*,⁷⁶ as well as to his own Rabāb and Rayyā.⁷⁷ Yet he fell short of the scope reached by the master-poets, for he neglected the themes of vengeance and bloodwit. Furthermore, he trips over the hems of his own garment, is distracted by his dream-image and the phantom of his imagination, and delights in the acacias and mimosas he describes. Love-poetry entirely obsessed him, and his words exhibit excellence and superiority only when he describes a furtive gaze, a flash of wit, a stolen glance, the keeping of a promise, an attempt to see a beloved once more, and a request to be made happy by her. Thus, talent first grabs him and then lets him go; at times, he gets carried away by passion, and at times, he is rejected by it. He wished the tribe of ‘*Udrah*’⁷⁸ had given birth to him so

from Mecca, famous for his flirtatious and somewhat explicit, though never obscene, love poetry (see *E.I.* I, III, 979).

⁷³ This is a reference to a line of poetry in which the love poet Kuṭayyir (see below) praised the Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar II (r. 98/717-101/720):

O ‘Umar, son of ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb, equivalent, in nobility of ancestry, to perfume . . . (W, p. 285, n. 95).

⁷⁴ ‘A life’.

⁷⁵ The term for ‘lesser pilgrimages’ is ‘*umar*’, plural of ‘*umrah*’.

⁷⁶ The poet ‘Umar composed love poetry for a lady named *Turayyā* (‘Pleades’), but when she married a man named Suhayl (‘Canopus’), he came up with a conceit based upon the literal meaning of the two future spouses’ names, plus the fact that, from the latitude of the Arabian Peninsula, the Pleiades rise in the North (Syria), whereas Canopus rises in the South (Yemen) so that the two can never meet in the heavens:

O you who marry *Turayyā* to Suhayl, by your life, how will the two ever meet?

She is a Syrian [or northern asterism] when she rises, whereas when Suhayl rises, he is a Yemenite [or southern star].

See ‘Umar ibn Abī Rabī‘ah, *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1961), p. 438 (cf. M31, n. 19, below).

⁷⁷ Two of the more than forty ladies to whom the inconstant ‘Umar addressed his love songs.

⁷⁸ In contrast to ‘Umar’s poetry, which was filled with light-hearted flirting, and dedicated to many ladies, that of his contemporaries, the poets from the tribe

that he could have let chastity control his passion, and so that he could have sworn his oath and vow to chastity alone.”

I enquired: “What about Abū ‘Amr,⁷⁹ ‘the Tormented’?” He responded: “He was ransomed with superior, red camels, buffered by wealth and a long life. He is Jamīl, and what a *jamīl*!”⁸⁰ He is a spokesman or guarantor; he is both crude and refined, he is sublime and captivating. He has a manner that is comely by reason of its kindliness, and words such that the softness of the breeze is considered rough next to their gentleness. When love makes him tremble and renders him unruly; when desire overcomes him and seeks him out, he has the stroke of a burnished sword, the strength of tempered wine, and the power of youth over gray-haired old age. He has the coquetry of Iraq and the grace of the Hījāz, the passion of lovers, and the profusion of the *rajaḥ* poets.”⁸¹

I said: “What about the Ḥuzā‘ī, Ibn Abī Jum‘ah?”⁸² He answered: “He felt an ardent love, shed a tear, and enjoyed praise and fame. He is Abū Ṣaḥr, and what an *abū ṣaḥr*!”⁸³ He is a man of glory and pride. It is enough for you to know that he is one of the joists holding up the love-elegy and one of the stays supporting the panegyric, as well as a master of puns and of ambiguous forms of speech. He causes human hearts and breasts to throb when love-sickness and passion make him speak. He is a master-panegyrist and a flint that strikes abundant fire. When he yearns and pines, nothing can curb or restrain him. ‘Azzah⁸⁴ controlled his bridle, all the while disregarding his piteous claims, so he requested of her ‘the mere shadow of a cloud’,⁸⁵ but he managed to bag not a single

of ‘Uḍrah (whose name, perhaps not uncoincidentally, literally means ‘virginity’) was characterized by hopelessness, chastity, frustration, and faithfulness to a single lady (see *E.I.* I, IV, 988-990).

⁷⁹ Known as Jamīl (d. 81/701), a famous love poet of the ‘Uḍri school (see *E.I.* 2, II, 427-428).

⁸⁰ ‘A beautiful one’.

⁸¹ Poets who composed unusually long poems in the meter *rajaḥ*.

⁸² He was Kuṭayyir (d. 104/723), a love poet of the ‘Uḍri school (see *E.I.* 2, V, 551-553).

⁸³ Literally, ‘father of a rock,’ i.e., ‘one possessing the solidity of a rock’.

⁸⁴ The name of his beloved.

⁸⁵ A reference to two lines of poetry by Kuṭayyir, in which he declares:

one of her sandgrouse or doves. He was an abundance that was reduced⁸⁶ and a hero who was humiliated for, since ancient times, great men have been humbled in order to be glorified subsequently, and experts have been considered ignorant despite their knowledge. How delightful is he to men of letters, and how he transcends all lands, be they fertile or barren."

I said: "What about the Taḡlibī, Abū Mālik?"⁸⁷ He replied: "Won't you avoid all that concerns him, and leave him to be forgotten among mortals? He is one whose tongue is sharp and whose talent is solid, who was not handicapped by being a Christian, while the fact that he was a townsman did not corrupt the purity of his speech.⁸⁸ On the contrary, he overwhelmed and dumbfounded people, so that they shrank away from him. May he perish, Ġiyāt⁸⁹ that he is, who never experienced good with the benefit of any help.⁹⁰ On account of the loquacity of his tongue he was called Aḥṭal⁹¹ or, perhaps, because of how he censured mistakes and loquacity⁹² in others."

I enquired: "What about the slave, Abū l-Ḥajnā?"⁹³ He replied: "You are a natural glutton for punishment. He is Nuṣayb, and what a *nuṣayb*!⁹⁴ He is fully bounteous, not just partly so; he is endowed

I and my mad passion for 'Azzah, after she and I gave up what existed between us,

Are like one who hopes for the shadow of a cloud: whenever he settles down to take a siesta beneath it, it vanishes.

See Kuṭayyir 'Azzah, *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1971), p. 103.

⁸⁶ In Arabic, the phrase *kaṭīrun qullila*, may also be understood as 'an abundance (*kaṭīrun*) that was put in the diminutive (*qullila*)', while the diminutive of *kaṭīr* is precisely *kuṭayyir*, the name of the poet.

⁸⁷ Known as al-Aḥṭal (19/640-90/708), he was a Christian from northern Iraq, and a famous Umayyad panegyrist and satirist. He formed part of a talented trio whose other two members were Jarīr and al-Farazdaq (see *E.I.* 2, I, 331).

⁸⁸ A reference to the firmly held belief that only Bedouins spoke pure Arabic and that, as a result of the influence of foreigners, the Arabic language tended to become corrupt whenever Bedouins settled in towns.

⁸⁹ Surname of the poet.

⁹⁰ *Ġiyāl*.

⁹¹ 'Loquacious one'.

⁹² *Ḥaṭal*.

⁹³ Nuṣayb ibn Rabāḥ (d. 108/726), a black slave and a famous Umayyad poet (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 145).

⁹⁴ 'A little monument'.

with luck and good fortune; in excellence, he is an unerring arrow; he is a freeborn slave, and bitter-sweet; his loyalty was so noble that he became illustrious, and his disposition was so goodly that he became gracious. During his life, he fell in love with Da'd⁹⁵ and declared that he would be jealous of her even after his death."⁹⁶

I said: "What is your opinion about al-Ḥansā'?"⁹⁷ He replied: "Hasten to the women poets, now that, in discussing the men among them, you have already been granted such detailed elaboration and space!" I replied: "At any rate, you must inform me about her and about Laylā al-Aḥyālīyah,⁹⁸ for both of them attained high rank." Then he replied: "To hell with both of them, since the one is a calamity, and the other, a disaster! They both peered into hidden matters with a clear eye, to the point that they surpassed first-rate and master-poets, nor did they neglect the theme of vengeance and the bloodwit. Al-Ḥansā' is Tumāḍīr, and what a *tumāḍīr*!⁹⁹ She has a face radiant with excellence and is an urban nomad in the purity of her speech; she is a mourning dove, and a kindler of passion's flint who always strikes fire. She dispensed with composing any love-elegy or poem of self-praise and mourned instead over Mu'āwīyah and Ṣaḥr.¹⁰⁰ As far as Laylā al-Aḥyālīyah is concerned, what a *laylā*!¹⁰¹ she is! Let it suffice you to know that she outwitted no less than al-Ḥajjāj¹⁰² as she traversed the mountain passes and rugged

⁹⁵ The lady to whom he devoted his love poems.

⁹⁶ A reference to a line of poetry by Nuṣayb, in which he states:

I will pine for Da'd as long as I live and, when I die—woe unto Da'd!—who will pine for her after me?

See Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *Kitāb al-'iqd al-farīd*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn, et al. (Cairo, 1965), V, 373.

⁹⁷ Named Tumāḍīr (ca. AD 575-AH 24/645), she is famous for the elegies in which she mourned her brothers Mu'āwīyah and Ṣaḥr, both of whom perished in battle (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1027).

⁹⁸ She died ca. 80/700, and was also famous for her elegies (see *E.I.* 2, V, 710).

⁹⁹ Literally 'she traces her lineage to the tribe of Muḍar'.

¹⁰⁰ Her slain brothers.

¹⁰¹ 'Intoxication'.

¹⁰² He lived from 40/660 to 95/714 and was an Umayyad governor of Iraq known for his severity (cf. M13, n. 11, above). This passage is an allusion to an incident in which the poetess appeared before al-Ḥajjāj and was asked by him to recite a poem about her lover Tawbah, in which she alluded negatively to the governor. Her words angered the latter, who ordered her tongue to be cut out.

roads of speech. She brought about the death of Tawbah¹⁰³ by alternating between unruliness and regret. She drove al-Ja'dī¹⁰⁴ away, causing him to take to his heels in flight, to the point that he died and was lost to his family and friends."

I said: "What about mentioning al-Ja'dī?"¹⁰⁵ To which he answered: "Shame on you, you little Ma'addi;¹⁰⁶ your words drift from one topic to another, and even your seriousness is nothing but buffoonery. You wander up and down, neglecting no famous or obscure person. Abū Laylā, Qays was a man of authority and proud bearing.¹⁰⁷ Having been given the choice, he described dwellings and depicted horses, elaborating at length in so doing. In discourse, he rode a docile mount, and in poetry, he evoked abandoned encampments, for he was as original as he was amazing, being both able to place the object of his description at a distance, as well as to bring it up close, so that eyewitnesses agreed with him, and saintly ascetics did not avoid him. How excellent was the prayer that he might continue to enjoy the soundness of his teeth,¹⁰⁸ and the favor that raised him above his contemporaries and those of his same age."

I said: "And what about Qays, 'the Madman'?"¹⁰⁹ He answered:

Laylā managed to appease the governor by reciting another poem, this time in his praise. See Muḥammad ibn Šākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1951), II, 289-291, no. 361.

¹⁰³ Tawbah ibn al-Ḥumayyir was a bandit warrior whose love for Laylā could not be fulfilled. When he was assassinated, she composed a famous elegy in his memory (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 912a).

¹⁰⁴ An allusion to a poet named Qays ibn 'Abdallāh, al-Nābiḡah al-Ja'dī (d. 50/670) against whom she engaged in a poetic duel in which she succeeded in surpassing her opponent (see *E.I.* 2, V, 1102-1107).

¹⁰⁵ See n. 104, above.

¹⁰⁶ A member of the North Arabian grouping of Ma'add (see *E.I.* 2, V, 894-895). This is a reference to the Arabic proverb: "Your hearing of the little Ma'addi is better than your seeing him," which is applied to persons whose reputation is superior to their actual appearance (*M.A.*, I, 227-230, no. 655).

¹⁰⁷ *Qays*.

¹⁰⁸ An allusion to an occasion in which the poet praised the Prophet who, in turn declared: "May God not break your teeth!" The poet is said to have enjoyed the benefit of healthy teeth from that time forward. See Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Šīr wa-l-šū'arā'*, pp. 55-58, at p. 56.

¹⁰⁹ Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, al-Majnūn (d. ca. 68/688) was one of the most famous 'Udri poets. He is reputed to have gone mad over his lady Laylā. Their story became legendary and provided the basis for later romances about *Majnūn Laylā* ('Laylā's madman') in several Islamic languages (see *E.I.* 2, V, 1102-1107).

“He was possessed and insane in all sorts and kinds of ways. Love and kindness drove him mad, so that his heart and tongue turned sweet. Passion placed its garments on him and success opened its doors to him. In the arena of ardent love and yearning, he embodies a proverb traveling by day and, in the lowlands and the highlands, he is a dream-image traveling by night. Woe, woe unto him, when he openly mentioned the name of his Laylā, whom he referred to as Umm Mālik,¹¹⁰ thereby perishing among mortals; or when he declared that his meeting with her would be ‘in the wake of westerly wandering stars,’¹¹¹ thus conquering every astonishing summit of originality!”

I asked: “What about Qays ibn al-Darīh?”¹¹² He replied: “He experienced pure love and suffered from a wounded heart and an eyelid injured by love’s sleeplessness. His discourse is ample; it is in earnest, not in jest. Both the content and the form of his poetry are refined, and his loyalty and commitment to love are obvious, for he ‘kissed the surface of the ground’¹¹³ and entreated the midday mirage. How excellent were his affection and inclination, when he invoked his Lubnā’s¹¹⁴ name in the diminutive, and was attracted to her by his distinctive tenderness, and when love distanced him from her at times, and brought him near to her at others! He was a keen observer and a brilliant light; a weak person who became inured to disease; one distressed when he became too ill to sit up on his own; he left the desert but regretted doing so as soon as he began to miss the object of his passion. He claimed that both religion and the

¹¹⁰ Surnames of the lady.

¹¹¹ Allusion to a line by the poet in which he declares:

This morning, as I looked for Laylā, I was like one gazing at dawn in the wake of westerly wandering stars.

See Majnūn Laylā, *Dīwān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāğ (Cairo, 1973), pp. 78-80, at p. 79, no. 51, l. 10.

¹¹² He is another ‘Udri poet (d. ca. 68/688). See *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston, et al. (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, I [Cambridge, 1983]), pp. 425-426; Qays Lubnā, *Dīwān* ed. ‘Adnān Zakī Darwīš (Beirut, 1996).

¹¹³ Referring to a line by the poet stating:

I have never loved your land, and yet I kiss the trace left by one who steps on its surface.

Qays Lubnā, *Dīwān*, pp. 29-30, at p. 30, no. 2, l. 1.

¹¹⁴ His lady.

world we live in possess esoteric and exoteric dimensions, and that ages and eternities would have to intervene before he could experience resignation or consolation for his love."

I asked: "What about al-Mura^{at}, Abū Mu'ād?"¹¹⁵ He replied: "You really need help! You are confusing the *nab*¹¹⁶ with the *ḡarab*,¹¹⁷ and are invoking both the non-Arab and the Arab in one breath! Spare me the sterile, lesser poets, and ask me only about the fertile master-poets!" I retorted: "You must, nonetheless, indulge me by mentioning that son of a slave father, otherwise, how can the likes of you be considered an authority?" He replied: "Despite everything negative I have said, he is Ibn Burd, Baššār, a man of skillful art¹¹⁸ and a collector of tithes;¹¹⁹ he composed at length and in abundance; he erred not, and left a profound influence on those who came after him. Compilation busied itself with him, whereas criticism neglected him; he lacked the purity of speech that characterizes Bedouins, as well as the native-speaker's knowledge of *īrāb*.¹²⁰ Were it not that he was the first Modern, his fame would lie buried in the tomb and the grave. Yet the Moderns held him in esteem, just as the tribe of 'Uqayl¹²¹ held al-Muzāḥim¹²² in esteem,

¹¹⁵ He was the blind poet Baššār ibn Burd (ca. 95/714-167/783). Standing at the watershed between Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd poetry, he was the founder of the *muḥḍaṭ* or 'Modern' school of Arabic poetry that arose in the early 'Abbāsīd period and was characterized by its copious use of conceits and figures of speech. He descended from a noble Persian family (although his father was a former slave), and was accused of heresy, whereupon the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775-169/785) had him flogged to death (see *E.I.* 2, I, 1080-1082).

¹¹⁶ *Chadara tenax*, a tree of which the wood is used in making arrows.

¹¹⁷ A species of willow (see M2, n. 12, above). The expression is equivalent to: "You are confusing apples with oranges."

¹¹⁸ Reading *ḥayyāl* with Ḍ, rather than *ḥiyāl* with W.

¹¹⁹ Reading *'aššār* with Ḍ, rather than *'iṣār* with W.

¹²⁰ Word-endings in Classical Arabic indicating case in the noun and mood in the verb.

¹²¹ A North Arabian tribe (see *E.I.* 2, III, 971-972).

¹²² A love-poet of the tribe of 'Uqayl, who died ca.120/778. See Muḥammad ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī, *Die Klassen der Dichter (Tabaqāt al-šū'arā)*, ed. Joseph Hell (Leiden, 1916), pp. 150-151. The 'Modern' poets were viewed as inferior to the 'Ancients' by traditional scholars, and this is the view being upheld here. What al-Sadūsī is saying is that, just as the poet al-Muzāḥim was held in esteem by the undistinguished tribe of 'Uqayl, so Baššār was held in esteem by the undistinguished 'Modern' school. In other words, al-Sadūsī is damning Baššār with faint praise.

when no king or prince would confer any distinction upon them.”

I asked: “What about al-Šarī, Muslim?”¹²³ He responded: “He is a superior knight wearing an insignia to distinguish him in battle. He surpasses his peers, sunders ties, and cuts down his opponents. He was the first to compose poetry in an elegant style and to adorn it; he climbed and ascended the peak of inventiveness; he hastened swiftly toward passion, until he was felled by the love for which he became well known.”

I asked: “What about al-Ḥakamī, Abū Nuwās?”¹²⁴ He answered: “He was concerned with scandal and winecups; he preferred obscenity and drinking vessels, neglecting descriptions and panegyrics. He clothed wine in the robe of his artistry, and devoted his tongue to it. Were it not for that, his rank would be outstanding and his words, pure gold.”

I said: “What about the senior Ṭayyīṭ?”¹²⁵ He responded: “How fine are the words that he composed and adorned, yet how ugly are the ideas that he expressed and communicated! He even went to the extreme of calling men to prayer, and of announcing the greatness of God in his poetry! In his embellishment and decoration there is that which puts the skillful champion to shame, so that people have insisted on granting him preeminence, despite having torn his hide to shreds in their criticism. Yet who can escape from being criticized, or find a safe haven from grudges and rancor? He is Abū Tammām, Ḥabīb ibn Aws, who runs with the lope of a wolf¹²⁶ making off with every generous gift and offering.¹²⁷ With what a firm step does he tread over the various provinces of dis-

¹²³ Muslim ibn al-Walīd (d. 208/823), surnamed Šarī al-Ġawānī (‘the one felled by the fair maidens’), was one of a constellation of ‘Modern’ poets who flourished at the court of Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 170/786-193/909), (see *E.I.* 2, II, 694-695).

¹²⁴ Al-Ḥasan ibn Hānī (146/763-198/814), surnamed Abū Nuwās (‘the man with the kiss-curls’) was famous for his licentious poetry devoted to extolling the pleasures of wine, women, and boys (see *E.I.* 2, I, 143-145).

¹²⁵ Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws (d. ca. 236/850) was famous for his panegyrics to the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs. His critics accused him of making excessive use of conceits, to the point of rendering the meaning of his poetry obscure (see *E.I.* 2, I, 153-155). He was, in other words, perceived by his contemporaries as being an Arab equivalent to Góngora, and a *culterano*, *avant la lettre*.

¹²⁶ *Aws*.

¹²⁷ *Aws*.

course, while alternating, in his travels, between the eloquence of the tribes of ʿĀmir¹²⁸ and Daws!¹²⁹ He is an eternally flowing fountain and a helpful assistant; he is uniquely guided in his speech, and there is no wetnurse or midwife who can compare with him.”

I said: “What about the junior Ṭayyīṭ?”¹³⁰ He answered: “He opened his mouth to recite poetry after reaching adolescence and losing his milk-teeth to artistic excellence. He is Abū ʿUbādah, Walīd; one who possesses a personally acquired store of inventiveness along with an inherited one. He was provided with splendor and brilliance, and nourished by luxury and wealth. He is Abū ʿUbādah, Walīd, and what a *walīd*!¹³¹ Because of his poetic talent the grayest of elders becomes young again, whereas the youngest of children¹³² grows up. The heedless ignore his talent, and the haughty strut in his garments, while he pours his wine with restraint and trails the hem of his robe behind him with majestic pride. The age clothed him in the mantle of its springtime,¹³³ and he sipped his poetic talent from its brook and stream.”

I asked: “What about al-Rūmī, ibn Jurayj?”¹³⁴ He replied: “He is man of invective and quarrelsomeness. He is ʿAlī, and what an ʿalī!¹³⁵ Yet he is as modest as he is distinguished.¹³⁶ Often do I declare that he is a true poet, only to have to admit that he is also a blowhard and a windbag. He rises as high as a star, and falls as low as a meteor. I bear witness that he is a poet who composes poetry of remarkable beauty, and a loudmouth who causes much distress. He gathers firewood by night,¹³⁷ inundates a flood;¹³⁸ trails

¹²⁸ A South Arabian tribe (see *E.I.* 2, II, 365).

¹²⁹ See M21, n. 4, above.

¹³⁰ Al-Buḥturī (206/821-284/898) was another major ʿAbbāsīd panegyrist, as well as a *protégé* of Abū Tammām (see *E.I.* 2, I, 1289-1290).

¹³¹ ‘House-born slave’.

¹³² *Walīd*.

¹³³ Which he is famous for describing in his poems.

¹³⁴ Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Rūmī (221/836-283/896), who attempted to create a new introspective and analytical poetry. He was also famous for his invective (see *E.I.* 2, III, 907-909).

¹³⁵ ‘A high, lofty, distinguished individual’.

¹³⁶ ʿAlī.

¹³⁷ When, because of the dark, it cannot be seen. The expression indicates the pursuit of a futile act.

¹³⁸ A redundant or excessive act.

his sleeves along with the train of his garment, as he struts in supreme arrogance, begging for a gift and donation. He is a eulogizing satirist, an eager hopper, a wailing mourner, a descriptive speaker, and a bombastic thunderer."

I enquired: "What about Ibn al-Mu'tazz?"¹³⁹ He answered: "What do you expect from one who was overthrown and defeated? He was 'Abdallāh Abū l-'Abbās, the brave young hero of the Banū 'Abbās,¹⁴⁰ who was both meritorious and renowned. Simile obeyed him and surrendered a generous share and an unveiled face to him."

I said: "What about al-Kindī, Abū l-Ṭayyib?"¹⁴¹ He replied: "Along with his sweet words, he was a poet gifted with a natural talent that poured forth like a raincloud. Did his reputation not advance? Of course it did, for his knowledge and skill became famous! Mouths were fond of, and constantly uttered his sayings; waters were sweetened by his poems, caravans bore forth his fame, and hands were clapped in agreement¹⁴² over his superiority. He choked and tormented all those who aspired to compose poetry, while his star was brilliant wherever it shone."

I asked: "What about those who were his contemporaries and successors, yet whose fortunes were eclipsed by his own, namely al-Nubātī,¹⁴³ al-Salāmī,¹⁴⁴ al-Hāšimī,¹⁴⁵ and al-Tihāmī?"¹⁴⁶ He responded: "They are a group among whom artistic excellence came to be generalized, and whom the March and April months of Time

¹³⁹ An 'Abbāsīd prince who was also a distinguished 'Modern' poet and rhetorician. He was born in 247/861, while his unfortunate reign as Caliph lasted for only one day, ending with his assassination in 296/909 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 892-893).

¹⁴⁰ The 'Abbāsīd dynasty.

¹⁴¹ Known as al-Mutanabbī (303/915-354/965), he is esteemed by many to be the greatest of the Classical Arabic poets (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 769-772).

¹⁴² See M7, n. 17, above.

¹⁴³ Possibly Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī (327/939-405/1014), a minor poet of the second 'Abbāsīd period, who attended the court of the Hamdānīd prince Sayf al-Dawlah (r. 333/945-356/967) in Aleppo (see *I.K.B.D.*, II, 138-144).

¹⁴⁴ Possibly Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Maḥzūmī, al-Qurašī, al-Salāmī (326/948-393/1003), a minor Iraqi poet (see *I.K.B.D.*, II, 110-115).

¹⁴⁵ Possibly a minor poet named Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Hāšimī known as Ibn Sukkarah (d. 385/995). His surviving poetry deals with licentiousness, jesting, and invective (see *I.K.B.D.*, III, 115-118).

¹⁴⁶ Possibly a minor poet named Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Tihāmī (d. 416/1025), (see *I.K.B.D.*, II, 316-319).

brought forth; they are the fruit of the ages and epochs, the flower of the days and months." I insisted: "I would like to hear about their virtues in detail, and to receive an evaluation and summary of it." He answered: "That is a goal whose attainment would be as difficult as its benefit would be paltry, for the group is a large one, all its members are distinguished, the necklace they constitute is composed of pearl after pearl, and their works are as beautiful as the brilliant white pasterns of horses, and the bright blazes on their foreheads."

I asked: "What about the Taglibī, Abū Firās?"¹⁴⁷ He replied: "He was a master of ink and paper, he both ascended pulpits and mounted horses. With his manifold cords and ropes, he drew his words from the wellspring of inspiration; his soldiers and militias made him independent of royal authority. He is a Hārīt, and what a *hārīt*!¹⁴⁸ He is no wage-earner,¹⁴⁹ ploughman,¹⁵⁰ fortune-seeker, or heir. *Belles lettres* granted him a livelihood, while wounds and scars marred his skin. During his lifetime, he alternated between capturing and being captured, between wealth and poverty, while royalty did not cease to long for him, nor obstacles, to hinder him, but the envious knew all along that such obstacles¹⁵¹ would prevail over him at times, whereas, at other times, he would prevail over them. Thus, such envy did him no harm. He was even damned with faint praise when it was said of him that 'He was a brave young hero, yet not quite up to the standards of Mālik.'¹⁵² But, although he dwelt beneath the shadows of obscurity, he also donned the vestments of power, and occupied a spacious lodging in the encampments and way-stations of men's souls."

¹⁴⁷ He lived from 320/932 to 357/968 and was a nephew of Sayf al-Dawlah, whose Aleppo court he attended. He was a major poet, and a warrior, whose poems written during his captivity in Constantinople rise to impressive heights of emotion (see *E.I.* 2, I, 119-120).

¹⁴⁸ The word also means 'a lion'.

¹⁴⁹ Reading *lā kāсіб* with D, rather than *wa-lā kāсіб* with W.

¹⁵⁰ *Hārīt*.

¹⁵¹ Reading *anna-hā* with D, rather than *anna-humā* with W.

¹⁵² A pessimistic Arabic proverb implying that there is always someone superior to that person to whom the proverb is being applied (see *M.A.*, II, 450-451, no. 2762).

I asked: "What about that dignitary, al-Šarīf?"¹⁵³ He answered: "He possesses both an inherited and a personally acquired nobility. He is the noblest of Qurayš¹⁵⁴ in his words, the most all-encompassing of them in his power, the most welcoming of them¹⁵⁵ in his embrace, and the most fertile of them in his encampments and spring-pastures. He is able to compose a love-prelude that flows like a river, a poem in self-praise that comes thundering down like a boulder, a descriptive poem that is fitted together as skillfully as are paving-stones, and an elegy and a lament for the dead so painful, that they resemble the pain of a fool biting his fingers after having been cheated. I have never seen anyone more steady in following a straight path, or more flexible in twisting and turning about. He was wrongfully compared to al-Walīd,¹⁵⁶ as a result of which his standing remained unknown and unrecognized, although both these poets enjoyed precedence and possessed the banner of leadership; both were vigorous and constant. Yet al-Raḍī¹⁵⁷ cannot console us for the loss of al-Murtaḍā,¹⁵⁸ for each of the two is a swordblade unsheathed, and a delightful counterbalance to the other."

I said: "What about the Maḡribī vizier?"¹⁵⁹ He answered: "He was a non-Arab¹⁶⁰ Arab, he was loyal to the Holy Writ, and was a high-ranking Ḥārījī.¹⁶¹ He was Abū l-Qāsim, and what an *abū l-*

¹⁵³ Al-Šarīf al-Raḍī (359/970-406/1015) was a famous poet, as well as a patron of poets, who descended from the Prophet, and flourished in Baghdad. He was a leading Šīʿī writer and composed many poems of an anti-Sunni nature (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 340-343).

¹⁵⁴ The tribe to which the Prophet belonged.

¹⁵⁵ Reading *arḥabu-hum* with Ḍ, rather than *arʿabu-hum* with W.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Buḥturī, mentioned above.

¹⁵⁷ Surname of the poet under discussion.

¹⁵⁸ Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn al-Husayn ibn Mūsā known as al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā (355/966-436/1044), was a brother of al-Šarīf al-Raḍī, and a distinguished poet and scholar in his own right (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 634).

¹⁵⁹ He is Abū l-Qāsim al-Husayn ibn ʿAlī al-Maḡribī, who was not from the Maghreb at all, but descended from a noble Persian lineage connecting him with the Sāsānid emperor Bahrām Gūr (r. AD 420-438). On the Maḡribī vizier, see *I.K.B.D.*, I, 450-456.

¹⁶⁰ ʿAjamī may also be interpreted more specifically to mean 'Persian' (see *E.I.* 2, I, 206).

¹⁶¹ During the battle of Šiffin (37/657), ʿAlī, the fourth orthodox Caliph (r. 35/656-40/661), agreed to submit to arbitration the dispute over the succession to the caliphate that he was currently having with Muʿāwiyah, governor of Syria.

*qāsim!*¹⁶² He had a smiling mouth and his fragrance was redolent; he ruled the masses and fletched his arrow with the choice forefeathers and hidden secondary feathers of birds' wings; he encamped on summits of *belles lettres* that had never been encamped upon before, fastened on himself amulets that have never been unfastened or untied thereafter, and became a specialist in literature's diverse branches, so that learning went mad over him. His understanding quaffed drink after drink from the water of eloquence, and his arrow was guided by the spirit of precision, for he struck vital areas and joints, mastering both the general and the specific. He thus outstripped and surpassed others, achieved and reached his goal, adorned and embroidered the garment of artistic excellence, and revealed and disclosed the secret of creativity."

I asked: "What about al-Tanūhī, Abū l-'Alā'?"¹⁶³ He said: "He is an arrow of greatness and high rank; a wearer of embroidered robes and striped mantles. Verse submitted and yielded to him, but prose denied and refused itself to him, so that he died of chagrin without ever having mastered prose, having continuously gone astray within its unmarked deserts. He was a wise fool; an inhabited abandoned-encampment; he soared and plummeted; he beat and shook the tree of error, knocking down its leaves."

I asked: "What about al-Daylamī, Mihiyār?"¹⁶⁴ He replied: "He is a racing steed with whom wild asses compete, a unique pearl on the necklace of the poets, the treasure of their kingdom, the foremost horse among those running in their file, the leader of their

When the verdict was issued against 'Alī's cause, he was accused by a large sector of his army of having betrayed his sacred trust to defend his holy office. This group 'seceded' and formed a new sect within Islam, namely the Ḥārījīs ('those who secede'), (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1074-1077; M5, n. 4, above).

¹⁶² 'A beautiful person'.

¹⁶³ He is the famous blind poet and prose writer Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (363/973-449/1057), whose technique of *luḏūm mā lā yalzam*, which consists of rhyming the penultimate as well as the final consonant of rhyme-words, al-Saraqṣṭī is imitating in his *al-Maqāmāt al-luḏūmiyah*. Al-Ma'arrī attended the 'Abbāsid court in Baghdad, where he was not appreciated, hence he returned home to Syria, where he developed his free-thinking and pessimistic philosophy (see *E.I.* 2, V, 927-935).

¹⁶⁴ A famous poet who died in 428/1037. He was converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam by al-Šarīf al-Raḏī, and took up residence in Baghdad, where he preached the Šrī doctrine (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 24).

troops of cavalry. He speaks at length without getting bored; he is a moist meadow besprinkled with dew; a tightly twisted rope that is not weak and cannot be untied, he brings the white-footed wild goats down from the mountain tops,¹⁶⁵ and reconciles adversaries; he arouses the sluggish, and makes the wooden tip of his spear-shaft follow precisely in the path of its iron head; he is the truest of arrows, and the seal of all these noble poets.”

I asked: “How many others, along with him, are adept and skillful, and have climbed and ascended the peaks of artistic excellence?” He replied: “As for the latter, their number is incalculable, hence I do not wish to investigate the subject in detail, for evaluating them would be a difficult task, since all of them are resplendent and brilliant.” I therefore insisted: “Would it be possible for you to bear with me, and offer me full information and knowledge regarding those poets who are our contemporaries?” He responded to me: “O Sā’ib, ‘hold to forgiveness’¹⁶⁶ and do not trouble pure waters, for tomorrow is another day, and the best life is one of rest and tranquility. I have been tedious for far too long, and boredom has set in. I am not leaving you because I dislike you, but rather, I am repairing to a fertile area of the land, covered with herbage and greenery, and containing way-stations and encampments, in which I will most assuredly find a monk and some monasteries.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, give me some cash in exchange for this traveling-camel,¹⁶⁸ and you will see no further trace of me.”

Al-Sā’ib said:

I thus offered him all that was left of my *dirhams* and *dīnārs*. Then

¹⁶⁵ Or ‘he brings the ravens with a white feather in their wings down from their perches’. The point is that his poetic charm is so great that it attracts animals and birds as shy of human company as the above.

¹⁶⁶ Qur’ān, 7:199.

¹⁶⁷ No doubt in which to pursue the unlawful activities described in “*Maqāmah* 20 (Wine).”

¹⁶⁸ Note (A) that at the beginning of this *maqāmah*, it is distinctly stated that al-Sadūsī is mounted by al-Sā’ib on one of the latter’s camels. Al-Sā’ib is thus being asked to buy back his own camel. (B) The travelers are in the middle of a “trackless wilderness.” If this is so, then how does al-Sadūsī hope to reach the monastery on foot? These are two further inconsistencies in the narration, suggesting either the unreliability of the narrator, or his gullibility.

he said: “How tightly do talons¹⁶⁹ and hooks¹⁷⁰ clutch the objects of their desire!” With that, he took his leave of me, declaring, as he departed [*sarī*]:

God protect an illustrious young hero who feels distress as evening falls, for he is on the verge of separation from me.

Hardly did I request a boon from him, than he granted it, thereby making me rich.

Let me thank him for his effort, and spend all night long praying to God on his behalf,

For I have often rent the garment of gloom before, as I bowed down and knelt in worship.

¹⁶⁹ Or ‘hooks’.

¹⁷⁰ Or ‘distinguished men of evil disposition’.

Maqāmah 31
(*The Stars*)¹

The narrator said:

I left Iraq among² a group of travelers of noble lineage, distinguished ancestry, and clear virtue, the creases of whose palms distilled the moisture of generosity, and whose glory was ancient as a pyramid. We were on our way to the holy sanctuary of God's Ka'bah, and were performing the holy rites of pilgrimage and consecration. During the course of our journey, the beginnings and ends of every conversation one might desire were generously provided, and the waves of the full and swollen sea of letters clashed against one another, as we endeavored to make the stages of our peregrination short, when in reality they were long, by spurring on our female riding-camels, despite their exhaustion. While we were traversing the surface of the desert of al-Samāwah,³ we beheld the full moon⁴ in the sky, or heaven, round like a bracelet, or curved like a bangle. Suddenly we spied a shooting star that had spontaneously burst into view, descending from on high, so that it penetrated the atmosphere and traveled west and east,⁵ until it filled our eyes and transformed the landscape. It was as if it had encountered the planet Mars⁶ in its path and speared it, or as if it had aimed its sparks at Capella⁷ and struck it. So we declared:

This is a marvelous sign. Perhaps it portends a prayer to be answered, an evil to be averted, or a desert⁸ to be crossed.

Then we plunged into speech, exercised our thoughts, went down

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 26 in D.

² Reading *fī lummatin* with D, rather than *wa-fī lummatin* with W.

³ Between Kufa and Syria (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 1041).

⁴ *Badr*. Note that the moon will be described as a crescent (*hilāl*), (see below, n. 9).

⁵ *Garban wa-šarqan*, which would be physically impossible.

⁶ *Al-mirrḥ*.

⁷ *Al-ʿayyūq*, a giant yellow star in the constellation Auriga. Here and in what follows, I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Mark Pettigrew, who, in a forthcoming article on this *maqāmah*, will elucidate much of the star-lore it contains, and who has generously granted me permission to use some of his discoveries to explain numerous obscure points in the text.

⁸ Reading *qafṛan* with D, rather than *faqṛan* with W.

to drink from the cistern and meadow of deliberation, and declared:

This is a sign, but where is the one who can interpret it? To what can we compare it, when anything like it is hard to find?

We all contended with one another for the right to speak and to occupy the arena of discourse and, each according to his ability, we raced our horses or donkeys in its hippodrome. While we were thus occupied, suddenly a person appeared, veiled by darkness, but whom words made distinct, for he said:

O men of solid education, laden with gold and silver; O sons of the non-Arabs, would anyone like to test my mettle? Who among you is saddened by my cheerful countenance? Where among you is a talented, discriminating man? Who among you can compare with, or resemble me? Look at the lot of you: How can you achieve your purpose? You have injured learning and reopened its wound; you have strayed from your goal and come to be distracted from the substance by the accident.

Al-Sā'ib said:

He so aroused and stirred us, subdued and vanquished us, that we tried to approach him and asked him to repeat his words. But he refused, all the while avoiding us and saying:

My kind does not ride away, or let others do so, until he has either triumphed or mounted a wild beast. Listen, and listen closely; then despair, or seek further information.

So we said to him:

Let us, oh let us have your counsel! Our own words have all been in vain.

Then he replied [*ḥaṭṭ*]:

I remember a crescent moon,⁹ round like a bracelet, or curved like a bangle,

That alarmed the stars so that they sped off warily, like an oryx-herd alarmed by the arrival of dawn.

Do not blame those stars, for bows¹⁰ are capable of shooting

⁹ *Hilāl*. Note that the moon has been described as a full one (*badr*), (see above, n. 4). This is one more inconsistency in the narration.

¹⁰ Here, the crescent moon is presented metaphorically as being a bow.

piercing arrows whose tips are sharpened by Perdition and Ruin.

Even when strong, every brave star among them becomes weak, as well as cautious lest those arrows should fall upon it.

Al-Ġafr¹¹ is terrified by that crescent moon, as are the two Simāks¹², while the Tawr¹³ of the Zodiac bellows with fright on account of its presence.

One of the moon's unerring arrows has pierced Bahrām,¹⁴ so that the latter is covered with its own dark, flowing blood,

And the moon also shot the Charioteer¹⁵ with an arrow consisting of a shooting star bright as a flower in bloom.

As for al-Turayyā,¹⁶ it fears lest the moon be a spy whose proximity is here to stay,

While Suhayl¹⁷ hopes, despite the moon's nearness, that a love-union will take place tomorrow, if only an appeal for help can bring him closer to his beloved,

But one traveling north,¹⁸ whom uplands and lowlands embrace, is far from one traveling south.¹⁹

¹¹ 'The Kid', three stars in Virgo (mistakenly attributed to Libra in some sources. See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* [London, 1863-1893], VI, 2273) which may be *iota*, *kappa*, and *phi* Virginis. It represents the fifteenth lunar mansion.

¹² *Al-simākān*, two important stars (see M2, n. 11, above).

¹³ 'Bull', i.e., the constellation Taurus.

¹⁴ An alternate name, of Persian derivation, for the planet Mars, which is normally known in Arabic as *al-mirṭḥ*.

¹⁵ *Mumsik al-'inān* 'the one grasping the reins', i.e., the constellation Auriga.

¹⁶ The Pleiades, a bright star cluster in Taurus. Also the third lunar mansion, associated with the abundance of rain.

¹⁷ Canopus (*alpha* Carinae).

¹⁸ *Sha'ām* ('traveling north' or simply 'northern'), a term applied to many stars, but here referring to the Pleiades, which, from the latitude of the Arabian Peninsula, appear to rise in Syria.

¹⁹ *Yamān* ('traveling south' or simply 'southern') referring to Canopus which, from the latitude of the Arabian Peninsula, appears to rise in Yemen. This is a reference to a poem composed by 'Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah (see M30, n. 76, above).

Yet, since ancient times, Suhayl has wooed al-Turayyā, while al-Turayyā has modestly preserved her virtue despite his advances.

Meanwhile al-Suhà²⁰ has grown lean out of passion for al-Turayyā, for he is her Hammām,²¹ whereas she is his Nawār.²²

Let us congratulate the two Oryx Calves²³ on their love-union, whether they keep their passion secret or make it public,

Be patient, O Suhayl, now that you have fallen in love, for love is a torment and a burning thirst.

Cultivate hope and, perchance, Fate will grant you your wishes, for Fate is ever changing.

Let us congratulate you, in your loneliness, whenever you are visited by a constant visitor, namely the dream-image of the one who avoids you.²⁴

The other stars envy you for being so unique that their light cannot compete with your brilliance.²⁵

In al-Wazn,²⁶ you have a friend and ally whom no circumstance can prevent from keeping his oath.

²⁰ A faintly visible star in Ursa Major, proverbially difficult to see. Spotting it was a test of eyesight. Al-Suhà can probably be identified as 80 Ursa Majoris (I am indebted to Professor Gibor Basri of the Department of Astronomy at the University of California, Berkeley for this information), (see M7, n. 19, above).

²¹ Surname of the Umayyad poet al-Farazdaq (see M30, n. 62, above).

²² The wife of al-Farazdaq, whom the poet repudiated, after which he regretted having done so, only to spend the rest of his life writing desperate love poems to her (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 476a, and *passim*).

²³ *Al-farqadān* are *beta* and *gamma* of Ursa Minor, two bright stars that revolve around the polestar and never set. They are, therefore, symbolic, among the Arabs, of faithfulness.

²⁴ I.e., al-Turayyā, the Pleiades.

²⁵ Canopus is the second brightest star in the heavens.

²⁶ Al-Wazn and al-Ḥaḍārī are two stars in the constellation of Centaurus, known as *al-muḥlīfān* ('the two things upon which people swear'), supposedly because they rose shortly before Canopus and were frequently confused with it, one person swearing that it was Canopus, while the other swearing that it was not. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, II, 589, identifies al-Wazn as a star on the left fore-hoof of Centaurus (possibly *alpha* Centauri) and al-Ḥaḍārī as a star on the right fore-hoof of Centaurus (possibly *beta* Centauri).

Al-Ḥaḍāri²⁷ appeared as al-Wazn's co-*muhlif*,²⁸ while you, Suhayl, have never complained of al-Ḥaḍāri, even when proximity to it brings you sorrow.

In this wise do true companions and sincere friends behave; therefore, remain calm, Suhayl, for those onagers have not abandoned you to wander off at random.

It is as if the other stars were a bevy of circumambulating maidens, like unto gazelles, you being their Dawār.²⁹

It was for a good reason that al-Simāk al-Rāmiḥ,³⁰ brandished a lance, like a brave horseman returning from an encounter,

While the valiant knight al-Simāk al-A'zal³¹ approached at a nonchalant, leisurely pace, when summoned to the attack.

Al-Nasr al-Ṭā'ir³² came flying, on the wing, like a bird of prey pouncing upon a sandgrouse,

While its twin, al-Nasr al-Wāqī³³ hoped for deliverance and, therefore, swooped down all night long, without ever escaping.

From a distance, an Archer³⁴, whose two arrows have never missed their target, aims at the two Širā stars.³⁵

²⁷ See n. 26.

²⁸ See n. 26.

²⁹ A pre-Islamic idol around which worshippers circumambulated. This is an imitation of a line from the *Mu'allaqah* of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays:

A herd appeared before us, the gazelles of which seemed to be maidens of Dawār in trailing, striped garments.

See Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* (Bombay, 1893), pp. 23-24, l. 65.

³⁰ 'The lancebearing *simāk*', i.e., Arcturus (*alpha* Boötis), see n. 12, above.

³¹ 'The unarmed *simāk*', i.e., Spica Virginis (*alpha* Virginis), see n. 12, above.

³² 'The Flying Eagle', three stars in Aquila said to represent an eagle with its wings outspread, identified as *alpha*, *beta*, and *gamma* Aquilae (see Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star-Names and their Meanings* [New York, 1899], p. 57).

³³ 'The Falling Eagle', three stars in Lyra said to represent an eagle with its wings folded, identified as *alpha*, *epsilon*, and *xi* Lyrae (Allen, *Star-Names and their Meaning*, p. 282).

³⁴ *Rāmin* (indefinite) for *al-rāmī* ('the archer'), i.e., the constellation Sagittarius.

³⁵ The singular *al-širā* designates Sirius (*alpha* Canis Majoris), also known as *al-širā al-'abūr* ('the crossing Sirius'). The dual *al-širayān* designates both Sirius and Procyon (*alpha* Canis Minoris), the latter of which is known in Arabic as *al-*

Al-Ši'rà al-'Abūr³⁶ fled from her sister,³⁷ so that the latter spent the night in distress, groaning like a berieved female camel mourning over its lost young.

Her eye became covered with a purulent liquid secretion so that people declared: "Because of her copious weeping, fluid matter has blinded her eye."

The Milky Way complained, and al-Ši'rà³⁸ arrived, for conversing with al-Ši'rà is a pleasant prospect.

The one and the other are lots apportioned by Destiny, for the attainment of which camels and their saddles are unnecessary.

My daily sustenance, the outcome of my hopes, and my fates, all have been exhausted, so why must I keep on traveling up hill and down dale?

Al-Sā'ib said:

He so dazzled us with his brilliance, that both the sleeper and the sleepless among us hastened toward him, and we all exclaimed:

Welcome to you, O skilled one; you have mastered poetic descriptions and dazzled composers of descriptive verse, therefore, who is the composer of this description and the joiner of this solid work of masonry? Is he a *jinni*, or a human? Is he a Tamīmi or a Qaysi?³⁹

He replied:

As for my lineage, I am from Yemen, and as for my homeland, I am from Oman.⁴⁰ It is there that I came to a halt in my journey, and there that I fell into so wretched a state that I ended up pounding colocynth.⁴¹ I will say this, and no more, for I am not one to prattle, or to babble on endlessly: Exile is exile! I will enjoy the

šī'rà *l-ġumaysā'* ('the Sirius whose eye is covered with a purulent liquid secretion'). Procyon also marks the seventh lunar mansion.

³⁶ Sirius.

³⁷ Procyon.

³⁸ Sirius.

³⁹ Both are North Arabian tribes (see M1, n. 12, and M14, n. 10, above).

⁴⁰ See M4, n. 1, above.

⁴¹ Which is bitter, and the pounding of which brings tears to one's eyes.

companionship of no kith and kin until the crow turns white⁴² or the earth is stained with my blood! Memory is widely disseminated, but knowledge is completely forgotten, all the while that ignorance is diligently preserved. My situation is disgraceful, sorrows beset me, Fate intrudes upon me, my fortune is diminished, my traveling-provisions are scant, my heart is fearful, and my cheek is flushed with shame. Alas for the lack of a friend, for my brazen countenance, my distance from home, and the crumbling of the wall of my house!

Al-Sā'ib said:

We then felt such pity for him that we were prepared to endure any sacrifice for his sake. We tried to approach him, but he shied away from us; we attempted to communicate with him, but he refused to cooperate with us.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then we gathered for him all the money and clothing he could wish to have, and said to him:

How many a desirable goal and example have we found in you; a goal that has caused us to yearn for your proximity, and to quench our burning thirst with your drink, or even with the illusion⁴³ you provide.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the man chuckled and guffawed, as if he had recovered and recuperated from his intoxication, and said [*mujtatt*]:

Had I allowed you to approach me, your provision-bag would have been lightened.

Instead, I backed away from all of you, while retaining only an illusion in my hands,

But if you were once an illusion, you are about to become the sweetest of drinks.

People are either thoroughbred falcons with piercing talons, or scavenging ravens.

⁴² I.e., 'never'.

⁴³ Literally, 'the midday mirage'.

There are, among horses, either those of mixed breed, or those of thoroughbred Arabian race.

I know my Fate well: It alternates between prosperity and ruin,
Between covert theft and murder on the one hand, and open
piercing and striking, on the other,

For wealth is a desirable lot, and wealth lies close at hand.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then we said to the man:

How excellent you are, how fine is your versification, how necessary we find it to honor you, how generous is your poetic recitation, how true is your guidance, how clear are your maxims⁴⁴ and how rare are your similes! Therefore, let us praise, oh let us praise you once again! Be munificent, oh be munificent with your abundance!

So he said [*mujtatt*]:

My goodly Sā'ib,⁴⁵ calm down, for passion has its reasons,
The lance has its point, the sword has its edge,
And the tongue has its methods that even serpents avoid.

The remembrance of my former association with you rises up within my mind like bubbles rising, one after the other, to the surface of a winecup.

How could I ever forget you, when you are the gateway to my daily sustenance?

Hind would never deceive you, neither would Zaynab, nor Rabāb.⁴⁶

As for money, save it until domes are erected in your honor.

How many a man says, when he becomes wealthy—there being many ways of obtaining wealth—

⁴⁴ Reading *amtāla-ka* with D, rather than *amtala-ka* with W.

⁴⁵ *lā sā'ib al-ḥayr* may also be translated 'O you who stray from good' (see M21, n. 10; M26, n. 16, above). Hence this is a pun.

⁴⁶ Typical women's names of the sort found in Arabic love poetry.

“Youth has become praiseworthy, for wealth equals youth!”

Do not sail the sea; be fearful when its waves clash.

Humans are the most perfidious of all beings, especially the ones we love.

There is no noble man on earth; Fate⁴⁷ is a desolate wasteland.

Meet with your friends at infrequent intervals, so that your reunions may be like waterholes lying far apart

And, should you alight at any dwelling, let your stay in it not be longlasting.

Thereupon, I said:

Abū Ḥabīb! Must I stumble upon you even on pitch-black nights?
Why have you not turned your reins away, or blunted your spear-head?

But he blended into the crowd that surrounded us, till all I could hear was the faint sound he made, as he declared [*sarī*]:

Come now, my goodly Sā’ib,⁴⁸ act with deliberation, and veil me from these people.

Show forbearance to a friend of yours, no matter how many crimes he has committed, for forbearance is the bridle that controls success.

The vicissitudes of Fate aim at one, while Fate at times enriches, and at times impoverishes one.

Man cannot achieve eminence without intelligence, while the best disposition in the noble is forbearance.

⁴⁷ Reading *al-dahru* with D, rather than *al-dāru* with W.

⁴⁸ See n. 45, above.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I sojourned in Šul,² as though I were beset by the tip of a lance, for adversities had swept me along, while both optimists and pessimists were in despair over my misfortune. As for my life, its youth was gone and its garment had shrunk; I was incapable of movement and departure, weary of camel-saddles and baggage, and surviving on bare essentials. Although I inclined toward virtue, and unsheathed a piercing sword of determination, I remained unsatisfied and discontented, until I came across an old man, thin as a bundle of reeds, who moved about dressed in a woolen cloak, leaning upon a stout staff, and imploring God's protection against all that was unhealthy and unwholesome. So I turned to greet him, wishing him the protection of Islam. Thereupon, he signaled to me with an eye like a cavernous pool, and a tongue like an unsheathed sword, saying to me:

O Sā'ib, have the adversities of Fate made their peace with you? Have its misfortunes treated you fairly? Perhaps right-guidance will come to your aid, or error will avoid you. Perchance the right path will show you its lucky side, or common sense will draw near to you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I scrutinized him, and lo, he was al-Sadūsī, whose like and equal are hard to find, so I kissed³ the toe-thong and heel-strap of his sandal, and said:

I have just enough food to live on, I practice moderation and virtue, I abstain from sin, while God knows best that this is so. Perhaps I will succeed in obtaining your guidance, and in following your example to its utmost limits.

He exclaimed:

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 29 in D.

² A city in the land of the Ḥazars, near Derbent, Dagestan, on the Caspian Sea (see J.G.W., I, 439, and *passim*).

³ Reading *wa-qabbaltu* with D, rather than *wa-qabiltu* with W.

I beg forgiveness, my Lord, and I express to You my gratitude, not my ingratitude!

Thereupon, I did not cease to honor and respect him; to expect much, rather than little from him, only to see him striving and progressing toward righteousness, and only to observe that his good behavior shone like the flash of an ember or a meteor until, one day, he led me to a main mosque, in which people were either reciting the Qur'ān or listening to it. There, he bowed and prostrated himself, praised and extolled God, wandered up hill and down dale in his private prayers, leaned against a column,⁴ and said:

May God curse Pharaoh and bless Āsīyah.⁵ In that couple, He united two opposites and joined a pair of antagonists. Their inclinations and beliefs diverged, hence the Omniscient Judge granted a respite, according to His pleasure, turning their tale into a Qur'ānic verse intended for recitation, and raising it aloft as a shining banner, so that the transmitter might transmit it and the intelligent man might consider it. Many a righteous person is afflicted by a wicked one, and many an intelligent individual is attacked by a Bāqil,⁶ who treats him with hostility, deceiving and flattering him, but only so that God may bring relief to his persecution, thereby making manifest the fragrance of his soul. I have endured one experience after another, adopted the customs of both Arabs and non-Arabs, become acquainted with the ways of Time and of men; I have engaged in discussion with both unimportant and important individuals, mingled with the tractable and the intractable, befriended the enthusiast as well as the bored; my breast has been oppressed, my standing has been diminished, the resting place of my camels has been narrow, but my reasoning has been right; I have been intolerant of wrong, and difficult to please, while companionship and trials, tribulations and experiences, have never ceased their give and take with me, or their avoidance and hindrance of me, until my distress turned to relief, and I reached open expanses

⁴ Before the introduction of the *madrasah* in al-Andalus, teachers lectured in mosques. Leaning against a column was their preferred posture.

⁵ Wife of Pharaoh, and one of four perfect women, the other three being Mary, Ḥadījah, and Fāṭimah. See Qur'ān, 66:11.

⁶ The name of a man who was proverbial for stammering, and stupidity (see *M.A.*, II, 388, no. 2595).

through my patience. Then, I donned the robe of feigned indifference, until eventually, my mental faculties returned to me. But then I royally roiled pure waters, and seriously soured sweet milk. I walked in the company of Time, doing precisely as it wished, neither allowing the grass to grow under my feet, nor my desires to go for long unfulfilled. I befriended each person according to his nature, and clothed him in accordance with the pristine state or the tattered condition of his garment. Yet, in this particular friend,⁷ I have been afflicted by an impassable mountain path whose midday mirage deceives me, while his drink fails to quench my thirst; whose friendship beguiles me, while mourning him brings no consolation; whose fragrance is attractive, while his oppression is incurable; whose charms are bewitching, while no reliance may be placed upon his foolish acts. He has pursued me, year after year, while I have fled from him with the swiftness of an ostrich, until he has finally caught up with me in my old age—and oh how far from one who stumbles is the healing of his broken bones! This man has been on intimate terms with me, like a devoted son so that, from his ocean, I have reached the shore; he showed me a heart devoid of malice, as well as sweet affection, a polite welcome, and sincere advice, so that I bared my mind to him—and what pure water did I give him to drink from my flow! I used to own certain priceless treasures, and some objects whose value was not to be scorned or despised, which a manager oversaw for me, so that others despaired of ever possessing them. But this man caught me unawares and robbed me of them, while adding smoke to the fire,⁸ for he stayed on with me rather than vanishing, and gave no sign of ever leaving or departing. Instead, he increased and carried his deception to the limit, thinking that he had not squandered and wasted enough of my property, until it eventually came to pass that an individual I trusted approached me and asked:

Does any object of yours happen to be missing, or have you been made suspicious by any unforeseen event?

Then, entertaining serious misgivings, I pondered deeply, but was unable to penetrate or unravel the cryptic meaning of his words.

⁷ Here al-Sadūsī is referring to al-Sā'ib.

⁸ I.e., 'Adding insult to injury'.

So he explained:

A container appeared in the marketplace, with your name upon it, and your mark inside it which, when opened, was found to reveal the finest of mantles, and to enclose both a familiar and a strange brand of silver. The one who brought the container to us was a certain youth⁹ who sits in your company, and who walks by your side; one who exchanges bonds of friendship and assistance with you. Whereupon we put two and two together, suspected a loss, and declared:

Fate is unreliable, and this affair has several possible angles to it. What if perhaps . . . or perhaps . . . ? Many a drinker takes a first drink but not a second one; many a friend betrays, defrauds, and crawls into the burrow of treachery, therein to hide.

Al-Sadūsī said:

It was as if, with his reins, he had diverted my hopes from their goal, or as if, with his spearhead, he had transfixed my heart, for I realized that my belongings were a total loss, and knew for a fact that they were irretrievably gone.

Then I said:

In what way do your words apply to me? My mind is confused, and my understanding has abandoned me! Return, oh return my belongings to me! Bring them, yes bring them back to me! The articles you speak of are the savings granted to me by Time, my share of security, my eye when all eyes are fast asleep, my cash when debts come due; they are the garment of my youth and my rightful compensation for the loss of my loved ones; they are the gift of my days and the precious object of my waking and sleeping hours; one for which I have sacrificed my honor, and before which I have delayed the last breath of my life. I have driven back all those who would deprive me of them, keeping away all influences and mediators, until my property remained the light of my mind and the splendor of my memory, to bring joy to my loneliness, and to gather together those under my protection. My property was my hand and support, my veil and protection, whilst today, I am exposed to the sun in utter nakedness, with neither deep, nor shallow

⁹ At the beginning of this *maqāmah*, the narrator had stated that his youth was gone. This is yet another instance of narratorial inconsistency.

water, while a life of poverty and lamentation has now been definitively decreed for me and, to top my overwhelming ill luck, I have been afflicted by the headache of a severe misfortune.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Those present felt sympathy and compassion for the old man, who had turned his plaint into a success rather than a failure, for the bystanders rose against me in rage; my calm turned to disquiet; they lavished fisticuffs and blows upon me, signaling and winking to one another to indicate how disgraceful I was. I had certain possessions and precious belongings before which a solid lock and bolt had been fastened.¹⁰ But they pried both open, shattered them, and gained control of what lay inside, which act I was unable to prevent, any more than I could have permitted it. Then they hauled me before a stern judge endowed with intelligence and understanding, who said to me:

O liar or deceiver, has sin covered your heart with blackness? Do you have any words to say for yourself, or any eyewitness who can testify in your favor, seeing that so many distinguished men and eyewitnesses have testified against you?

So I replied:

None whatsoever! Yet my story is a long one, Fate is dilatory, this old man is deceitful, a judgment should be decisive, yet you are proceeding too swiftly. I am thus reduced to confusion and perplexity.¹¹

The judge said:

How can this old man be accused of bringing false charges against you, when he is the son of a woman who has borne few offspring?¹²

¹⁰ At the beginning of this *maqāmah*, al-Sā'ib had explained that he possessed just barely enough property to subsist. Now he owns precious valuables. This is another contradiction in the narrative.

¹¹ Reading *sādir* with D, rather than *ādīr* with W.

¹² I.e., he is someone who is precious, outstanding, and unique. This is an allusion to a verse attributed either to Kuṭayyir or to the 'Transitional' poet 'Abbās ibn Mirdās al-Salmī, who was included in the *Hamāsah*, an anthology compiled by the 'Abbāsīd poet Abū Tammām (d. ca 236/850), (see *E.I.* 2, I, 12):

Most small birds have several chicks, but the mother of the falcon has only a few.

See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut, n. d.), V, 203b, s. v. *nazara*; Yaḥyà Šāmī, *Arwa'u mā qīla fī l-šī'r al-'arabī* (Beirut, n. d.), p. 27.

“He is today’s or tomorrow’s owl,”¹³ on the verge of passing away while awake or asleep. A man such as he brings false charges against no one, while the very sense he makes vouches for the truth of his words. Yes, my judgment is indeed decisive, and I find that it is you who are the guilty party. Furthermore, whilst I am the one in control of this court, you are implying that I act unjustly, and you are forcibly seeking to divest me of my reputation for justice and forbearance. This constitutes a further hostile act on your part, beyond the first one of which you are already guilty, and is characteristic of the various sorts and kinds of activities in which you engage. Place him, oh place him in the old man’s hands, and subdue, yes subdue his agitation! Let justice be done to him, and let either his arrest or release be implemented!

Al-Sā’ib said:

When the old man looked at me, he manifested his hypocrisy by feigning pity, and by saying:

I will not cause him pain by having him beaten; instead, I will have him hurled east or west, along with whatever money he has on him, for he is a sinister character. What is he to us? Take what is his,¹⁴ leaving only his rags on him, for that is the most fitting punishment for him. Then he began to recite [*sarī*]:

Were it not for my righteous hand and kindly behavior, your very rags would be torn from your body.

You are a foolish person, O Sā’ib, who fail to recognize the true nature of social stature and wealth.

Among men, a slave is more fortunate than you are, even when his camels graze upon rugged ground,

For a slave is no different from a freeborn man; only their activities and occupations set the two apart.

A noble youth is consoled by his hopes, but no hope can console an old man

¹³ Pre-Islamic Arabs believed that after death, the soul took the form of an owl. This is an Arabic proverb meaning “He is about to die, today or tomorrow.” See *M.A.*, III, 501-502, no. 4607.

¹⁴ Reading *ḥudū mā la-hu* with Ḍ, rather than *ḥudū māla-hu* (‘take his money’) with W. Both readings are possible.

For, if you so wish, you can still strike it rich: all a noble youth needs is a camel-saddle and a camel to urge forth.

A freeborn man pays no heed to the social station in which he finds himself; renown and obscurity are all the same to him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I departed from him, both remaining on my guard against the sparks he emitted, and feeling insecure against his harm. My heart was filled with hatred for him, while my good and bad luck kept bringing him back to me; so much so, that I eventually came to imagine that he was on every road, and to believe that he was a member of every tribe and lineage.

Al-Mundhir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I did not cease going along at the whim of the south and north winds, aiming right and left, speeding along in rags and tatters, and journeying from fragrant musk to freshly trodden dung, while money did not cease submitting its reins to my control, so that its raincloud drew near, its pearls thronged toward me, and its teats flowed, until the sources of my wealth became plentiful, and the Mother of Stench² grew fragrant after reeking, for I acquired the huge sum of ten thousand *dirhams*, and said:

This is a rare gift of Fate, and what a rare gift it is, indeed!

Thus did my ambitions soar, my sorrows clear up, my hopes expand, and my travails decrease. I became fond of morning and evening draughts of wine, and I held my own against every man who overtook and oustripped others in the race toward idleness. I inclined toward melodies and musical instruments, being heedless and forgetful of proper conduct. How fond did I become of conversing with a drinking-companion, of whose words I relished both the new and the old, so that I received and I gave; I plundered and was plundered. I assumed that mine was a state that would never end, and considered sincere moral advice to be as bitter as *sal*³ or colocynth, until one of my drinking-companions said to me:

How much in need you are of Salmān.

So I replied:

And what kind of a person—you may speak frankly and with impunity—is Salmān?

He answered:

He is a person gifted with pleasant discourse and inoffensive information; one possessed of a vast⁴ culture and a devout character; one who has mastered sources and their derivatives, ordinances and chapters; one who can bring the white-footed mountain goat

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 31 in D.

² 'The world'.

³ A bitter plant.

⁴ Read *tarrah* with D, rather than *tarrah* with W.

down from its lofty peak;⁵ who can make the Indian blade redundant in India itself. He is gobbled up like food by the mind; he is imbibed like a drink, and he is played like a musical instrument, thereby providing great delight, and all because of the brilliance of his conversation. Souls and hearts long for him when he struts about like a beloved or a desired one.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

If you are accurate in your assessment, how excellent is the one whom you have described! You have made me long for such perfection, striking me with unerring arrows! Where, oh where is the individual you have mentioned to be found? Let there be no remissness or slowness in my meeting him; this is the man with whom I will share my life, and whom I will deck out in my corona,⁶ removing my veil before him, and granting him control over my reins; this is the man who will be the everlasting goal of my hopes, and a substitute for all else; this is the man by whose mention human breasts are delighted; the man whom verses of poetry, from first to last word, prove unable to describe; this man is a cure for sorrow, he is wealth when one has been robbed, soothing tar on itching mange, and rapture in song. Behold, I will fly to him without wings, and ride, for his sake, on the mount of every sin.

Al-Sā'ib said:

When evening arrived, and men and women were indistinguishable from one another, he stepped out of the darkness and into our view, whereupon even the exhausted and the lame among us arose to greet him. Then we honored him lavishly, as he took his place within our midst, and we arranged ourselves around him like a necklace, holding his slightest word in esteem, offering him our respect, receiving him in a welcoming manner, and sending every south and east wind of kindness in his direction. I recognized his manner of speech and its idiosyncracies, and I found the large capacity of his drinking cup and dish to be pleasant, so I said:

These are notes whose melodies have knocked on the door of my

⁵ Because his conversation is so fascinating that it overcomes the shyness of wild animals, who thus draw near to hear him.

⁶ *Al-ṭyāl*, specifically 'the corona of the sun'.

ears before, and musical instruments the fragrance of whose quavering tunes, like unto brilliant flowers, has previously shimmered throughout my garden!⁷

Thus, my mind did not cease attempting to guess his identity, while my intuition tried to sound it out, as he resorted to, and found refuge in the purity of his speech, while pouring out his eloquence in abundance, as melodies drew forth his ideas, caused the torrential downpour of his rainclouds, made the dew of his lips flow drop by drop, drained his glass, tempered the heat produced by his winebibbing, emptied his stream, inspired the wonders he produced, and elicited his most apposite statements. There was thus no song in which he did not raise his voice, no *hazaj*⁸ which he did not sing,⁹ no *ramal*,¹⁰ in which he did not keep up a swift pace,¹¹ no *ḥafīf*,¹² in which he did not murmur,¹³ and no *taqīl*¹⁴ that he did not stress.¹⁵ When his voice quavered, we would ask him to repeat his sounds, so that he would begin his musical performance, and then provide us with an encore, until, when the tyranny of intoxication overwhelmed him, and drunkenness revealed the secrets hidden in his mind, he removed his cloak and began to speak out, at times clearly and at times obscurely; he stuttered and stam-

⁷ The Arabic text for this sentence is: *inna-hā la-naḡamātun qad ṭaraqa samʿī ʾalḡānu-hā wa-ʾadawātun raḡḡa ʾalā rawḡī rayḡānu-hā*. Since the verb *raḡḡa* allows for two meanings ('to quaver' when said of sound, and 'to shimmer' when said of color), the sentence is an amphibology, and the translation merely attempts to reflect the distinctly *moderniste* usage of mixed metaphors in the original. In pedestrian terms, what the narrator is saying, is that he has heard this speaker's voice before.

⁸ Both the name of a musical rhythm (see Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms* [Westport and London, 1981], p. 84), and of a poetic meter (see *E.I.* 2, I, 667-677).

⁹ *Hazaj*. Here and below, the author puns on the literal meaning of the names of the musical rhythms.

¹⁰ Both the name of a musical rhythm (see Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 276) and of a poetic meter (see *E.I.* 2, *loc. cit.*).

¹¹ *Ramal*.

¹² 'Rapid in tempo', a musical term used to characterize certain rhythmic modes (see Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-144). Also, the name of a poetic meter (see *E.I.* 2, *loc. cit.*).

¹³ *Ḥafīf*.

¹⁴ 'Slow in tempo', a musical term used to characterize certain rhythmic modes (Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *op. cit.*, p. 367).

¹⁵ *Taqīl*.

mered incoherently, and publicly revealed, to our applause,¹⁶ a tender heart and brazen face, as he recited [*mutaqārib*]:

Oh, hand me some of that acidulous wine for which the noble, superior man longs.

All you need to know is that, among its other effects, it turns the humble person into a powerful one.

It makes one's sides quiver for the folly of youth, just as the wind's southing makes the reed's side quiver.

Then he sang [*mutaqārib*]:

Oh, hand over some wine that is like pure, liquid gold, for I am just as anxious to drink it as you are!

Oh, do hand it over, for it is a bargain; but bring it quickly, before the day of my death arrives!

Oh, make me drink cup after cup of it, but pour it into a glass cup; do not pour for me, into a cup carved from tamarisk-wood,

For I am descended from the highborn nobility of Yemen, should a Ḥaḍāri¹⁷ ever confuse people into swearing¹⁸ to the contrary.

Then he sang [*mutaqārib*]:

Oh, hand over some wine! I am enraptured by it, and my kind is wont to hover over its kind.

Do hand over (thereby taking advantage of a careless oversight for the ignoring of which the censor is sure to rebuke us)

An exquisite wine that reminds us of the time of youth. Can even a jaded person ever become tired of remembering such a time?

¹⁶ Reading *bi-l-tasfiq* with D, rather than *bi-l-tasfiḥ* with W.

¹⁷ Al-Ḥaḍāri and al-Wazn are two stars in the constellation of Centaurus (see M31, n. 26, above).

¹⁸ Correcting both W and D's *aḥlafa* to *aḥlafa*.

Bring it swiftly, for it is as brightly colored as carnelian, so that the one who awaits its arrival is blinded by its brilliance.

Bring it on, along with a white wine that rends the veil of gloom whenever anyone rises in the dark.

Do wake up, for there is a flood of wine at hand, and every waking soul is fast asleep.

The man attached to life hovers over life, little knowing that death too, hovers over him.

Then he sang [*madīd*]:

Many a cup has been clothed in a stream of bubbles, like a snake slithering over the surface of a valley.

Tempering has scattered the Pleiades over the surface of the wine or, if you prefer, its bubbles are like domes rising in your honor.

Do not blame me for being passionately fond of wine, for I maintain that it is the only true object of desire, and the very essence of youth.

How can I forget wine in my old age, when I have loved it for so long?

Al-Sā'ib said:

We were astonished by his ability to compose and to improvise, by the fluency and range of his speech.

Then the stranger said:

How is a man¹⁹ to be thought of, or a tongue to be extolled, by one whom Fate has assailed; one whose day and month have become the same, the resting places of whose camels are unfit for him, whose homelands are far away, whose branches have been shaken down by Fate, who has been robbed by it of his virtuous wife and stallions, so that he makes his appearance before you naked as a bow made of *nab'* wood,²⁰ trimmed down like an arrow-shaft, and moving like a star in its orbit, with no family to tie him

¹⁹ Reading *insān* with D, rather than *ihsān* with W.

²⁰ See M2, n. 12, above.

down, and no rugged or smooth terrain to bear him on its surface, for he does not seek shelter in a settled dwelling place, nor has he ceased being harmed or suffering adversity? The worst of his misfortunes will be the end of his life, the loss of his strength, the control exerted over him by his decline, the playing of tricks on him by his memory, the disintegration of his thought, for he not only approaches the years of old age, but also the vice of avarice, the lack of generosity, the clouding of his drink, and the absence of his friend. Alas for my loss, and my want of property, for I used to enjoy one group of friends after another, along with their compliance and submission to my will, so that it was a pleasure to meet them, I trusted in their loyalty, conferred benefits on, and established ties with, them. But I never achieved or reached any form of prosperity without eventually having my friend snub me, or my truthful confidant lie to me repeatedly, whereupon I broke off the relationship, became wary of the arrows of the entire lot of them, fled from home, made isolation the pivot around which I moved, began to roam about in different countries, and to run in every racecourse for, "this is water, but not as good as that of Ṣaddā"²¹ and "this is a pasture, but not one full of *sa'dān*."²²

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we welcomed his words, insofar as we hoped to detain him among us. Out of courtesy, I befriended him, and pledged my allegiance and loyalty to him.

Then the stranger said:

May God join whomsoever He joins, for the best of good things is what has just happened. Thus it is with some flashes of lightning that disappoint us, whereas others please us by bringing rain in their aftermath. This soul of mine harbors a hidden curiosity to know whether anyone has ever been informed and notified that he will last forever. Secure the future with the present, a son bears witness to his father's nature, and may God help whomsoever helps God whereas, whoever considers charity to be a limitation only limits himself.

²¹ The name of a well proverbial for its delicious water (*M.A.*, III, 267, no. 3842).

²² The most suitable grass for camels, producing a sweet milk (*M.A.*, III, 265, no. 3836). The above are two Arabic proverbs.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Upon hearing this, I scattered before him all the *ḍinārs* and *dirhams* he could desire, which clarified every doubt and obscurity he had, for the wood of his branch became clothed in a mantle of leaves, and his conversation filled us with sleeplessness, until, when drunkenness had assailed us, and both recognition and non-recognition had become one and the same thing to us, he tore off curtains and veils, picking and choosing from among the loot to be found at hand, which he appropriated and transported to his own lodging. Three hours later, we became aware of his absence and remembered his engagement with us, and lo, he had penned the following poem on my hand [*ṣarī*]:²³

Were it not for you, O Sā'ib, I would not apologize for the ill-gotten loot my sinfulness and injustice have earned me.

Fear God, O Sā'ib, on behalf of this friend of yours, namely myself, called Hayyān ibn Bayyān.²⁴

The length of time that has elapsed since your last contact with me has made you forget all that had formerly transpired between us, for man is heedless and forgetful.

I am sorry for having betrayed you, yet I am equally sorry for my starving, naked self.

All the pupils of a good teacher resort to a soft touch; one who is as easy to bend down and harvest, as is a supple, verdant branch.

Both Fate and I are to be suspected, for we are both similar and equivalent in our treachery.

May the Lord grant you a long life, O righteous brother, who have lavished your righteousness upon me, and may He also grant me a long life.

God made its fulfillment precede the Promise of Reward,²⁵ nor

²³ Since the poem is rather long, we are either to assume that the narrator had an unusually long hand, or that he is telling a tall tale.

²⁴ Name of a man proverbial for his unimportance (see M12, n. 9, above).

²⁵ *Al-wa'd*. This is the Mu'tazili doctrine of free will, under which God is

did He water down any promise of His with kindness.

True merit lies in money, so put aside all that has been said about 'Abs and Dubyān.²⁶

God, O Sā'ib, is present in any scheme that spares you from having to emulate 'Awf and Liḥyān.²⁷

Do you know, O Sā'ib, what scheme will favor you both in urban Jerusalem and rural Busyān?²⁸

Do you know, O Sā'ib, what robe you should proudly trail on all occasions?

Do you know, O Sā'ib, what garden is redolent of myrtle and wild jasmine?

They are precisely those you unjustly reject, thereby alternating between being a traitor and a liar.

And yet, how many a night have you spent hungering for them, being called Hungry son of Starving!

A crown is a crown on the head of a noble youth, and how much more so, if he can obtain native gold!

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

What a pious preacher you are, for a braggart! What an eloquent speaker, for a soothsayer! What a sociable person, for an anti-social one! What a loser, for a merchant!

For I despaired of his repentance and, therefore, refrained from blaming him.

constrained to reward good and punish evil without the possibility of changing His mind (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793).

²⁶ Two North Arabian sub-groupings of the tribe of Ġaṭafān, famous for their heroic exploits in pre-Islamic times (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1023-1024).

²⁷ Two further heroic Arab groups, of which the latter were an ancient North Arabian people and kingdom (see *E.I.* 2, V, 761-763).

²⁸ Either two mountains in the territory of the Banū Jašm, or a place full of pools and rivers, twenty-one miles from Šubaykah, between it and the oasis of Wajrah, both in Arabia (see *J.G.W.*, I, 626). The contrast being made here is one between town and country. *Ḍ*, p. 395, provides the interesting variant: "what scheme will favor you in Silves and Jaén?" Both are towns in the Iberian Peninsula: the former in present-day Portugal, and the latter in Spain.

Maqāmah 34¹
(*The Horse*)

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

When the splendor of my youth was in full bloom and I was growing up in the lap of luxury, I adopted various forms of levity, and I went seriously mad from idleness.² I used to move from phase to phase: From plenty to famine, and from a steadfast goal to straying from the same. One time, instead of beautiful, fair-complexioned ladies, I took up an interest in large, gentle-paced, thoroughbred horses, and turned, from the strumming of the mandolin, to striking the shins of horses, by acquiring one new breed of them after another, obtaining them willy-nilly, casting my glance amongst them, herd after herd, and acquiring every new pasture and watering-place for them, for I surveyed grazing grounds and pastures for them, selected their caretaker and herdsman, designed a mark and brand for them, gave each of them a name, and delighted in their neighing as much as I did in songs, for they filled me with as much longing as do abandoned encampments and ruined habitations.³ Often did I use them to compete against squadrons of cavalry, raced them against horses of noble descent, won the trophy of the competition, and ended up being a man of much esteem, unhumbled and undefeated. Whenever I made the cheek of an opponent cleave to the dust, the excitement of victory would arouse me, so that I kept up this activity for several years, mingling with throngs and throngs of competitors. Often did I take my horses, wrapped in striped mantles and Yemeni stuffs, for an outing in the evening hours, when they would graze, wander about freely, frisk merrily, roll in the sands, and evacuate their dung and droppings, one after the other, until I would reach a certain river while they were still wrapped in their horse-blankets. Then their grooms would make them plunge into the water, they would go down to drink from pool after pool in its depths, then rise, swimming with their forelegs, running about

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 42 in D.

² Reading *junintu fī l-baṭālātī* with D, rather than *junnat bī l-baṭālātu* with W.

³ Over which pre-Islamic poets conventionally lamented the passage of time and the disappearance of their loved ones.

whinnying and snorting, with the water streaming over their rumps and backs like a reliable, rain-laden cloud that pours down heavily, while they responded to one another's neighing and whinnying, kindling a blazing fire with their frisking. Then I would release them, so that they could return to their merriment and enjoy themselves to the maximum, whereupon they would frolic with one another like gazelles, approaching from all directions, as do packs of wolves and flocks of baby ostriches, while the breeze would ruffle their manes and grasp their limbs until, when they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and had become bored⁴ with their evening pasture, they would begin to sniff the ground, to nibble on the flowering water lilies and 'awf,⁵ to crane their necks, which were as tall as pine trees, and to prolong the gaze of eyes that were like the enchantment of eloquence, looking out from their bridles and saddles, contained within their pastures and meadows, while good is closely attached to their forelocks, and success shines out from their defenses. Then, they would stand on three hooves, with the tip of the fourth lightly resting on the ground, and would tirelessly maintain a dignified bearing by standing upright until evening had fallen, and both man and beast longed for his resting-place. On one such occasion, I suddenly beheld a noble youth, bright as a star, with flawless skin, whose forelocks flowed freely, with a white complexion, who was mounted astride a horse as towering as a well-built palace; a horse wrapped in splendidly embroidered stuffs from Aden,⁶ whom he was guiding and leading; a horse that displayed ample strands of hair on its tail, plus a full mane; a horse on which no blemish appeared, and that gave no indication of being the offspring of an inferior stallion that had been bred with a superior mare. Then the youth made the horse retreat and advance, and said:

This is Fleetfoot, the son of Fleetfoot, the son of Sabal:⁷ If they

⁴ Vowelizing *sa'imāt* rather than W's *sa'imtu*. Ḍ records *mallat* with the same meaning.

⁵ A fragrant desert plant.

⁶ Reading 'adn with Ḍ, rather than 'adnān with W. Aden lies in the southwest part of Southern Yemen, on the Gulf of Aden near the southern entrance to the Red Sea (see M6, n. 1, above).

⁷ A famous pre-Islamic mare descended from Ḍū l-'Uqqāl who, in turn, descended from Zād al-Rākib, a horse given, according to legend, by Solomon to

are unremitting in their running, he is fleetfooted; and if they are fleetfooted, he is most vehement in his running.⁸

Then the horse neighed, whinnied, reared, halted, and stood still in its tracks, after which the youth said:

Here you have a purebred Arab steed, my favorite and close companion, a rising and setting star, a nocturnal asterism shining through the daylight, the son of al-Wajīḥ and Lāḥiq,⁹ a lean-bellied horse that overtakes all those that would outrun it, one that arrests glances, that swiftly disappears from view, and that arouses the wrath of rivals and opponents. How can Dāḥis and al-Ġabrā',¹⁰ or al-Jammā'¹¹ and al-Šaqrā',¹² or al-Ya'būb¹³ and al-Yaḥmūm,¹⁴ or al-ʿAddā'¹⁵ and al-Ḥamūm¹⁶ compare with it? Behold a cheek that gleams like a diadem and a crown, a neck like a guide who leads men toward righteousness; consider this eye, like the mirror of a deft-handed woman, that turns in the horse's eyesocket, beneath its

an Azdī delegation. See Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *Les "livres des chevaux" de Hišām ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī*, ed. G. Levi Della Vida (Leiden, 1928), p. 7, and *passim*; Ibn Ḥudayl al-Andalusī, *La parure des cavaliers et l'insigne des preux (Ḥilyat al-fursān wa-š'ār al-šuj'ān)*, trans. Louis Mercier (Paris, 1924), pp. 177-180. On pre-Islamic horselore, see too *E.I.* 2, IV, 1143-1146. I particularly wish to thank Miss Michelle Hamilton for generously providing me with references to, and identifications of, the pre-Islamic horses mentioned in this *maqāmāh*.

⁸ A line in praise of a horse by the 'Transitional' poet Jahm ibn Šibl. See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-1893), III, 935-936.

⁹ Names of two famous pre-Islamic horses descended from a legendary horse named A'waj, that belonged to the biblical king David and was, in turn, descended from Dū l-'Uqqāl (see Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *op. cit.*, p. 9, and *passim*; *E.I.* 2, II, 873; Ibn Ḥudayl al-Andalusī, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-180).

¹⁰ Two famous pre-Islamic horses descended from Dū l-'Uqqāl. They brought about a pre-Islamic feud named after them (see Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *op. cit.*, p. 9, and *passim*; Ibn Ḥudayl al-Andalusī, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181, 190).

¹¹ Not identified.

¹² Al-Šaqrā' was a descendant of David's horse A'waj (see Ibn Ḥudayl al-Andalusī, *op. cit.*, p. 182).

¹³ Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹⁴ A famous descendant of Dāḥis (see Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Ibn Ḥudayl al-Andalusī, *op. cit.*, p. 187).

¹⁵ Not identified.

¹⁶ Emending Ḍ and W's Jammūm in accordance with Hišām ibn al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn al-A'rābī, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

blinder. Here you have a nostril like a den of wild beasts and a cave of hyenas, a delicate ear that is neither folded nor flattened, like the leaves of the *barīr*,¹⁷ or like a sharp spearhead: it is accurate in its hearing, bright in its sheen; it can even hear the tread of ants, and can announce good or evil. Behold a skull like an anvil, or like an ogress in the desert, widening down to the base of a neck like a coffin, followed by a taut belly, and ribs like ropes. When this horse advances or retreats, beauty itself transmits and relays information about it; it is a fleeting bolt of lightning when it prances, and a dream-image visiting a lover whenever it advances.

So I replied to the youth:

God have mercy on you! Getting to know something bears witness to the truth of any statement made about it, and examination dispels any doubt. Here is my whip. Shall we race?

The youth replied:

A horse such as this one cannot be aroused by a mere whip or reprimand, nor can it be summoned forth by any other stallion or brood mare. You neither know how to make it run, nor can you buy or sell it. It is my Sakāb, whom I chose for my stirrup, selecting it for life, and deeming it suitable to the attainment of all my goals. It will not be loaned or sold, even if estates and spring pastures are lavished¹⁸ upon me. It is my hand and foot, my prosperity and privation, my flesh and blood, my joy and sorrow.

Al-Sā'ib said:

The youth's words continued to increase my eagerness to own the animal, and they kindled the fire of acquisitiveness within my breast, until I made him a generous offer and revealed¹⁹ my intention.

The youth declared:

My homeland is remote, the distance between the two of us is vast, traveling has taken its toll from this horse, and waterless deserts and wastelands have so emaciated it, that it is exhausted, as you can plainly see. I feel nothing but pity and fear for it, for I am about to hit the road, and the misfortunes of Fate have already

¹⁷ The grape-like fruit of the *arāk*, a thorny tree on which camels feed.

¹⁸ Vowelizing *buḍilat* with Ḍ, rather than *baḍaltu* with W.

¹⁹ Reading *kašaftu* with Ḍ, rather than *kašafa* with W.

assailed us repeatedly. Therefore, because of the magnanimity I observe in you, and because of your admiration of, and appreciation for, the animal's qualities, I will allow you to enjoy the use of it until I return from Oman.²⁰ But I will require from you a deposit and security for the horse. I need a herd of one hundred camels to be paid to me in advance, hoping to God that it will be an adequate compensation, and also, that you will be generous in caring for my horse and in providing it with fodder. God knows that I part from it as a father parts from his son, a lover, from the source of his affliction, and an inhabitant, from his native land. Moreover, a certain senile old man, who has bequeathed every form of anxiety upon me, insists and demands that I find a fertile morning and evening pasture for the horse, despite the fact that we are strangers in this land.

So I said to the youth:

You and your old man will be my guests this very night. How excellent you both are: True dream-images and phantoms of the imagination descending upon a lover!

Al-Sā'ib said:

So the youth summoned his old man out from the open area in which we were stationed, and the latter began to creep slowly over its bare surface until, when he reached us, he lowered his veil over his face and withdrew from us in an aloof and unfriendly manner.

Then he said to the youth:

Could it be the case that you have set a price for this noble steed, when you know full well that I have vowed not to sell it?

Then the youth replied to the old man:

No, by God, O my father, I would not willingly betray my pledge to you, regarding the animal, nor would I arouse your concern over it. Rather, the matter stands thus and thus . . . for I am opposed to the very same thing to which you are opposed, without any ifs, ands, or buts.

Thereupon, the old man said:

My friendliness is beginning to return to me, now that I realize that you are part of my own stock and origin; of my own kith and

²⁰ In the southeast of the Arabian peninsula, on the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea (see M4, n. 1, above).

kin, while an invitation to be a guest should always be accepted, for it is a noble gesture and a magnanimous act.²¹

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I escorted both of them to a house whose table was laden with abundance, and the ceiling of whose sitting-room was lofty.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then we satisfied our appetite for food and caused a downpour of conversation to flow, but the old man fell asleep before us, snoring like a young camel, all the while that he was concocting every crafty scheme and trick he could devise against us.

Al-Sā'ib said:

When the gray wolf of daybreak stretched out its tail, and the Sultan who holds sway over sleep revealed the brilliant whiteness of his teeth, the old man suddenly awoke and called his son Ḥabīb, saying:

"The people have nearly entered upon the time of dawn: prosecute the night-journey,"²² but you have not succeeded in obtaining your purpose. Where is that act the man who made a commitment to you bound himself to perform, and that thing the man who made a concession to you agreed to provide?

Then I realized what he was hinting at, so I surveyed my pregnant she-camels and those that had given birth, and handed him the round number of one hundred of them, after having broken their badges one by one.

The youth said to me:

This document in my handwriting is a clear contract I have made out to you—for you are distinguished and I am famous—that will remain valid until the moment of our return, when both security and horse are to revert to their respective owners.

²¹ Since the invitation was extended by the narrator to the youth before the latter's elderly father appeared, one is left wondering how the father knew about it. This may be another instance of narratorial ambiguity.

²² From a line of poetry by the 'Transitional' poet al-Šammāḥ ibn Ḍirār (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 288-289):

And the saying of the crier is: "The people have nearly entered upon the time of dawn: prosecute the night-journey."

(Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, III, 1641).

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then, slightly before daybreak, I bid them both farewell, saying: May you both be accompanied by good, and meet with the bird of good fortune.

Then, once he was far away, I turned to read what the youth had inscribed in his contract, only to find the following written down [*basīf*]:

Habīb²³ has hit on you unexpectedly, O sincere and beloved friend.

Before him, his father also deceived you, even though you were his intimate companion, much loved by him.

A thoroughbred steed deceived you by the way it was described, even though its mane and tail were not its own.

Its life was sorely afflicted by a rearing Time that balked at keeping its promise.

Its mouth contains not a single tooth with a sharp edge, so that its only food is liquid and froth.

Its color cannot be restored naturally, hence turmeric and the extract of henna have restored it artificially.

Do you not know²⁴—woe unto you!—that you are but a waif on the lap of Time?

You expect the horse to run a single heat in Time's expanse but, at its most intense, its running is no more than a crawl.

You were deceived when it neighed like a colt that knows not what galloping or prancing are.

How can you have made such a mistake when, in its voice, there is a sign that any experienced physician is able to recognize?

All thoroughbred horses neigh, whereas all billygoats bleat.

²³ The name of the youth, who is al-Sadūsī's son.

²⁴ Vowelizing '*alimta* with Ḍ, rather than '*alimat* with W.

What a vile descendant of an ass this horse is! It is neither sleek in the forelocks nor well cared for!

Don't take any talk about it too seriously, for even the clever and intelligent man may be deceived.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I checked out the animal, only to find that matters were just as the youth had described. Hence, let no one praise or be grateful to it, for it was neither a horse nor an ass, it neither neighed nor brayed. Its hide was wrinkled, its flesh was wasted, its skin was shriveled, its hair had fallen out, its molar had been ground down to the point that it had disappeared, its shin-bone had become thin and worn out, a dyer had stained it with *barnī*²⁵ and turmeric, Fate had sapped its body-fluids, its mane and tail had been attached with glue, and mounted on a body thin as a blunt lance or an arrow. Hence, I turned it into bait for vultures and eagles, and prey for lions and wolves, tallying up my losses, and saying:

I made a mistake and failed to achieve my purpose.

²⁵ A round, yellow variety of date considered to be of superior quality, and from which a yellow dye was extracted.

Maqāmah 35¹
(*The Bear*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I was in Wāsiṭ,² alternating between a just and an unjust Fate, a rising and falling Fortune, and a senile and youthful life;³ I was hanging onto the tail-cord⁴ of enjoyment, seeking refuge in the lead-rope of piety, struggling to subdue my soul, requiring great efforts of, and placing many demands upon it. One day, as I was wandering about in one of the city's lanes, neither rising nor descending, I suddenly heard the sound of piping on a reed, along with much revelry, as well as a clamor and an uproar, with boys racing one another toward the source of that noise like moths to a flame, violently quarreling with one another to reach it first, rejoicing at it in amazement, and prolonging the commotion they were making over it. So I looked at that gathering, extending my gaze and glance, until suddenly I beheld a master wrapped in a robe, surrounded by women and small boys, who was running and dancing, whose speech ebbed and flowed, and lo, in his hand he held some chains, attached to a scowling beast of hideous aspect that was dancing in time with him, anticipating the rise and fall of his cadences. The master was opening the beast's maw with a stick, so that its jaw would go up and down during the performance, all the while that the master was saying:

Listen to what Abū Rabāḥ,⁵ a creature of affluence and profit,⁶ has to say; he is one who neither roars nor barks, neither growls, howls, nor yelps; the honey-gatherer and collector, the daring raider and swift runner, the enemy of bees, the prisoner of mud.

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 41 in D.

² There were several places by that name, including those located in Najd, Yamāmah, Iraq, and Mecca, but the largest and most famous was Wāsiṭ al-Ḥajjāj, halfway between Basra and Kufa (see *E.I.* I, III, 1128-1132).

³ Literally "and life's senile as well as its youthful camel."

⁴ The *ḍināb*, with which the camel's tail is fastened to its hind-girth so that the animal will not swing its tail and soil its rider.

⁵ The name literally means 'the father of (i. e. 'he who makes') a profit'.

⁶ *Rabāḥ*. A pun on the bear's name.

Then he began to recite, making it appear as if the words were coming directly from the animal's mouth,⁷ while I was halted in my tracks by the astonishing skill I observed in him [*ṣarī*]:

My Lord, O my Lord, toward You do we travel on our way to our final destination; Your servant, whose gut is starving, prays to You.

I pray to You, my Lord, for You are the One who will hear, in me, the voice of a prisoner in captivity.

To You do I complain of everyone who demands of me an account of my keeper, and of how to cheer the confined.

My keeper feeds me bread, whereas all I crave is my juice, but how can I obtain juice?

I'm not a good dancer; I only go, in the performance, as far as he goes.

I must endure the fate that has befallen me at the hands of my master, for his breast is carefree whereas mine is constricted,

And what can possibly be amusing in the state of one who has come to be confined and rendered helpless in his master's hands?

I have a fierce and hateful nature; a long face and a short neck,

Over and above which, I am afflicted by increasing weak-sightedness. Although I am not entirely blind, I cannot see clearly.

Then the master was given a round of comments and applause, as everybody⁸ swarmed around him, good wishes egged him on, and gratuities sought to make him reveal his secret, while he made a show of resistance and feigned aversion to doing so, until the she-camel of his soul consented to being governed by the will of his

⁷ This must be one of the earliest known descriptions of an act of ventriloquism.

⁸ *Al-naslu wa-l-natfu*, literally 'the molted and the plucked'. Since *nasl* also means 'offspring', *natf* ('plucked', or perhaps 'depilated') may refer to the women in the crowd, and it might be possible to translate "as women and children swarmed around him."

audience, and its refractory horse was reduced to obedience. Then he said:

Listen to my response, and decide whether I have failed or succeeded [*sarī*]:

Bear, O bear, what kind of a staff, O bear, is this one of yours, the wood of which is *sa'sam*?⁹

Take pride in yourself at the expense of the wolf and its like; how inferior are the wolf and the fox to you,

And attack with your paw or your foreleg, for your paw can cause much mischief.

It is as if your hide, which fits you loosely because it is so pliant, were made of cotton or *raysam*.¹⁰

You imitate human beings in their behavior, and in everything that is proscribed and preordained.

I swear by love—and beyond love, no oath is possible for one who swears, if he is in love—

That you are more delightful than Abū Hārīṭ¹¹ and that, aside from the latter's courage, you are better looking.

How can that not be so, when you wear a costume embellished by a mark of beauty that will always surpass anything worn by the lion?

Therefore, declare: "I am in love," and have no doubt about it, for every refined individual is influenced by love.

⁹ A black wood from which bows and arrows are made, also known as *šīz*.

¹⁰ This word is not found in any of the standard Arabic dictionaries. D (p. 456, n. 1) suggests that it may be a variant form of the word *abraysīm*, 'silk'. W (p. 335, n. 23) states that it is a plant, but provides no source for his claim. It is a derivative of the Persian *rešam* or *rīšam*, 'silk'. See F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 4th ed. (London, 1957), p. 603b. Related to it is the word *abrašam*, 'silk, sewing silk' (*ibid.*, p. 7a), which entered Arabic in the forms *ibrīšam* and *ibrīšim* "sometimes synonymous with silk (ḥarīr) . . . According to some, especially 'raw silk' or 'dressed silk', stuff wholly composed of silk (both warp and weft)." See Anonymous, *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf)*, trans. Ghāda al-Hijjāwī al-Qaddūmī (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996), p. 423, and *passim*.

¹¹ An epithet of the lion.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I looked at the master attentively, and he returned my look, while wrapping and covering himself up in his robe, as he began to say [*sarī*]:

O you who scrutinize our fault, do not forget that fault of your own that you have overlooked,

For man is his brother's mirror; therefore, let your bowstring not betray you, be it ever so taut.

Every superior man has his defect, even though he is 'Antarah¹² in courage.

Disregard one who stumbles, whether Fate prolongs his life or severs its cord.

I am al-Sadūsī and, therefore, it is no wonder that Fate at times diminishes my standing, and at times averts harm from me.

As for you, if you shelter a friend against Fate, he will be well protected from that very misfortune of which you yourself are wary.

Your sincere friend would sacrifice himself for you, O Sā'ib—may he never break or betray his oath to you!

I am a nightingale—and no weak one—who, when the going gets tough by night, is called a fox.

When his sincere friend commits an offense against him, a truly noble youth will overlook it.

Nor does a truly noble youth care whether his companion is extravagant or stingy with his silver.

So I said:

Abū Ḥabīb, are you now earning your living by means of a bear, thereby dishonoring yourself in the eyes of noble youths?¹³ Your

¹² 'Antarah ibn Šaddād was a famous pre-Islamic poet and hero who lived in the sixth century. He composed one of the seven *Mu'allaqāt* and, later on, became the hero of an extensive popular epic (see *E.I.* 2, I, 521-522; M30, n. 32, above).

¹³ Animal trainers were placed in the same social category of low-lives as were

star has declined, your status is contemptible, your dignity is diminished, your quarreling is endless, the result of your activities is evil, your midday and morning mirages are illusory, your efforts are blameworthy, defending you is forbidden, and mourning you as though you were dead is obligatory.

Al-Sadūsī replied:

Lighten up on me! Get away from me! Be off! Otherwise I will sic the bear on you! Its fangs are sharp and can inflict a severe wound; it can throw a pebble at you with its paw, impose an “everlasting punishment”¹⁴ on you by treading you underfoot, and do all sorts of mischief to you with a lash of its tail. Were it not for the loyalty and friendship I feel for you, both highlands and lowlands would be too narrow to hide you; therefore, be reasonable, so that I may continue to enjoy your acquaintance.

I answered him:

No, by God, I will not be reasonable, until I witness your excuse and treachery, and learn of your comings and goings.

Then al-Sadūsī pointed me out to the crowd, and said:

This is a wicked old man who molests small boys and disgraces his friends.

quacks, con-men, beggars, and thieves. See for example, the shadow play *‘Ajīb wa-Ḡarīb* in Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl, *Three Shadow Plays*, ed. Paul Kahle, et al. (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 55-89. That play does, in fact contain a description of an animal performance featuring a bear that is made to dance by its trainer, one Abū l-Waḥš as follows:

Then Abū l-Waḥš appears with his bear and his rod and his wallet, and he strikes the bear as clapper-bells are struck, and he says: “Play the reed, O Ḥamīs,” and he sings [*ḥafīf*]:

The companionship of bears taught me how to struggle, and showed me that corruption could be turned into good behavior.

I have a companion from among the bears, who is rough-natured, fierce, rebellious, and defiantly resists me.

My rod trained it when it defied me, and showed it both joys and sorrows.

Then he says: “This is the waddling of the fat lady, and this, the snoozing of the lazy one.” Then he says: “Whoever blesses the chosen Prophet, and selected Messenger, will not neglect me, by his life, and if *he* will not favor me, then who will? Give me something, may God prolong your lives, and fill your homes with offspring,” and he exits (Ibn Dāniyāl, p. 79).

¹⁴ Qur’ān, 37:9.

Then did they overwhelm me by kicking and pushing, poking and slapping, lifting and dropping me, all the while that al-Sadūsī made his bear circle around me, time after time, so that I found myself surrounded by the crowd, with al-Sadūsī reciting [*rajaz*]:

What do you think now, Sā'ib, of having resisted me? I have led men forth in troops,

And made them test Fate group after group. Oh, many a slap on the nape of your neck has declared:

"Either find refuge in the shadow of piety, or else you will become entirely powerless among mortals."

Kindle the fire of piety with harm's firesticks!¹⁵ Have you had enough, so that you will now leave me be, my friend?

Each one of us will be summoned individually on the Day of Reckoning.

Then al-Sadūsī circled around me, singing [*rajaz*]:

What do you think now—woe is you!—of having disagreed with me? Is it a sour wine that you have drunk, or a sweet one?

How can you seek—woe is you!—to be on good terms with me, when you have broken your vow and promise?

Cease your meddling, and take on allies, without caring if you break your oaths to them,

For mortals have passed away, generation after generation, devoured as though they were either choice cuts of meat, or less desirable cloven hooves;

Or as if they resembled the fruit-bearing tree that tempts one to harvest its fruit, or its opposite.¹⁶ Indeed, I am on good terms with all mortals,

¹⁵ I.e., "learn how to be pious from the harmful experience you have suffered."

¹⁶ *Hilāf*. The word also designates the Egyptian willow (*salix Aegyptia*) which, being fruitless, is the "opposite" of the fruit-bearing tree previously mentioned. Thus, this is a pun.

For I have associated with proud-necked princes and uncouth bumpkins, but I have never found a friend who is any different from the rest.

Then he left me on the road, as he stormed out like a violent gale, after having caused me much pain, for he had branded me with the mark of infamy.¹⁷

¹⁷ At this point the suspicious reader is inevitably left wondering what happened to the bear. Is this another account of an episode that never took place?

Maqāmah 36¹
(*The Phoenix*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

Persistence in going abroad exhausted me and inclinations to wander wore me out, until I was devoting all my efforts to traveling in foreign parts. I was accompanied and assisted along my journey, until I halted in the land of China, where I made friends with a noble youth of solid views and sound mind, whom I trusted, and who trusted me, and whom I made the confidant of my secret sorrows. Along with the above, he was strong of talon, clever of mind, an impediment to his opponent,² and kind in his intentions. He had studied with physicians, frequented the assemblies of the intelligent, was fond of the arts and sciences, and was interested in roads and climes. He used to excel in mathematics and geometry, and had penetrated deeply into the obscure and dark night of their mysteries. He would often discuss astronomy, offering an opinion or conjecture on that subject. I used to observe how transparent those sciences were to him, and considered his knowledge to be among the greatest of strengths and benefactions until, on one occasion, he shocked me by behaving with the tipsiness of a drunkard, acting as though he were overcome by the giddiness of a noble steed, and moving about with the liveliness of a twinkling glance.

I said to him:

What is the cause of this merriment? Have you achieved life everlasting? Is it the intoxication of wine, or success in a discovery; a breeze fragrant to its inhaler, or the excitement of a lover?

He replied:

None of the above; instead, how generous, pleasant, subtle, and favorable to human souls is he, namely the cause of my merriment. He is a well-watered meadow, a dazzling knowledge, a bewitching mind, a brilliant refinement, a magnificent method, a clear eloquence, an outspoken tongue, a total friendship, a perfect beauty,

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 44 in Ḍ.

² Vowelizing *munāẓi'* with Ḍ, rather than *manāẓi'* with W.

a preponderant intelligence, a gentle prudence, a decisive judgment, and a sharp tongue; in short, he is a man remarkable for his excellence. Today, I passed by a large group and an impressive gathering whom a respectably plump master had assembled. He was an elder in whose favor the wind of contest after contest for superiority in knowledge blew. At times, he addressed us in prose and, at times, in verse; at times, his reins restrained him, and he fell silent. I was one of those who drew close to him; who discussed with, asked difficult questions of, and thronged to him from right and left, yet I ended up agreeing wholeheartedly with him. In him, I initiated a discussion with the very center of a profound ocean of knowledge, with a reliable fascination, with a cultivated garden growing in the wilderness, and with the downpour of a raincloud. He fanned the flame of, and fertilized intellects, bettered and improved minds, whetted and polished ideas, gradually leading and drawing them nearer to the truth. He is seduction or mercy itself, a nourishing piece of fat or an illuminating lump of coal; he is freedom from want, or the goal of one's hopes; his authority left me at my wits' end. I suspect he is at times sincere, and at times merely pretentious; he combines the *nab*³ with the *garab*,⁴ poison with white honey, the possible with the impossible, the unadorned with the adorned; he confuses his words when he formulates his statements.

Then I declared:

This is a clear description, a remarkable account, and an extraordinary matter having no equal. Your descriptions have filled us with longing for him, while your praise for, and enthusiasm over him have astonished us. Is there no way of meeting him and of observing such a high stature and eminence as his?⁵

He replied:

Come along, we will follow in his tracks and join those who ask him many questions, to whom he will give many answers in verse and in prose, and whom he will treat with preference and honor.

Al-Sā'ib said:

³ See M2, n. 12, above.

⁴ See M2, n. 12, above. The expression means: "He confuses apples with oranges."

⁵ Reading *wa-mulāḥazati tasāmī-hi wa-rtiqā'i-hi* with D, rather than *wa-murāwahati waṭ'i-hi 'aw siqā'i-hi* ('and the alternation of his step or his waterskin') with W.

So I accompanied him until we reached that man, whom people were surrounding and encircling, standing in rows, while he was roaring as loudly as a rutting male camel exposing its soft palate, swooping down in his delivery as does the falcon or the sparrowhawk, striking his target with every one of his well-aimed arrows, and saying:

O people of China, where are your men of balanced reason and sound intellect, where are your heroic souls and your soaring Arab ambitions? Where are your clever minds? Where are your pure hearts, that I may inform them about rare matters and tell them of wondrous things? In this region, you are like none other than truffles or mushrooms.⁶ You neither know what animals are, nor what their qualities, species, phenomena, or essences are really like; what large cities contain, or what ages and epochs have produced. I was in the far-distant land of the Maghreb,⁷ having traversed every path on earth, when journeying led us to a vast desert sweltering under the midday heat and the blistering simoon.⁸ As we traveled swiftly, night and day, raising up our collapsing bodies, we suddenly reached a level land and a sandy stretch, as smooth as the surfaces of bucklers or shields, exhibiting colors such as saffron or turmeric, whereupon we entered that land and trod upon the mantle and embroidery of its surface. While we were so doing, that land moved forward rapidly, and its length and breadth wheeled about in the opposite direction, with us in it. Then we began to move along the stages of a journey, and to behold that the deserts and shores were causing

⁶ Which grow in dark, damp areas, on decaying matter, and are therefore lowly.

⁷ Which, in Arabic, is reputed to be a region where sorcery is much cultivated (see *E.I.* 2, V, 1183-1184). Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies here: (1) Marvels were generally attributed to the Far East, e.g. in the introduction to Buzurg ibn Shahriyār's *ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* (see *E.I.* 2, I, 203). China itself was seen as a particular center of strange marvels. Telling tales of wonders to a Chinese audience is, therefore, tantamount to carrying coals to Newcastle. (2) Specifically, the phoenix (*anqāʾ*) was associated by the Greeks with the wildernesses of Arabia (see *E.I.* 2, I, 509), and giant turtle-islands were associated by the Arabs with the South Seas, not with the Maghreb. (3) Wonders are, by their very nature, unfamiliar. They are, therefore, normally relegated to the distant margins of the familiar world. What then would an Andalusī reader make of this tall tale about an area with which he was all too familiar?

⁸ See M18, n. 6, above.

us to advance, until we saw either that the sea was moving toward us, or that we were moving toward the sea; that it was rising above us at times, and that we were rising above it at others, so that its crests and waves were toying with us, and the curves and windings of its shores were growing distant from us. Then the land we were on sank into the sea and we found ourselves helpless in the water. So we swam for a long time and exhausted our patience and will, until we emerged onto a broad island with fertile meadows and a bountiful land. There, we brought to a halt our weakened and exhausted bodies, and the remains of our perishing souls, for we were bereft of mind and reason, and unable to accept or reject anything; not knowing what was the matter, nor the reason for this incredible wonder, until we eventually regained our wits, and our ties to life were restored after having been severed.⁹ We recovered from our hardship and awoke from our intoxication, only to realize that we had ridden on the back of a sea-creature that had entered the desert and then gone back to the ocean: a gigantic animal that had gone to graze on land and then returned to its natural element; one that had emerged from the water to sun itself, then plunged back into its marine environment and become submerged. And while we were wandering back and forth in those regions, and clinging to the stays of hope, we were suddenly overshadowed by a deep shade and a moist raincloud that thundered and rustled; that whistled and soughed, until it landed and hit the ground, and lo, we beheld a bird bathing itself in the water, emitting a cry like echoing thunder, and turning the sea deep red as it devoured its fish. It began to move and stir the water with its beak, and to churn it into a froth, and while we were in this state, with fear of that bird terrifying us, with its power overwhelming us, we suddenly came upon a man whose hair was disheveled, and who was bent and hunchbacked like a bow or an axe,¹⁰ for Time had instructed and educated him. He shied away from us, sought to flee, praised God, asked His forgiveness, and demanded: “Are you a *jinni* or a human; a species or a genus? Who is this night-visiting phantom, this err-

⁹ Reading *ba'da l-taṣarrumī* with D, rather than *ba'da l-ya'sī* ('after despair') with W.

¹⁰ Reading *fa's* with D, rather than *nās* with W.

ing¹¹ arrow, this unheard-of creature? He would belong to a noble genus, if he were not an antagonist; to an eminent species, if he were not hostile; he would be a fascinating companion, if he did not attempt to defeat us; he would possess a goodly disposition, if he were not eloquent; he would manifest splendid qualities, if he were not greedy; he would be a friendly companion, if he were not mortal; and he would be the best of allies, if he did not disagree with my opinion. O my Lord, make me familiar with loneliness and seclusion, and spare me the terrors of tremors and earthquakes! O my Lord, my devotion is to You alone; it is You alone whom I obey; Your satisfaction is my sole purpose; You are my only wealth; invocation of You provides me with all companionship; thanking You is my only concern; toward You alone do my hands rise in supplication; from You alone do all my integrity and right-guidance derive; You comforted me and I became content; You commanded me and I obeyed! O my Lord, make me one of the best heralds to proclaim Your truth, and deliver me from the evil of Your enemies! O my Lord, place my nourishment and protection in Your hands, and let all my supererogatory prayers, be they even ones or odd, be addressed to You. Behold me, Your humble worshiper, Your worthless creature: There is no power or might save through You, and no support or grace save from You! You have provided me with intelligence to avail me in my old age, and have dressed me in the twin robes of honor and nobility! O Benefactor, O Donor, I guard against, and fear Your displeasure alone!”

The old man addressing the assembled Chinese said:

Thus our affection inclined toward that recluse, our hopes turned to him, and we said to him:

O abstinent hermit and peaceful ascetic, your compassion is godly, and your bliss is divine. If you will listen to a part of our tale, we will provide you with exquisite beauties. We are a people to whom such and such befell . . . If you were to know our story, you would take pity on us and weep.

Then the ascetic replied:

The creature you speak of is the turtle of this swelling sea;¹² the

¹¹ Reading *māriq* with D, rather than *ma'āriq* with W.

¹² Reading *hādā l-yammi l-zāḥiri* with D, rather than *hādā l-yawmi l-zāḥiri* with W.

bane of ships that plow the bounding main. How many a man has perished because of this turtle, and how many a traveler has voyaged on its back! Praise be to Him who ordained your deliverance by placing within your grasp a promontory rising safely above sea-level. As for this bird that you see before you, it is the chick of the phoenix—may misfortune not be decreed to it, and may calamities not visit it by night! I found it on this island, when it was completely covered with down, when its hunger was extreme and its exhaustion had reached the limit, for it used to have a mother to nourish and fetch food for it, until the calamity of calamities snatched her away, Death ensnared her in its coils, and she was eliminated from the sea, at a time when no one was able to protect her from her appointed hour of death, for everyone who has a soul will perish, since the appointed hour of death is ever alert, and is an imperious lord. So I fed the chick with my very own hand and raised it until it grew up. It visits me every month and causes me to take pleasure in every garden and flower of its good qualities. Blessed be that obtainer and provider, for how much water from the Nile has it fetched me; how much fresh and sweet water from the Tigris and Euphrates has it devoted to me; how much pleasant food, along with the bounty of the rivers Sayhān¹³ and Jayhān,¹⁴ has it offered me. Sometimes it fetched me, along with the best of blessings and the milk of camels, what I abhor, abstain from, and avoid; what I will neither smell nor sip, yet occasionally I did drink of it, as one drinks from what is forbidden out of dire necessity, or as a maiden preserves her virtue for a virgin groom. Indeed, the chick's story is most remarkable: I summon it and it responds; I chide it and it is driven away; I scold it and it hides and turban its head in its feathers.

Then the ascetic declared:

Come, O offspring of the phoenix, O you who resemble the dove; rather, you who resemble a human being and are superior in beauty and excellence! O you who possess a gifted tongue and an

¹³ A large river in southeast Turkey, known in antiquity as the Saros. It is the western twin of the Jayhān (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 112-113; n. 14, below). There is also a river by that name in Basra.

¹⁴ A river in southeast Turkey. It is the ancient Pyramos (see *E.I.* 2, II, 502-503).

ample wing, what do you have to report? What do you have to say for yourself? Intellects are baffled when you speak; your melodies are worthy of being played on the lute, and your tunes, of being sung by David;¹⁵ you sadden and enrapture, your meaning is at times easy to grasp and at times difficult to follow; on how many a distant journey have travelers taken news about you to foreign parts, and how much pride has the west taken in you;¹⁶ you alone boast four wings and an extra claw lacking in all other birds; your silence informs, your speech edifies, and your condition is impressive. O possessor of a white-striped garment, hollow quills, a long, ringed neck, and surpassing loveliness, you put the peacock's beauty to shame, being the nobler and more resplendant creature. Congratulations on your high rank and virtue. Come, come, when will you don your sandals for the journey, lead the vanguard, and perform good deeds?

The master said:

Then we saw the bird come forward like a forbidding, lofty mountain, and like a dark night, until it halted humbly before the ascetic, raised the wing of a humble traveler, revealed itself, and cried out, until it ceased and desisted; it clattered with its beak like a stork, until it perturbed us, spread out the garments of its feathers, and lifted its crest displaying one gap after another between its plumes, smoothed them down, went off to doff and remove garment after garment, folding in and spreading out, compacting and squeezing together its plumage, doing everything imaginable to display excellence and beauty; superiority and perfection.

Then the ascetic said to us:

Rejoice over your deliverance and the happy outcome of your affairs, in the fact that you now contemplate both hill and sand-dune, having reached dry land, and found shelter in the kindest and most charitable of creatures. O my Lord, steady these wanderers when they stumble, bring order into their chaos, hasten their

¹⁵ Proverbial, in the Arabic tradition, for the beauty of his voice (see *E.I.* 2, II, 182).

¹⁶ As a sacred symbol in Egyptian religion, the phoenix represented the sun, which dies each night and rises again each morning. For more on the phoenix, see *E.I.* 2, I, 509.

homecoming, shorten their absence from their native shores, preserve their secrets, forgive their sins, make them contemplate the wonders of Your grace, and bring them down to drink from the waterholes of Your affection. O my Lord, rekindle their hope, ordain their deliverance, make it the cause of their repentance, cancel their sin, grant them Your relief rather than Your harm, and protect them night and day.

Then he added:

O my sons, when the bird is seated and it rests, when it perches and it nests, climb gradually onto its tail as soon as it lets it hang down, but be careful and beware of that tail should the bird raise or move it forward. Then climb up the base of the tail, toward the spine on the bird's back, but beware lest it peck you with its beak, and beware of its aggressive behavior. After that, cling to the ends of its feathers and stay inside the hollow on its back where its shoulderblades meet. Then will you pierce the air like a well-fledged arrow, at the end of which the bird will deposit you in pleasant, lovely valleys and plains, after having carried you distance after distance, devouring them at tremendous speed, and banishing every peril and terror from your souls, all the while harboring joy and excitement in its own, just as grandeur and nobility cleave to its mantle. So, come forward now to honor it, lining up before it, for it can understand the slightest hint and unspoken thought. God alleviate your difficulty by means of it, raise your status through it, dispel your fear, guide you along the path of truth, and reunite you with your mates and spouses.

The master said:

So we obeyed the ascetic's directions, while he began to preach admonitory parables to us, offering the world as his example [*muj-tatt*]:

The world you live in, O my companion, is a bridge, and Time consists of difficulty and ease.

Ask Death whether the short-lived mountain swallow or the long-lived eagle ever escaped it.

In appearance you are free and yet, in reality, captivity lurks beneath your life,

Even if it should prove to be a long life, and its creation and joints are strong.¹⁷

O woe to him who hastens toward a place in which his lot will inevitably be ruination!

The worst thing a powerful man can undergo there is humiliation and constraint.

The master said:

We continued thus, until the bird alighted, whereupon every dauntless and dismayed one among us clung to it, we were overwhelmed by its warmth and comfort, and we felt its strength and softness. Then, when daybreak appeared and became visible, when the dew was moist and wet, the bird flew gently through the air, while the clouds kept up with us like an escort, lightning flashed beneath us, and sunrises and sunsets gazed up our way, until the seas were left behind us, and we realized that we were entering the desert, although daybreak had not yet arrived. Then the bird began to swoop down and descend, diving toward an ample stretch of ground on the shore, in the direction of a land full of trees and rivers; of lush gardens and flowers. Upon landing, we were informed that it was part of the cultivated banks and shores of the Nile; of its canals and ditches. So we praised God Almighty for His blessings, and for our having alternately¹⁸ traveled through His earth and heaven. Then we scattered in all directions, parting company with anxiety and fear, while each one of us set out on his own for his homeland, thus making for his resting place. Therefore, when have the likes of you Chinese ever experienced such astonishing marvels, dazzling wonders, delicate feelings, and manifold works?¹⁹

¹⁷ A reference to Qur'ān, 76:28: "It is We who created them, and We have made their joints strong."

¹⁸ Vowelizing *taqallubi-nā* with Ǫ, rather than *taqallabnā* with W.

¹⁹ A curious question in light of the fact that the stereotypical Arab view was that the Chinese experienced such wonders on a daily basis. The plausibility of wonder tales (or of any tall tales) depends upon the wonderer's physical distance from the wonder (modern science fiction). I.e., if tall tales about the Far East are found to be credible in the Arab-Muslim world, then tall tales about the "Far West" will go over well in China. This is a cynical view of travelers' tales in general, and suggests, once again, that nothing in this text should be accepted at face value.

How many a relief after hardship, and triumph without prior preparedness is attributable to God!

Al-Sā'ib said:

I looked at him carefully, for I recognized certain idiosyncrasies in his manner of speaking, and I scrutinized him with my glance, only to discover that he was Abū Ḥabīb, that deceitful master and predatory wolf. The Chinese people, in the meantime, clamored and cried out mightily, while he gave me a wink and said:

Refrain from backbiting and slandering me.²⁰ Silence, silence! Think carefully, think carefully! Hush, hush! Don't be devious or make waves!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did people fall silent in order to listen, without murmuring or making the slightest sound, and the master said:

O people, a reasonable man is despoiled, a stranger is suspect, Time moves in constant cycles, people undergo varying circumstances, poverty visits us, wealth is in flight, a generous man is inhibited, a poor man is frightened, need emboldens, truth absolves, sustenance is available but withheld, and luck by turns reveals and conceals its favors from us. Often does a silent man speak clearly; often does a careful thinker express himself openly; often does one's condition speak for itself; often does one's leanness make a statement; when the meaning is apparent, secret discussion is a vice; a promise is a gift, hope is a mount, speaking openly is a manifestation of hidden inability, and a few scant drinks can allay a burning thirst. A mere hint is enough for men of distinction, since the generous person overlooks a fault, the one dear to you warns you, knowledge has many levels, piety is manifold, the man of nobility has an alert eye and an attentive ear, and lofty ambitions require a fleet foot and an eloquent tongue. Far be it from the man of sound means to importune and insist in his begging.²¹ All a man of merit needs to know is that one noble person is related to another.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then was the attention of the people directed toward him, and they gave him welcoming gifts and secret donations, so I followed

²⁰ Allusion to Qur'ān, 104:1.

²¹ Allusion to Qur'ān, 2:273.

him to his home, as the donations poured out after him, and I reproached and reviled him, until I caught up with him and said:

Abū Ḥabīb, do you think these people are naïve children going down a slide in innocent play, that you have fabricated this tall tale for them? Why have you not been kind to this group? Why have you not told them, instead, a true story about an elephant or a giraffe?

He smiled mockingly, pressed my hand disdainfully, and said [*mujaṭṭ*]:

Never inform this group about an elephant or a giraffe;

Instead, tell them tall tales whenever you narrate fables.

Leave aside true stories about meadow streams and tree bark.

How different from you is a clever man whose fortunetelling is transparent.

Everyone yields to the temptation of sin, but God forgives the sin of yielding to temptation.

Never be moved to pity ignorance,

And never leave a place where you can enjoy the company of elegance.

Time has destroyed my people, and I have been deprived of their noblemen.

Fate is hostile, so let me complain to you of its deviousness:

It has fled and shunned me, and who can bear its departure?

Were I to win the friendship of a noble individual, I would never abandon his tent.

My occupation is obvious, for men are oft beset by ill-fatedness,

Therefore, forgive your brother, let him be, and accept his confession—may God guide you along the right path.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I marveled at his range and versatility; at the swiftness with which he could reach the outer limits of speech, while folding its

reins for the gallop, striking with its swordblade and spearhead; being able to produce, all by himself, such remarkable descriptions, dubious situations, and farfetched if plausible stories. Then he abandoned me, after having bidden me farewell; after having blamed and duped Fate. Despite all this, I was of half a mind to follow him and of half a mind to revile him; I was torn between a desire causing me to long for him and a common sense insisting that I wash my hands of him and give him up for lost.

Maqāmah 37¹
(*The Dove*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

After having parted from my family and servants, I alighted in Palestine, where I associated with both moderate and excessive eaters, and I adhered closely to the ground like humble mushrooms and stemless plants. As I was wandering about in a certain market-place, the intensity of my homesickness suddenly overwhelmed me, until I glanced at a ring-necked dove with a mournful voice and a yearning heart, imprisoned by the locks of a cage; a dove that Fate, having changed its disposition toward the bird after first treating it kindly, had attired in its tatters. In that dove, I observed a delightful sight, and heard a voice that aroused grief and longing. The bird glanced through the aperture of its cage, while fearing punishment and hoping for delivery from the hand of the hunter “when there was no longer time for being saved.”² Then, it reverted to despair and consorted with misery and adversity. What a cup of humiliation did it swallow, and how wide did the wound of sorrow gape upon its breast! Thus, it bent down a humble neck and a submissive cheek until, when grief had constrained it, and all its sorrows and afflictions had overwhelmed it, it wrapped its head in an ample wing, took refuge in its primary and secondary wing-feathers, concealed anger in its breast, perched and rested on one leg, and mourned repeatedly without being able to fly away. While I was attentively observing this behavior on its part, and being reminded by it of ruin and perdition, I suddenly noticed an individual with a loud voice who was interrupting his talented utterances by clearing his throat and coughing, as he leaned against his staff and said:

Where is the man who obeys, as well as the one who disobeys God Almighty? How distant and remote is man from His right guidance! How often has Fate admonished and advised him. Have you not considered this gray dove? Its name is Clumsy. Misfor-

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 43 in D.

² Qur'ān, 38:3.

tune³ has been ordained for it, and the bond that joins it to its loved ones has been severed, hence, it has no desire to survive. It yearns for its companions, yet has been shorn of its feathers, its wing is grounded, although it considers avoidance of its companions to be a sin. But the snare enveloped it in its cords, so that tossing and turning, or moving about were of no avail, and when the dove's wing got caught, and longing overcame it, a heart throbbed, a noble steed ceased from its coursing and, whenever the dove struggled frantically within those cords, and harmful calamities gained control over it, it was ordained a hand to squeeze it tightly, without leaving it any heartbeat or pulse. Then that hand clipped the feathers that are missing from its wings, while its tail feathers were also cut off and, after some difficulty, the hand deposited it in a cage, where its body feathers fell to the ground when it molted. Therefore, O you who wander about and enjoy your freedom; you who are happy and gay, going about as you please, effortlessly letting down your well-bucket and well-rope, harvesting the fruit of both the large and the small palm trees of your hope, how can you compare with a former predator, now turned prey,⁴ that cannot leave its place; with a former hunter, now turned prisoner, that cannot arch its neck; with one who is a grieving mourner, a captive of snares, snatched from its valleys and hillsides, who cannot climb upon a branch or cross the horizon whereas, formerly, not even the sky was big enough to contain it, nor were wide, open spaces broad enough to hold it? And here that dove lies today, in a dwelling-place narrower than the grave, and in a state far more painful than that caused by the sting of hornets. Its hours are longer than Time itself, its respiration is more labored than shortness of breath, it cannot move a feather, perch upon an arbor, pick up a grain of wheat, or visit a loved one. Therefore, have you ever seen the like of this dove in one who misses his beloved after having sworn an oath of fealty to her? Have you ever seen one whom longing has stirred as much as it has this dove, all the while that Fate hinders and restrains it? Is there anyone among you who feels pity and

³ Reading *šaqā'* with D, rather than *šafā'* with W.

⁴ Aside from the occasional worm it may devour, it is hard to see how a grain-eating dove can be described as a predator.

compassion for this bird, and who is prepared to offer and spend a *dirham* of his own to rescue it and reverse its wretched state? By God, were it not for a group of small boys lacking in experience, who have consented to my coming here, but who await my return, since they look to, and depend upon no one but me,⁵ I would release this bird myself, out of sheer kindness, and lodge it in a safe place. Instead, let me place my hopes in a compassionate man, and my expectations in a kind person; one who will be ready to sacrifice a *dirham* in order to ransom this dove and guide it to its beloved. Lo, verily a man is a debtor in distress with regard to what he may possess, and verily, a bird is an honorable creature in the eyes of its Maker, who subjected air and land to it, and constricted length and breadth for it; it does not store up food, yet does not cease being fed, while this dove is a dearly beloved companion, whether it is feeding on its own, or being provided with its food; it faithfully completed the mission on which Noah sent it, without being distracted by the availability of food, or the desire and inclination to return to its nest, such as distracted the raven;⁶ it blocked the entrance to the cave, thereby providing a happy and decisive outcome to a well-known event.⁷ How many a discriminating, select admirer does the dove have, who prefers its cooing to the sound of the highest, and even of the lower strings of the lute; who intermingles with that bird as he does with his own family, and greets it with a friendly welcome on every occasion! Lo, the soul of a believer is familiar with fear, and compassion is better than meanness while, whoever holds a carat⁸ in esteem is contemptible, even if he is Socrates or Hippocrates.

⁵ The speaker is referring to his children but, after having used them as an excuse, he remains in the market for a considerable amount of time.

⁶ An allusion to the biblical story of Noah, the raven, and the dove found in Genesis, 8:6-12. The story is not included in the Qur'ān, which is not, by and large, a narrative text, but it is told in several later Arabic sources (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 108-109).

⁷ An allusion to two carrier-pigeons God sent from Mecca, to Muḥammad and Abū Bakr, when those two men took shelter in the cave of Jabal Ṭawr, as they were traveling to Medina (see *E.I.* 2, III, 108-110, at pp. 110a, 186b; Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sirat Rasūl Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume [Oxford, 1955], p. 224).

⁸ A measure of weight equivalent to one twenty-fourth of a gold *ḍīnār*.

Then he began to recite [*ramal*]:

O dove of the leafy copse, I feel a grief to which no other grief can ever compare, for as long as Time shall endure.

O dove of the leafy copse, for you I would sacrifice all that flies through the air or sticks to one place.

You are imprisoned against my will, but does the jailer know whom he imprisoned when he imprisoned you?

Which of Time's pure waterholes, never troubled by Time, has now become brackish?

O you who are stingy with your *dirham*, the stingy man will be tormented by the very thing that he has earned,

Namely money, which is a fleeting shadow, for money disowns its possessor and is shameless.

Whilst the miser is milking an inexhaustible stream of milk, a grazing-ground for his milch-camels suddenly withers so that he becomes confined to a single pasture.⁹

How many a man who leads an agile, active life, is such that Fate buffets¹⁰ him and consumes his wealth.

A man's day consists of his jet-black hair, but when his hair turns white, he is a night changing color.

How many an unerring arrow does Fate shoot, though a shield of piety stand before a man.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did *dirhams* pour forth upon him, and his she-camels¹¹ conceived right in front of him, as everyone rushed toward him, saying:

"Here is what I will offer in sacrifice, here is my robe, here is my

⁹ As a result of which, his camels have insufficient pasture and thus grow lean. Reading *fa-rajān* with Ḍ, rather than *fa-wajān* with W.

¹⁰ Literally, "kneads."

¹¹ *Iṣār*, literally, 'she-camels that have recently given birth', a metaphor for continuous prosperity.

mantle,” until the speaker’s hand was full, he was propelled toward the owner of the cage by his obvious cunning, and addressed him thus:

O hard-hearted man whom it is my religious duty to denounce, do you not wish to earn your share of God’s eternal reward? Is the latter not the most profitable return and the best bargain available to you? Are you content to shuffle the gaming arrows¹² yet end up being the loser? Will you ignore the consensus reached by this group because you are overwhelmed by greed and covetousness? By God, may you betray not even its most indigent member, and may you console only its poor!

Al-Sā’ib said:

Then the owner of the cage was put on the defensive by the speaker’s appeal, and feared lest his soul should perish. He turned the dove about in his hand, calming its fear and its heart, offering it his protection and defense, stroking its sides, and treating it gently until, finally, he released the bird, so that it was filled with joy and pride, it rose by its own efforts into the air,¹³ from whence it could look down upon the earth, while the speaker said:

Observe how joy and sprightliness have returned to the bird, now that its knots and bonds have been untied; observe how it circles and soars, how it flaps its wings back and forth, how it gradually rises in the air, crossing roads and the intervening spaces in the course of its ascending flight; how it advances and passes by, at times turning and wheeling; how it traverses the air and open space, and vies with the wind and lightning.

And, as people were gazing at it, fully verifying and confirming the truth of his words, the speaker plunged into the depths of the multitude that stood before him, taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the roar and clamor it produced, for he crept into the crowd that had assembled, while I began to follow after the pattering sound of his feet, until I caught his eye, identified him, and said:

¹² In the pre-Islamic game of chance called *maysir* (see M8, n. 1, above).

¹³ The previous description of the clipped, molted, and thoroughly featherless dove makes it hard to believe that it could have flown away so readily, when released. This is another instance of narratorial inconsistency in the text.

Abū Ḥabīb, your skill is both general and particular, and a man such as you is such that he first establishes the authority of a *ḥadīth* and then proceeds to transmit it. May your abode be held in high esteem, for both your earnestness and your jesting have been pleasant, and may both your young and your mature camels be honored.¹⁴

Then he began to laugh at me, and recited [*ramal*]:

Al-Sā'ib is astounded at me whenever I utter a decisive word,
For my tongue is a keen blade with a piercing edge that has
blunted the sharpness of iron-tipped Yemeni swords.

How often has speech dissuaded a resolute man, when the edge
of a keen blade was of no avail against him.

The freeborn man is never concerned over any predicament in
which he may find himself, even if Fate bites him with a curv-
ing fang.

His common sense and prudence will always suffice him; fur-
thermore, can any man be successful without those two qual-
ities?

How excellent is a noble youth's daily sustenance, even if he
has to look for mushrooms or wild onions growing in the dirt!

Then Abū Ḥabīb said to me:

O Sā'ib, leave me alone, and I will leave you alone, for whatever
deceives me, deceives you, and whoever demeans me, demeans
you. Perhaps our Fate will generously spare our lives, and allow us
to meet again.

Then I turned away from the road he was taking, and my group
parted from his.

¹⁴ Presumably, his children and the adult members of his family.

Maqāmah 38¹
(*The Ape*)

Al-Mundir ibn Humām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I left Tarsūs² wishing to go to the land of Sūs,³ so that I took to traveling, and endured deserts and wastelands that were enough to whiten a child's hair, and to exhaust a tireless adult, until I came upon a certain tribe, at the very moment when I was yearning for both morning and afternoon shadows, longing for a pleasant confinement among humans, and weary of both the lion lurking in its den and the gazelle hiding in its covert. Suddenly, I beheld a circle assembling and a group hastening, in the middle of which was an old man like the staff of al-Nahdī,⁴ claiming descent from al-Mahdī,⁵ while before him an ape was scurrying about executing its master's orders, and approaching or retreating, in response to his commands. The old man had attired the ape in an embroidered outer garment and attributed its lineage to the town of Nibāj.⁶ With it were a dog and an ass; a drum and a reed instrument.⁷ The dog

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² A city on the border of Syria, between Antioch, Aleppo, and Asia Minor. It is the ancient Tarsus in Cilicia (see *E.I.* 2, X, 306-307).

³ A town in Khuzistan, and another in Transoxania. There is also a town by that name (modern Sousse) in northeast Tunisia, on the Gulf of Hammamet, as well as a region in southwestern Morocco (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 898-901).

⁴ Nahdī is the name of an Arab tribe, of which some members settled in Málaga (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 221b), but this particular individual has not been identified.

⁵ 'The divinely guided one'. This is the title of several messianic reformers in the history of Islam, but to which of them the text is actually referring is not clear. The most famous is the twelfth Šr'i *imām*, Muḥammad, on whom, see M19, n. 18, above. Al-Mahdī is also the title of the third 'Abbāsid Caliph (r. 69/158-85/775), father of the more famous Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 170/786-193/809), and of the first Fātimid Caliph (r. 297/909-322/934).

⁶ A town in the Iraqi countryside, on the road to Basra, known as Nibāj Banī 'Āmir ibn Kurayz (see *J.G.W.*, I, 216, and *passim*).

⁷ In nineteenth-century Cairo, Edward William Lane witnessed a performance by a similar cast of characters, which he described as follows: "The 'Ḳurey-dātee' (whose appellation is derived from 'ḳird', an ape, or a monkey) amuses the lower orders in Cairo by sundry performances of an ape or a monkey, an ass, a dog, and a kid. He and the ape (which is generally of the cynocephalus kind)

fight each other with sticks. He dresses the ape fantastically, usually as a bride, or a veiled woman; puts it on the ass; and parades it round within the ring of spectators; himself going before and beating a tambourine. The ape is also made to dance, and to perform various antics. The ass is told to choose the handsomest girl in the ring, and does so; putting his nose towards her face, and greatly amusing her and all the spectators. The dog is ordered to imitate the motions of a thief, and accordingly crawls along on its belly." See E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1860. Repr., 1966), p. 395. Likewise, Ibn Dāniyāl, *Three Shadow Plays*, ed Paul Kahle, et al. (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 81-82, contains a performance by one Maymūn al-Qarrād ('Monkey, the Ape Trainer'), featuring a trained monkey:

Then Maymūn al-Qarrād appears with his demon, ape, and devil, saying: "The Najdi master has come to you. My drum has sounded, my reed has piped, and my monkey has danced," and he sings, saying [*kāmil*]:

Because of its understanding, my monkey can almost speak, and because of its graceful beauty, it is almost loved passionately.

It pounces like a eunuch slave who behaves hypocritically, and continues, at times, to dance and to clap its hands.

It does not pass through a home, leaping along its highest summits, without clinging to its ceiling.

It has the hand of a dyer: the surface of its palm is blue when it points something out in response.

It is dressed in the fur of dogs; moreover, the fur and waistband of the gray squirrel clothe it,

And when I am sitting down, my candle is in the palm of its hand, so that it is anxious to keep its hand from being burned.

With it, I earn my living, from what I taught it, ever since the little piebald kid was slaughtered.

The monkey saw what my hand did in slaughtering the kid, hence the monkey obeys me and hastens to provide all that I desire.

Then Maymūn makes the monkey dance in a veil and duncecap, and makes it go around, attached to a rope, while the monkey leaps and turns about. Then Maymūn says: "Entertain your masters, and show them your habits," after which he sings, saying [*zajal*]:

*I conjure you by God, O monkey,
To show me how the fat lady dances.*

*I conjure you to entertain whoever is present,
And then to grab these balls,
And to don a Tartar hat,
I conjure you by God, O monkey,
To dance for us like a balancing artist,*

attacked and growled at the old man, and the ape at times charged at him and then wheeled to retreat, while the contest between the two went on for a considerable amount of time as their field of battle widened. Sometimes the ass beat its hooves on the ground as it ran between the two of them, thinking that they were *lašīf*⁸ shrubs and *šilliyān*⁹ grass. The old man had provided the ape with a flexible bamboo cane along with a hard rock that it hit about like a ball struck by a polo-mallet, so that the ape mimicked the Persians during their festival of Mihrajān.¹⁰ Sometimes it would climb up the cane's knots as fast as a speeding harvester of dates, or a flashing, dazzling lightning-bolt; then it would descend and climb back up again, as if it were a bucket being let down or drawn up, and sometimes it would leap at the cane's tip, as if it were attacking lions or tigers. Sometimes it mounted the donkey and played a lively tune on the reed, beating the cymbal, claiming descent¹¹ from the Zanj,¹² and behaving like a veritable flirt and coquet, while the old man would say to it:

O son of a she-ape and brother of merriment, O jester and mourner, O starling, O lark, O you whose stories are charming, and whose annoyance is slight, put on your slippers, clap your hands, spur your donkey, play a lively tune on your reed, ring your

And jump on my head, then topple off;
 Play with your "mace" and give it your all,
 Then lower your head, and relax.
I conjure you by God, O monkey,
To collect the customer's small change.

Then he says: "O notables of the people, have mercy on one whose daily bread depends upon the hands of monkeys, and on that of this specific ape," after which, he exits.

⁸ Correcting the misprint *lašīq* in W and comparing with M43 n. 48, below, where the word is spelled correctly. The plant is a shrub on which camels and asses pasture.

⁹ A type of high-quality grass on which camels and asses pasture. See M21, n. 4, above; M43, n. 47, below.

¹⁰ The festival of the Persian autumnal equinox. It was originally celebrated in honor of the solar deity Mithra, to whom the equinoxes were sacred (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 15-20). The point being made here is based on the belief that polo was a game of Persian origin.

¹¹ Correcting the misprint *wa-tazà* in W to *wa-'lazà*.

¹² Black peoples from the east coast of Africa (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1213).

bells, slacken your reins, stroll about calmly in the course of your performance, provide ample astonishment and entertainment, address your audience with gestures, and go for the people with impressive features and fine apparel, so that, in exchange for the joy you provide them, you may obtain gifts from them, and receive their parings and leftovers, for your talent is your only tongue, and your muteness is your only voice.

Thereupon, the ape proceeded in this manner, coming and going, providing its entertainment and receiving its reward, until the old man flung two sharp swords at it, and it began to brandish them in order to kill two persons. Then the old man signaled to it, saying: "Stop, otherwise I will lay the palm of my hand on you!"

Then he added:

O people, our entertainment has been of various kinds, the generous man has been made merry indeed, the jovial atmosphere we have provided has been most delightful, Fate is very demanding, people are divided into the one who requests, and the one of whom a request is made.¹³ They have souls and hearts that consult one another at length about the best way to care for a horse, but often overlook its hobble, namely poverty and want. Fate offers both misfortunes and a recovery from such; both friendship and companionship. You have enjoyed our entertainments, having been amused without any effort on your part. But guests have certain rights, and shirking your pious duty toward them would be an irresponsible act. My friendliness has disposed me favorably toward you, as has the bond that unites your social class with mine, entirely aside from the fact that I am also motivated by my status as a stranger among you, and by my having been the victim of a robbery that made off with the little and the much that I possessed, as a result of which, the humble and the noble person have been brought together. The factors I have mentioned have lifted veils, revealed the concealed, made good fortune stumble, and altered boundaries, so that circumstances have changed and submitted to the influence of Time. Were it not for generous persons, hardship would afflict us, and were it not for magnanimous individuals, the noble steed would be unable to speed forth. Moreover, when a

¹³ Correcting the misprint *malūb* to *maṭlūb*.

summit is hard to climb, one must be sparing of one's energy, and when one's skill is not in demand, one must be frugal, and so I, your companion, have learned to be satisfied with surviving on a mere pittance;¹⁴ I have learned to resign myself to the depletion of my fortune, and to accept the flotsam that is swept down by the torrent. I have left my dear little boys behind and, to safeguard them, protective locks and bolts have been installed, behind which they wait expectantly for every homecoming traveler, as they look out for every rising or setting star of fortune.

Then he began to say [*sarī*]:

Were it not for my dear little boys, who are like a dove's downy chicks, I would not acquaint you with my privation or my fate,
Nor would I go down to turbid waters, but sip only from abundant, fresh waters.

Although this thoroughbred steed is wandering about, it is lame. Moreover, its mane would flow freely from its shoulders, were it not for its want.

By God, there is no friend on earth but you, Sir Dirham, who are ever loyal to the claim made upon you.

Oh, how many an obscure nobody among men is declared by wealth to be the very moon in all its fullness,

Yet how many an admirable and glorious person to his people is declared incompetent and unheroic!

Whosoever wishes to cause lasting monuments to his memory endure—as Mount Šamām¹⁵ endures—

Let him purchase praise with noble generosity, and let him appoint piety to be his prayer-leader.

How excellent is the man who shows generosity to a beggar suffering from hardship, and satisfied with mere *ṭumām* grass.¹⁶

¹⁴ Correcting the misprint *liqā'* to *lafā'*.

¹⁵ A mountain in Najd, in the territory of the tribe of Bāhilah. The name means 'the lofty one' (see *J.G.W.*, II, 288, and *passim*).

¹⁶ See M30, n. 29, above.

I am light of back,¹⁷ I am easy to host: I visit you seldom, and my image is rarely seen.

I only burden my neighbor to the extent of his ability; a single sip or a single cupful from him will suffice.

The hand of Fate destroyed Jurhum,¹⁸ and do you see any traces or remains of theirs?

It is as if their fate had led them by the lead-rope or halter of its misfortunes.

Everyone is connected to the Root of the Earth,¹⁹ for all men must abandon the flowers of the hills and their calyces.

Beware the Fate awaiting you! Take what you see now, and disregard the past or the future!

Al-Sā'ib said:

With these words, the old man moved men's hearts, caused milk to flow both from the she-camel with constricted teats as well as from the one with relaxed ones;²⁰ he raked in and received his contributions, flew about and moved quickly, began to put an end to his performance, leaned over what pickings he had gleaned, grasped his saddle, gathered his belongings together, put iron collars on his dog and ape, donned his robe and mantle, mounted his ass, and resumed his travels. Then I glanced at his features, yet I feared lest he might chase me away ignominiously, for I had realized that he was Abū Ḥabīb, and so, I concealed myself, not letting myself be seen, until he had finished what was left for him to do, led forth his wretched beast, and made promises and excuses to the group, after having sown amazement in their souls. Once he had escaped from the assembled crowd, after having made a firm re-

¹⁷ *Ḥafīfu l-hādi*, literally, 'light of back', i.e. 'owning little property'. This is an allusion to a *ḥadīth*: "Verily the most enviable of my supporters, in my opinion, is the believer who is light of back, rich in prayer" (See *C.I.T.M.*, II, 52b).

¹⁸ A legendary pre-Islamic people who ruled Mecca after the descendants of Ishmael, but whom God exterminated when they waxed evil (see M15, n. 20, above).

¹⁹ An epithet of Adam (see M15, n. 9, above).

²⁰ I.e., he managed to get contributions both from the miserly and from the generous.

solve to depart, I approached him, but he shrank away from me, sat to one side crouching, and said: "Leave me be, and you will be following the right path." Then he raised his voice and chanted, saying [*sarī*]:

How often, O Sā'ib, have you been in the dark, neither following the right path nor detecting it.

You say to me: "Desist!" But who ever desists from earning his living?

One's daily sustenance is a door. Therefore, knock hard on that door, for the drinker of wine is the one who presses its grapes.

Don't you see that it is the harvester²¹ who gathers the harvest, as his hand picks the fruit within reach or bends down the branches that are too high?

Although buxom and nubile maidens are not unattractive, only a noble, glorious youth can attract me,

Whereas the ape, the dog, and the desert ass are all faithful to the bonds of love.²²

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I said to the old man:

By God, let me enjoy none but your aphorisms, and be controlled by none but your reins and your curb, for I have long desired to meet you and long craved to drink from your waterskin.

Al-Sā'ib said:

²¹ *Al-jānī*. The word also means 'sinner, criminal, guilty party', hence this is a pun.

²² In its word-sequence and rhythm, this line is a comic parody of a famous line by al-Mutanabbī (303/915-354/965) in which the poet exalts heroic and literary values, found in a poem addressed to his patron Sayf al-Dawlah of Aleppo (r. 333/945-356/967):

For the horsemen, the night, and the desert know me; and the sword and the lance, and the paper and pen.

See A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: A Selection with Introduction, Translations, and Notes* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 70-75, at. p. 72, l. 22.

Then the old man smiled and beamed at me, his face gleamed and shone, and he said [*sarī*]:

Poverty and wealth are two contests in which a noble youth enjoys alternate success, therefore, be not concerned over how the times go by.

Money is the only true honor, so put aside the structure that Ḥimyar²³ and Aʿṣur²⁴ raised aloft.

Never befriend a baseborn man, for he will be your ruin, even if your glances bend him to your passion,

And never fraternize with any but a noble youth; one who will avert wrong from, and defend you.

Whether the envier tries to ascertain it, or actually does so, one friend is an indication of the other.

The power of whoever puts off helping a friend in distress for long will be diminished on the Day of Resurrection.

Fear for yourself and rein in your passion. The intelligent person is the one who reins in his passion,

For, next to all you do, stands a recording angel who adds up or compiles everything that is ever done.²⁵

Then he said to me:

Enough, O Sāʿib, enough! Otherwise, I will have to bite and sting you! Then he turned away from me, and I from him; he withdrew from me, and I from him.

²³ An ancient South Arabian people whose kingdom lay between Saba and the sea. They were ruled by a famous dynasty known as the Tubba's (see *E.I.* 2, X, 575-576).

²⁴ A North Arabian subdivision of the tribe of Qays. See ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam qabā'il al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1994), I, 34-35.

²⁵ Allusion to Qurʾān, 82:10-11: "But verily over you are appointed angels to protect you, kind and honorable, writing down your deeds."

Maqāmah 39¹

(*The Lion*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

After I had lost both the secondary and primary feathers of my wings, and at a time when the front and back² of Fate's misfortunes were racing one another in hot pursuit of me, and I had become a target for enemies and aggressors, I came across certain Bedouins in the desert, so I declared:

I will bury my soul in this faraway tomb, thereby protecting myself from apostates and unbelievers, in the hope that, by my change of location, my soul will eventually be transformed, and that, through my repentance, I will be able to restore it to its pristine sharpness and luster for, of old, large cities have distracted men, tender, fair young maidens have seduced them, friendship and warfare have been blamed, seclusion and solitude have been praised, knowledge has resulted in harm, and the sad and melancholy have been consoled.

One day, I discovered that the tents were empty and the camps abandoned, for the Bedouins had responded to a summons and assembled in a large crowd including old men and boys, weak and strong. I began to follow in their footsteps, likewise abandoning³ the encampment, in order to discover and ascertain what was going on. Suddenly I beheld the master, Abū Ḥabīb, who was leaning on his staff and motioning with it to anyone who ignored or avoided him, for the people had hastened to form a circle around him, hoping to hear a story or an evil turn of fortune from him. He was saying to them:

O Bedouins, O hostile ones, you dwell in the desert and treat me harshly; you wrong me and fail to appease me; you are hard-hearted and must be importuned for donations of your camel's milk. How strange it is that you should blame me, when so many of you

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 45 in D.

² Literally, 'the rumps and necks'.

³ Reading *astahli-hi* with D, rather than *astahli-hi* with W.

are yourselves blameworthy. Here I have brought you rare anecdotes, warned you against succumbing to fits of rage, provided you with much pleasure by means of my remarkable tales, and promised you a superior kind of knowledge familiar to me alone, but you have neither responded to my appeal, nor unfastened the hobble of your camel's generosity; the stone of your avarice has produced nary a drop, nor have any trees borne fruit in the vale of your niggardliness. I have never seen a people like you, whose natures have withered, so that even ferocious wild beasts are superior to you. Praise be to the One who causes dawn to break and has created different forms and shapes! Let me acquaint you with a marvelous case but, if I do so, will anyone call, and will anyone respond? I went forth in the company of a small group endowed with keen resolve, but with a notched sword's edge, until the deserts and wastelands overwhelmed us, and distances and journeys rivaled one another in length. One day, when thirst and hunger had afflicted us, and we could no longer proceed along our way any more than we could turn back, we heard cattle lowing, camels groaning, sheep bleating, and goats baaing, whereupon we were overwhelmed with astonishment, and turned in the direction of that uproar, saying:

Behold hope reappearing after having shunned us, and anticipation displaying its propitious side, after having disappeared.

And when we gazed upon that commotion, we saw that the animals were closing ranks like the links in a coat of chain-mail, and interlocking as do roots and branches. Suddenly, we saw two huge lions, like unto roaring stallions, who were crouching opposite one other, and taking turns in pouncing; who were striking the ground with tails like great serpents, while slaughtered animals lay before them like sacrificial offerings. Dust rose high between them, and no bird dared hover over, or fly in front of them, for they were rolling their eyes, as if the latter were live embers emitting sparks,⁴ and were shaking their heads, as if in response to a wine-induced intoxication, while the foam from their mouths flew in all directions, and Death, which they tossed about as lightly as if it were cotton, assumed many different aspects in their presence. They

⁴ Reading *siqt* with D, rather than *sawt* with W.

stretched out their forelegs, crouching for the kill, each one of them scowling and baring its teeth at its intended victim, as it summoned and rallied its courage. Suddenly, one of the two lions hastened toward us, at times raging and at times roaring, sometimes beating and sometimes striking the ground with its tail, while simultaneously baring fangs that were curved like hooked staves and sharpened like spearheads, shaking the crown of a head that was like an anvil, and displaying a mane like the *sa'dān*.⁵ Thus, it repaired and betook itself to us, while we had no doubt but that Death was approaching, and that Fate was determined to exhaust us, so that our tie to hope was severed, we despaired of the location we were in, and our companions sought safety, but where was safety to be found? Yet they still turned away in flight, making a tunnel or a burrow out of the surface of the earth, and saying:

Safety is a pleasant prize, whereas remaining here is like being pierced by an arrow!

When I saw that we were in the grip of perdition and the noose of captivity, I approached the lion as one would if he were politely seeking its favor, and surrendered to it with the humility of the helpless, imploring its mercy, and saying:

O Abū l-Ḥārīṭ,⁶ O Usāmah,⁷ O you who are gifted with beauty and good looks, O you who possess boldness and courage, O you who devour your victim with ravenous greed, O you who are endowed with a lofty goal and noble ambition, O you who possess eminence and glory, other wild beasts, as well as every creature that hunts down or rounds up its prey, are clearly distinguishable from you, for yours are authority and leadership, so where are your patience and your governance? Calm down, O prince of wild beasts, O lord of spring-encampments, for yours are firmness and forbearance, so where are your self-restraint and gentleness? Be gracious to your slaves, and spring to the attack only when you are out in your desert and wasteland. You have struck terror into our hearts

⁵ A plant that provides excellent fodder for camels, but that has a bushy head of thorns, to which the lions' manes are being likened here (see M33, n. 22, above).

⁶ Reading *abū l-ḥārīṭ* with Ḍ, rather than *abū l-ḥarīṭ* with W. This term is an epithet of the lion.

⁷ Another epithet of the lion.

and driven away both our milkless⁸ and our milk-giving camel. O most glorious of the glorious, O ascender to high places, to you belong modest restraint as well as generosity, hence your appetite for flesh should not let you get carried away, nor should your raging hunger gain the upper hand over you. We are in the protected sanctuary of your neighborhood and thus, in a place rendered safe against your pouncing on us. One such as you rules but does not destroy; he is powerful but does not betray. We are a helpless group of men whom desert plains and mountaintops have consumed, allowing each exhausted, extenuated individual among us who fears and respects death, to survive. But then, when we became aware of the presence of abundance, and heard the sounds of the livestock that was grazing hereabouts, you prevented us from reaching it, after having terrified our clan and paternal line.

And I recited to it [*basīl*]:

Every prince is magnanimous, while you, being high-minded by nature,

Are one whom Time has not inclined to arrogance, nor have lances bent your resolve.

I also recited to it [*basīl*]:

Every beauty manifests arrogance, and every lover manifests cunning,

Whereas you are devoid of both, for slaughter is your hallmark.

I also recited to it [*basīl*]:

Every beloved manifests coquetry, but sometimes boredom alters him.

As for you, you are my beloved, yet the crescent moon is closer to me than any relief you will ever provide.

I also recited to it [*basīl*]:

Blood has stained your side, for my final breath was exhaled from fear of you.

⁸ Vowelizing *jadūd* with *Ḍ*, rather than *judūd* with *W*.

When you wish to ravish something, it cannot be safeguarded against your onslaught.

Carry your prey to your lair, and take the fruit of your talents to your cubs; leave the livestock to those who own it, and relinquish the road to those who travel it.

Abū Ḥabīb added:

Then the lion hid its face, restrained its scowl and aggressivity, and turned away, as shame became manifest upon its flanks, whereas we devoted all our efforts to treating it politely. I had previously said to my companions:

Do as I do, and go in whatever direction I go.

Abū Ḥabīb added:

And suddenly both lions left us, going out into the open country and hanging around in a bare, empty spot. Then we went down to the herdsmen of the livestock we had encountered, and asked them:

Have you been eyewitnesses to our adventure?

They replied:

We saw an amazing wonder: We saw a lion behave submissively and obediently in response to your appeal. Was it a figment of our imagination, or was it for real? Did we see a *talkh*⁹ or a *sayāl*?¹⁰ This is an extraordinary event; an accident that has resulted in the greatest good fortune!

Abū Ḥabīb added:

Thereupon, those people greeted and bade us welcome, and went to great lengths in fulfilling their duties as our hosts. We remained with them for a long time, unable to leave them, eating skewers of roast meat, drinking fresh, restorative milk, mounted on cushions and pillows, and enjoying our mornings and evenings, until we finally decided to abandon them, for we had become bored with all they had to offer, be it simple or compound.¹¹ At the moment of our departure, they provided us with all manner of gifts, and all kinds of female riding-camels and mounts. Therefore, does

⁹ *Acacia gummifera* (see M30, n. 28, above).

¹⁰ *Carduus lacteus*, a type of thistle covered with prickles. The contrast being made here is between something pleasant (shade) and something unpleasant (prickles).

¹¹ Literally, 'double or single-stranded'.

our adventure not impress you as much as it impressed those people? Does it not fascinate you as much as it fascinated them? By God, your milch-camel is more bountiful than theirs, yet your hearts are harder, and your breasts and souls are harsher, despite the fact that you possess a far greater abundance of every commodity than they do, be it hair cloth or wool felt. Is it not a strange fact and a remarkable wonder that a ferocious, ravenous lion should have abandoned his usual custom; that a proud protector should have shown his submissiveness, whereas you, who are fashioned in the image of men, are lacking in any form of kindness and charity?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then were they roused from their slumber and removed the noose of their halter, for Abū Ḥabīb's speech had had its effect upon them, so that each one of them released the female and male camel of his generosity, as Abū Ḥabīb softened their inflexibility, aroused them from their apathy, and stirred them out of their lethargy, so that they came to blows with one another concerning who would be his host, and craned their necks in his direction with might and main.

Then he said to them:

I have, standing in your midst, a dear friend and close relative, without whose company no drink is easy for me to swallow, and between whom and me no midday mirage is interposed.

Then he pointed to me, whereupon I accompanied him to a tent furnished with slaves and household effects, offering relief and delight,¹² endowed with sheep returning to the fold at eve, and livestock grazing freely in a lush pasture. We spent that night enjoying the greatest of plenty, without giving thought to the subject of departure until, when the wolf of pre-dawn's grayish light wagged its tail, and flowers and aromatic plants exchanged fragrant odors with one another in the garden, Abū Ḥabīb laid his hand on many of the belongings in the tent, including some of its most precious and choicest items. Then he slipped away from me, but I noticed him crawling off when I missed his snorting,¹³ so I carefully followed in his track, fearing neither humans nor wild beasts.

¹² Reading *imtā'i* with D, rather than *imtinā'i* with W.

¹³ *Nabīb*. Literally, 'the sound made by a rutting male goat'.

But he commanded me:

O Sā'ib, keep away from me! Keep away! Regain your calm and your composure, remain in this desert of yours, and beware of falling into misfortune!

And he began to recite [*ramal*]:

So often are you seen complaining of me, Sā'ib, that not even being restrained by ropes could prevent you from doing so.

In complaining of me, Sā'ib, you have reached such a surfeit that you no longer complain of a toothache.

You have spent the night listening inattentively to my words, although I made the sound of the bell ring out loudly and clearly.

He who manifests an eloquent tongue is not the same as he who manifests a mute one.

Go back to the tribe you dwell among, and leave me alone, for I am hardly worried about stumbling upon its watchmen,

Insofar as I have been busy describing a tawny lion, violent to attack, on the defensive because of its ravenous appetite,

While in front of me stood a group of men from Hudayl,¹⁴ of the sort who do not fear a horse's neigh.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I said to myself:

This is a man who can deceive ravenous beasts, and confront ferocious wild animals, therefore, what would become of me should he decide to grind me between his molars?

So I turned away from him with apprehension, feeling no pity for his malady, but with a heart that took to flight out of fear, and burst into scattered pieces.

¹⁴ An Arab tribe living between Mecca and Medina to which a number of famous pre-Islamic poets belonged (see M1, n. 5, above). Here, they are being invoked as a symbol of heroism.

*Maqāmah 40*¹
(*On Poetry and Prose*)²

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

I was in the company of a group of men who were journeying in a caravan, and took to worrying that I might be ruined, for I was suffering from certain expenditures I had made. Therefore, I isolated myself from my traveling-companion and became suspicious of anyone who showed any interest in me, until the time came to make a brief halt for the night, at which point there alighted in my vicinity a person with a coarse appearance and a threadbare robe, accompanied by two youths who surrounded and treated him with respect and honor. When night descended and turned black, and the stars shifted their reins and took control of them for the journey, one of the two inquired of his partner, saying:

O Ḥabīb, do you claim to possess understanding, and to be a physician who can cure the diseases of literature?

Ḥabīb replied:

Not at all, Ġarīb. What has baffled you to the point that you insult one who greets and salutes you kindly?

Ġarīb replied:

A question that has baffled the first and the last; the man who speaks in earnest and the one who speaks in jest, namely, what is the long and short of poetry and prose; which of the two is the forbidding swordblade, and which, its lustre; which of the two leaves behind a clearer trace of its author, and which earns him greater renown; which of the two has a greater influence on the soul, more fully quenches and slakes the burning thirst of the thirsty, is more favored by commoners and kings, and makes embassies and messengers more efficient?

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 50 in Ḍ.

² Debates on the relative merits of poetry and prose abound in Classical Arabic literature. One of the earliest examples seems to be the ground-breaking epistle by the famous grammarian al-Mubarrad (210/826-284/898). The Arabic text of his treatise (which bears some resemblance to this *maqāmah*), accompanied by a study, were published in Gustave von Grunebaum, "Al-Mubarrad's Epistle on Poetry and Prose," *Orientalia* (new series), X:4 (1941), 372-382. For an English translation, see Appendix 2, below.

Ḥabīb answered him:

O Ġarīb, that is a simple question requiring a difficult answer, and a subject—by God's faith—that raises many doubts, in which no ignorant or intelligent person has ever had the upper hand. Either it is a subject on which consensus has been established, and before which all further ambitions must grind to a halt, or it is a subject on which opinions have differed, and in which scholars have followed their own individual doctrines.

Ġarīb said:

You have organized and defined the question; you have devoted and confined yourself to the truth, grasping the different branches of the tree of discourse, and bending them down for their fruit to be harvested. Tell me, nevertheless, what your own opinion is, for a man such as you can clarify and penetrate any doubt that may arise.

Ḥabīb responded:

As far as I am concerned, the matter is as clear as dawn shedding its light upon things. Don't you think that the heights of poetry are more difficult to climb, and a more pleasant choice; that poetry is more brilliant in its expression, quicker to be memorized; that it is more abundant in metaphor, clearer in its concision, wiser in purpose, nobler in its art, more direct in its ideas, more lofty in its constructions, more easily flowing from the tongue, more suited to man, more pungent as to its *rand*,³ more able to kindle fire, more conducive to joy, and that it more easily banishes cares? Have you ever heard of a prose composition to which melodies are applied, or over which drinking-cups and bowls are emptied; before which the collars of garments are rent,⁴ and from whose heart secrets emerge, so that ears are seduced by it, and stubbornness is persuaded by it? Poetry arouses ambitions and joys; it dispels sorrows and griefs. It is enough for you to consider that it exists both among Arabs and non-Arabs, and that its meadow is moistened and drenched by the rain of men's minds. The Arabs used to regard it as worthy on account of the nobility of their diction, their accomplishment in it, and their preservation of it. Moreover, the great and the power-

³ This name is applied to several fragrant trees and plants, among them, the laurel, myrtle, and aloes-wood.

⁴ As a sign of emotion caused by listening to poetry and music.

ful deemed that no composer of poetry was incapable of producing prose, yet how many a composer of prose is incapable of producing poetry, and when he does, his luck stumbles! Have songs not been adorned, abandoned-encampments mourned,⁵ great exploits set down in writing, the prolix speaker silenced, ambitions stirred, and treaties concluded, with the like of poetry and song-texts? Poetry possesses rules, requirements, determinants, and quiescent consonants⁶ before which the onlooker halts and whose mountain the reciter climbs. Long ago, poetry inspired the noble, protected the harem, and demanded payment of the debtor. Poetry was practiced by subjects and monarchs alike;⁷ it was worn like necklaces and strands, both by the cautious and the heedless. Both the lofty and the lowly considered poetry wondrous and astonishing; they esteemed its composer, held him in awe, included him among the learned, and considered him to be one of the wise. By it, the winning over of stubborn inclinations is sought, remote hopes are brought nigh, enmities and dislikes are resolved, trials and tribulations are prevented, rigidly frozen spirits are made to flow, abated resolutions are resurrected. It pierces as do arrows, flows with thought and imagination, and travels by night with each rainbearing and rainless cloud. Posterity thrives on it, and the years do not detract⁸ from it. Often does it travel⁹ like a star, and shoot¹⁰ projectiles like meteors; many an obscure person has it raised, for many a speaker has it interceded, many a fame has it launched, and many a distant one has it drawn near.

But as for prose, it is reins slackened, eloquence unraveled, a bridle easy to master, a road well-traveled, a waterhole oft visited, a garment tattered, a forbidden precinct used as public property, an evening and a morning drink toward which the slow and the swift steed alternate in chasing one another, and in which the sub-

⁵ This is conventional in the initial section of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*.

⁶ The latter are two grammatical terms denoting peculiarities of poetic diction not commonly found in prose.

⁷ At this point the text is transposed in W, so that one must go from the bottom of p. 373 to the top of p. 375, skipping over p. 374. The correct sequence may be found in D.

⁸ Reading *wa-lā ta'ḥudu* with D, rather than *wa-ta'ḥudu* with W.

⁹ Reading *sāra maṣīr* with D, rather than *sāra maṣīr* with W.

¹⁰ Vowelizing *ramā* with D, rather than *rumīya* with W.

missive and the rebellious slave are equal. Its appeal is to the vulgar, and there is no difference between its exoteric and its esoteric meanings. What I have just said brings the truth out into the open and provides a definitive judgment. How many a wise statement does it contain!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Ġarīb said to Ḥabīb:

O full brother of mine, you are worthy and deserving of credit, for from you come all confirmation and substantiation, and you have displayed accuracy—may our clan and family sacrifice themselves for you! Nonetheless, would you mind listening to my words, thereby broadening your knowledge, and turning a blind eye to, and concealing your stupidity? Upon investigation of the subject, the composer of prose is able to claim:

Prose is assuredly easier to cultivate, more abundant in its reward, more obedient to the bridle, more penetrating in its spear-head; by it, kingdoms are ruled and roads are traversed, government is served, policy is implemented, conditions are maintained, property is protected; by it, sciences are communicated, minds are weighed, proofs and arguments are provided, sweet and salt water are distinguished. How different is¹¹ *gravity from levity, the restless from the weary. What is poetry and who is the poet? Falsehood and bombast, sheer lies,*¹² *and a topsy-turvy order of things. The rank of the versifying poet is as different from that of the prose-writing secretary as is a reward from a salary. The poet stands up only to sink*¹³ *into stinking, purulent filth, whereas the secretary sits on a comfortable seat and dwells in a choice spot; he walks on a carpet, and the earth affords him a spacious arena; he is reached by going up ascending staircases,*¹⁴ *and the camel-saddle is broken in his presence,*¹⁵ *he is attired in prestige, and stands face to face with royalty; he speaks secretly and*

¹¹ At this point different manuscripts of our text contain two alternate versions of the ensuing italicized part of Ġarīb's poetophobic speech. W chooses the one immediately following as his main text, and places the other (translated at the end of the *maqāmah*) in a footnote, whereas Ḍ does just the opposite.

¹² At this point W's pagination is again inverted, so that one must read from the bottom of p. 375 to the top of p. 374. The correct sequence is found in Ḍ.

¹³ Reading *yqa'u* with Ḍ, rather than *yqna'u* with W.

¹⁴ I.e., he dwells in lofty places and is of high rank.

¹⁵ As an indication that the journey is over. The implication is that people often travel toward him, and that he is, therefore, much sought after.

confidentially in the king's ear, and rivals the latter in intelligence. Moreover, he is the king's viceregent in all matters pertaining to the latter's confidential matters; he is the king's steward entrusted with carrying out the latter's beneficial and harmful decisions; he gives orders in accordance with the king's commands and transmits the king's warnings. He clothes the king's ideas in the jewels of his expressions, and wraps the king's decrees in the mantles of his protection and defense.¹⁶ The secretary often alternates between harsh¹⁷ and soothing words; at times rendering full justice, and at times refraining from doing so. Such, then, is the secretary:¹⁸ a man who is singled out for the task of bidding good and forbidding evil, and who drinks from the sweetest pool and cistern of royal authority. He is the first to embark upon, and the last to abandon, or to be distracted from, his goal. He makes hopes attainable and guides actions; it is he who wields the pen and hands out¹⁹ the divining-arrows; he directs squadrons of cavalry, wards off south winds, manages dynasties, and possesses both horses and servants. The poet and the secretary are like none other than the satisfied and the dissatisfied. The poet's rank is one of falsehood and his abode is one of depravity;²⁰ he endures a dishonorable status and walks in chains; he is feared only for his invective verse, and wins favor only through his urgent solicitations; doors are closed before him, and bodies are concealed so as to avoid any contact with him; people seek refuge in God against his importunate requests, and are wary of giving him gifts. No one invites us to cultivate poetry, and no one pastures it on piety. Poetry divested al-Kindī²¹ of his sovereignty; it imposed death on him the day it encroached upon his power, and diverted him from beginning and completing his affairs, for it banished him from his home, and prevented him from moving about. In contrast, how many a virtue, indeed, does prose possess, concerning which subject both judgment and judge concur.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Upon hearing the words of the two, the old man was greatly moved, he marveled, and said:

¹⁶ Variant reading in D: "To the king belongs the idea, and to the secretary its expression; to the king belongs the decision, and to the secretary its implementation."

¹⁷ Reading *šaddada* with D, rather than *baddada* with W.

¹⁸ Reading *hā huwa* with D, rather than *mā huwa* with W.

¹⁹ Reading *yujīlu* with D, rather than *yuhīlu* with W.

²⁰ Reading *rayn* with D, rather than *zayn* with W.

²¹ Imru' al-Qays, the most famous of the pre-Islamic poets, and composer of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 7, above).

*Neither of you has surrendered to your opponent, or imposed your opinion on the other, for each of you has traveled along his own path, and sided with a contrary faction. Nevertheless, I have some decisive words to say on the subject; words concerning which both original and derivative sources stand in agreement, and in defense of which both the sharp spearheads, as well as the arrowheads of proof, rise as one.*²² Do you not seek instead what agreement encounters and conformity provides, or that toward which a truthful investigation leads, or what truth and sincerity support?

Then they both responded:²³

Yes, that is what we seek—may we sacrifice our souls and hearts for you!²⁴—Yet have you no explanation to offer these eminent men, no clarification for these brilliant listeners, no pearls of wisdom for these superior individuals?

The old man replied:

Does dawn not break, and does truth not define matters?²⁵ What we are really dealing with here are levels and degrees, along with perfume and fragrance, for every defender²⁶ has his property and every swordsman has his success. Even though the vicissitudes of Fortune can affect both precious objects and the sciences, they cannot detract from or add to them, nor can they rank them by degree. Therefore, avoid external appearances, for they can neither increase nor decrease. Only the lesser or greater demand for an object leads to agreement, whereas its existence or non-existence do not require agreement or consensus. Abandon then, this subject, for ties of relationship have broken down over it, and minds have lost their way through considering it. How different from all this are the essence and purity of knowledge! With regard to it, everyone is attracted by beauty and included among the eloquent.

Poetry is a sterile stud, a stationary traveler, a hated beloved, a boy with facial down whose cheeks have been shaved, an object to which people have become much attached, and to which they have linked and bound their aspirations. Although they have blended

²² The diverging passage preferred and edited by W ends here, and the text begins, once more, to coincide with that recorded in D.

²³ Reading *qālā* with D, rather than *qāla* with W.

²⁴ Reading *fadat-ka* with D, rather than *fadat-hu* with W.

²⁵ I.e., "Is the Pope not Catholic? Is the matter not obvious?"

²⁶ Reading *hāmīn* with D, rather than *hālamīn* with W.

poetry with falsehood and untruth, they have turned a blind eye to that fact. Indeed, its praise is more copious than its blame, its honey is greater than its poison, the one who uses it for unworthy ends is unworthy, and the one who turns it away from its true purpose is reprehensible and blameworthy. What a difference there is between a subject and a predicate, and between an agent and an object!²⁷ Justice in handing down a verdict is a virtue, for the proper object of justice is to abstract virtue from its practitioner, and to derive knowledge from its servant or bearer. So beware of disputation, and keep within the bounds of moderation, for discourse has its own highways and bypaths, and proofs are either easy or difficult.

As for prose, it is a fertile female, a flintstick that is neither too soft nor too hard to produce fire when struck; it is a flowing spring, and a loving mother; it enjoys rank and status, plus power tempered by humility. It is both sweet and bitter to me; it both stops and starts. It penetrates every circle and kindles every firestick. It is nomadic and sedentary, withered and verdant. It is an avoider who seeks contact, and a sharp fang.

How different from all the above is truly pleasant speech and superior discourse! The latter constitutes true pearls, whether it is couched in verse or in prose; whether it is wisdom to be rejected or accepted. It does no harm to pearls if composers of poetry do not organize them into poems, even though the great and the powerful have preferred to employ them strung in verses. Hence, neither of you should prefer one type of composer over the other, save on the basis of the superiority of the better composer, and of the power of the stronger one. Artistic excellence is manifold: the sun rises and sets, the moon wanes and waxes; it is both ugly and beautiful. Man has good and bad omens, the earth contains gold and manure, and the crown is only superior to the anklet by reason of the superiority of the head over the foot. Therefore, consider my words, trust my judgment, and rely on what I have imparted to you, for I have spoken to people on intimate terms, held lengthy debates and discussions, grown fond of knowledge, and acquired forbearance. Beware then of strife; of making comparisons, and of impatience. In all situations, adopt the fairer and juster stance; lean toward the path

²⁷ Four grammatical terms.

that is smoother and broader, without turning away from the even path representing the golden mean, since “that is true constancy,”²⁸ which you are urgently invited to adopt. Furthermore, beware of partisanship; of rising to take a stand in favor of discord, for that is a defect in character and a flaw in your intention and sincerity. Every subject has its adherents and partisans, and everything has its preservation and destruction. The crafts²⁹ have their masters, and virtues have their causes; the world has its ups and downs, its lance and its sword, its justice and its enmity, and among the “serpents of the earth” is the lineage of ‘Adwān.³⁰

Then Ḥabīb and Ġarīb replied:

May we be granted your mercy and satisfaction; may we never lack your forgiveness and indulgence, and may we continue to derive light and fire from your knowledge, so that, with your guidance, we may ascend a summit and climb a minaret, for you have calmed our hearts and made both our propitious and our sinister omens lucky; you have versified your opinion in prose, while imparting some of your unique knowledge.

Then the old man said to them:

May God grant you good fortune through reconciliation, so that you may continue to dwell among friend and sympathizer. May He give you the pleasure of knowledge, and adorn you with the robe of forbearance, strengthen you with contentment and skill, and free you from greed and humiliation, for you have brought me joy through your nobility, and paid the debt you owe me through your filial piety, save that, in my soul there is, because of you, what is

²⁸ Qur’ān, 3:186, 42:43.

²⁹ Reading *ṣanā’i* with Ḍ, rather than *ḍā’i* with W.

³⁰ An allusion to three lines of poetry by *Ḍū l-Iṣba’* of the North Arabian tribe of ‘Adwān (see *E.I.* 2, III, 363b) which, in pre-Islamic times, was rent by tribal wars:

Bring an excuse for the tribe, ‘Adwān; they were the serpents of the earth,
But some acted wrongfully against some, and were not regardful of the
rights of some,
So they became subjects of talk uttered by the raising of speech and the
lowering thereof.

See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-1893), V, 1986. To be called a “serpent” implies cunning, strength, and courage and is, therefore, a compliment indicative of heroism.

more painful than the burn produced by a live ember, and more pernicious than snow-blindness, namely, the fact that you possess no wealth and occupy no elevated position in this age. You have devoted yourselves entirely to *belles lettres* and to the pursuit of knowledge, while neglecting current events and the changes of fortune. Meanwhile, without you, I have aimed my arrows and struggled, while vying with, and laying siege to Time. Here you have knowledge, which circumstances have ruined, while terrors have scared off its flock, so that it is as if it were demanding its blood vengeance from its avenger, and were launching even and odd misfortunes.

Then the old man recited [*sarī*]:

How plentiful is ignorance and how many adherents does it have!

Alas for knowledge! How it has perished!

Knowledge led me astray, then I led it astray,

For I bequeathed it to those among men who led it astray!

Do neither of you see how many people who have learned from me, and then transmitted what I taught them, speaking and acting in accordance with my knowledge, have later betrayed me and forgotten my exertion and effort on their behalf? I bequeathed honor and glory to them, and they bequeathed grief and sorrow to me; I made them dwell in the uplands and hilltops, whereas they deprived me of any loyalty and benefit. I sincerely advise both of you to associate only with noble individuals, and to ride only on the backs of noble steeds; to strike fire only with the *nab*,³¹ and to alight only in springtime pastures; to travel only with provisions for the journey, and to enter the desert only with a waterskin. Behold, we are encamped in an open desert, complaining of the cold, night winds; we have spilled our water and endured thirst; our milkskin is now empty and our ripe dates have withered; we know no one,

³¹ *Chadara tenax* (see M12, n. 2, above). It is highly unsuitable for striking fire, hence the Arabic proverb: "If he were to strike fire with the *nab*, he would kindle it," applied to a man of extraordinary skill (see *M.A.*, III, 150, no. 3489). Hence the speaker's advice to his sons is perverse.

and are known to no one, while the stranger is always an object of suspicion and distrust.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then everyone hearkened to, and sympathized with the old man's words; they came to a consensus, agreed to extend their charity to him, and distributed to him whatever he desired in the way of food, drink, and even clothing to cover his nakedness since, as he claimed, his own had been stolen from him. Then they smoothed his bed, comforted his sleeplessness, wrapped him in mantle after striped Bedouin mantle, *treated him as one does a noble and generous man*,³² raised a tent for him in the most fertile valley and loftiest plateau and said:

God forbid that we should fail to show concern for this learned scholar, for it is we who will be enriched by extending our charity to him, and helping him back on his feet!

On hearing this, the old man prayed that they might earn a lavish reward and an abundant means of subsistence.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I looked attentively at him, and he at me. Then he activated and lightened his feet, on which he sped toward me. So I asked:

Abū Ḥabīb, is that you in the dark of this night?

He replied:

Welcome, O Sā'ib, do you know that it is you who are the one confined whereas I am the "wanderer?"³³ And he recited [*basīl*]:

Every day we bid each other hello; we never tire of doing so
and are given no peace by it.

How often has Time blamed you, O youth subject to the rule
of Time, as if blame and censure were of any use.

How intensely fond is a man of being by himself, for neither
old men nor boys can be true.

A dream-image of your friend must suffice you; one that travels
forth by night when gloom arrives.³⁴

³² The italicized passage is found only in D.

³³ *Sā'ib*. Here the speaker is playing on al-Sā'ib's name, which means 'wanderer'.

³⁴ *As'asa*. The word also has the opposite meaning 'departs'.

The safer of two alternatives with a friend is to remember him *in absentia*, and so, farewell.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I then recognized what he was hinting at, aiming for, and alluding to, and declared: I welcome you most effusively, for you are perfectly reliable, but don't touch me.³⁵ Beware of the drinking cups, and be on guard against vile people.

And when the night grew dark and reached its midpoint, he chose and collected what was available in the place, shifted his reins to one side, redirected his travel, made for the road, and departed. When I followed after him, he turned away from me, saying [*muj-taṭṭ*]:

O goodly Sā'ib,³⁶ favor me with your avoidance and evasion,
And forgive me, for sincere friendship depends upon forgiveness and mutual satisfaction.

The doctrines of others are too narrow to enfold my vast desires.

How many a deadly assault have I launched, "like the assault of al-Barrāḍ!"³⁷

In it, I got the riding camels going with the girth-thong and saddle-girths.

³⁵ Qur'ān, 20:97. The implication is that al-Sadūsī is a social leper in the eyes of al-Sā'ib, who wants no contact with him.

³⁶ *Yā sā'iba l-ḥayr*. The expression may also be translated "O you who stray from good" and is, therefore, a pun on the character's name (see M21, n. 11; M26, n. 16; M31, n. 46, above).

³⁷ An allusion to a famous outlaw named al-Barrāḍ ibn Qays al-Kinānī who is said to have provoked a war between the Arab tribes of Banū Kinānah and Qays 'Aylān (see *E.I.* 2, II, 883b). On this outlaw, the 'Abbāsīd poet Abū Tammām declared:

A true hero is one with whom the nights of Time and the waterless deserts are familiar; one who resembles the tongue-flicking serpent:

Every day, as Time goes by, he launches an assault like the assault of al-Barrāḍ.

Al-Ta'libī, *Ṭimār al-qulūb fī l-muḍāf wa-l-mansūb*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ (Damascus, 1994), I, 235-235, at p. 236.

Leave outlaws to quench their thirst in al-Jafr³⁸ or al-Firāḍ,³⁹

And, some day, let your life be satisfied with a small pool of stagnant water, or a spring producing a mere trickle.

Don't be one of those fools who feel concern for, or are opposed to other people.

It has been said that Time is a loan: far from you be the debt I have incurred!

The arrow of Time is inescapable, so let it hit its targets.

The anger of my people can cause me no harm as long as God is pleased with me.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I marveled at his artistic excellence and proficiency, at his ability to roam up hill and down dale in his discourse, at the abundance of his subject matter, at the brilliance of his talent, at his insight into truths, his investigation into subtle matters, his observation of the divisions and categories of speech, his handling of its sources and their derivatives, his playing tricks on men's minds, his contempt for what has been handed down and transmitted by tradition, and moreover, for his stooping to infamous tricks, after having attained splendid and valuable achievements in the arena of knowledge. I considered that his defects amounted to paltry freckles on the face of his perfection; to a slight blemish in his beauty, for he inspired me to overlook his negative aspects. I thus continued to erase and efface his shortcomings from my heart, to the point that I longed for him to be a friend in whom I could trust and confide.

³⁸ The word means 'a well that is wider at its bottom than at its top'. There were several places with that name, including one near Medina (see *J.G.W.*, II, 92, and *passim*).

³⁹ The word means 'drinking hollows dug along the bank of a river'. There was a place with that name between Basra and Yamāmah (see *J.G.W.*, I, 925, and *passim*). Both images imply abundance of water, in contrast to what follows, below.

Alternate Version

. . . the case of one restricted by rhymes, from that of one, the forefeathers and hidden feathers of whose wings are unrestricted, and whose composer achieves his goal, while a springtime pasture and grazing-ground of eloquence are not barren for him! How many a huge army did prose repel, extinguishing the war that flared up and burned because of it, making unnecessary mašrafi⁴⁰ swords and heads of spears, causing wet-nurses to neglect their infants by its cries, and causing miscarriages in pregnant women. Prose is as delicate as the spring breeze, and shines with the brilliance of a smiling mouth. By it, the intractable are tamed and controlled, old hatreds and animosities are resolved, hard hearts are won over, withered flanks are made flexible, fortresses are recovered, chieftains are subdued, the disobedient is reduced to obedience, and the remote is brought near. It has often been a mediator and an ambassador, a herald of good news and a warner of the bad. By it, epistles are adorned, measures are adopted, the student and researcher meet with success. Through its eloquence news is transmitted; in it, the learned and the scholarly take pride; it is incessantly free as to its reins and ever vying with the clouds. No racecourse baffles it; nothing manifest or concealed eludes it, for it is the glory and tongue of the state, the rider and intimate companion selected for the journey, the Luqmān⁴¹ and interpreter of wisdom, the right hand and safeguard of the kingdom. With its wording treaties are ratified, the witness and his testimony are recorded, chronicles are adorned and embellished, and events are recognized and identified; it is the measure of eloquence and chaste speech, the probe of strength and composure. Because of it, the scholar of Hamadhan,⁴² who was extremely well-versed in it, was named *The Wonder of the Age*⁴³ in olden days and times of yore, for he won high rank and ever-increasing prizes, and trailed the hem of

⁴⁰ Arabian swords proverbial for their excellence.

⁴¹ The pre-Islamic king Luqmān ibn 'Ād was the object of many legends. The building of the great Dam of Ma'rib in the Yemeni region of Saba was attributed to him. He was surnamed 'The Man of the Vultures' because he was granted the gift of living as long as seven vultures (proverbially long-lived creatures), one after the other. Fables were attributed to him, and he became proverbial for his wisdom (see M11, n. 17, above).

⁴² Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Yahyā al-Hamadānī (358/969-398/1008), was the originator of the *maqāmah* genre, as well as a poet and epistolary writer (see "Preliminary Study," n. 2, above).

⁴³ *Badī' al-Ẓamān*, the author's surname (see "Preliminary Study," n. 2, above).

his glory over *Sahbān*,⁴⁴ while camel-riders discussed his stories in their evening, leisure hours. By my faith, even though he was innovative and impressive in the field of poetry, and manifested the eloquence of his ideas by expressing himself clearly in verse, his fame is confined to his prose and restricted to the long and short of it. Minds bear witness to that fact and observe, of it, what has been recorded and transmitted. There suffices prose as a virtue and as a pre-eminent position, the fact that it encompasses all the other sciences, whereas their occurrence in versified speech is rare, over and above the fact that prose constitutes one of the inimitable miracles of the best man in creation⁴⁵—and how honorable that is as an indication of superiority in rank and as a rank indicating superiority. If there were high rank to be acquired, or glory to be considered through poetry, noble status would not have been denied to him, his august tongue would not have been prevented from using poetry, and what would have been his answer, after he had baffled every traveler and wanderer?

The debate between the two of them went on thusly, nor did either resort to a reversal in direction or a change of mind; on the contrary, the partisan of poetry began to gain victory, nor did he tend toward abridgment and restraint; instead, he elaborated and exaggerated; he raised aloft the pavilions of his prejudice and tied down their tentropes; he began to present counter-proofs and to destroy the arguments his brother had provided; the dispute between the two intensified, and the bonds of love came close to being sundered. In the course of it all, the old man awoke from his nap, sat up cross-legged in his seat, belched from the very depths of his stomach, rubbed sleep from his eyes, and asked the reason for the dispute between his two sons. So they told him their tale, recapitulating it from beginning to end. Thereupon he donned his robe, put on his sandals, and cleared his throat, after having coughed. Then he said:

O my sons, know that confrontation and argument bequeath hatred and spite, for often has disputing divided two brothers and led them to disobedience of

⁴⁴ *Sahbān* ibn *Zafr* ibn *Īyās* al-Wā'ilī (d. ca 54/674) was a famous early Islamic orator who became proverbial for his eloquence (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 830).

⁴⁵ An epithet of the Prophet *Muḥammad*, the text of whose *Qur'ānic* revelation is composed in rhymed prose rather than strict verse. According to Islamic doctrine, the *Qur'ān* is considered to be the word not of the Prophet, but of God Himself. It is, however, an "inimitable miracle" of the Prophet insofar as it was transmitted to mankind by means of the latter. Strictly speaking, and from the orthodox point of view, the *Qur'ān* is couched neither in prose nor in verse. Instead, in its "inimitability," it transcends all notions of genre. The view being expressed by the speaker is, therefore, a rationalist and irreverent one.

their parents. You have exceeded the proper bounds in that area, traversed the roughest of roads, surrendered to your passions, ridden in the trail of him who errs and goes astray, and thus deviated from your goal, wandered, and gotten lost.

*Maqāmah 41*¹
(*The Berbers*)

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

I did not cease to wander east and west, nor to be tempted by nocturnal paths and camel trails, until summits and swollen rivers complained of me, and rising and setting stars grew bored with me when, at last, Time hurled me to the land of Tangier,² whence I could survey the portals of the Frankish lands.³ There, I stayed among a people like cattle and ostriches, and humans like wolves or hyenas, whose speech I could not understand, and with whose minds my own did not agree. I differed from those people in the manner of my dress and speech, nor did I lack being rejected and rebuffed by them. Hence, after speaking, I became dumb, and after neighing, I became satisfied with the clatter of bells,⁴ as though I were in the company of cattle, or herding free-grazing camels that would neither obey, keep the peace, nor match my understanding and forbearance. I had heard of the land of al-Andalus and of its culture, its festivities, and its refinement, and I had come to long for it with the longing of a passionate lover, and would have given old and valuable possessions in exchange for it. The qualities I observed in its inhabitants⁵ used to delight me, and the virtues I came to expect from its best and finest citizens used to please me, even though I had met only its newly-weaned, rather than its experienced young camels, and merely viewed the foot of its summit. So, when I wished to attempt the crossing, and to traverse the straits preventing me from reaching al-Andalus, I came down to these shores, leaving behind the barren land of Tangier, while saying:

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 46 in D.

² In northern Morocco, on the Strait of Gibraltar (*E.I.* 2, X, 183-185).

³ I.e., the Iberian Peninsula, gateway to the Kingdom of the Franks (a generic term for Western Europe) for one traveling toward it from the direction of North Africa.

⁴ Muslims do not normally use bells, which are associated with Christian practices. This is, then, a rather curious sentence. It probably means that the narrator resigned himself to being among people so foreign to him, that they were almost like non-Muslims.

⁵ D, *ahli-hā* ('its people'); W, *rijāli-hā* ('its men').

"With a stride one fathom long, you will leave beasts of prey, and with the flutter of a single sail, you will join valiant heroes." But as I stood by the shore, in a state of deep despair, I suddenly saw an individual wrapped in his cloak, leaving only one side of his face exposed. He was jabbering to the natives, whom he could understand, in a language unintelligible to me. Then, he gestured toward me, and praised me to the skies before them.⁶ This behavior, on his part, alarmed me, and made me fear death and destruction. All at once, the natives surrounded me, eager to show me their kindness, until that individual began to speak in the foreign⁷ and the Berber tongue, while at the same time translating their words into Arabic.

He said:

O Sā'ib, may the misfortunes of Fate not afflict you. You are, to these people, either an unexpected companion of an officially invited guest, or that guest himself, therefore, you must either accept their hospitality, or prepare to meet the sword, so let injustice and oppression not surprise you. Please replace your solitude with human company. Like you, I am familiar with the camel-saddle and the stout she-camel; your kind is my kind, and your origin is my origin; this is an invitation whose mealtime has arrived, and an adulterated milk newly purified.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Upon hearing his words, I implored him, in God's name, to inform me who he was, and he replied:

I am a Muḍarite⁸ or a Yemenite.⁹ Tut, tut, indeed! Do you pretend not to know your own companion and associate?

Al-Sā'ib said:

The more I looked at him, the more he concealed and wrapped himself within his clothes, while saying to me:

Can you not distinguish between plains and mountains? Can you

⁶ Since the narrator has just declared that the language being spoken by the mystery-man is unintelligible to him, how can he know that he is being praised in it? This is another narratorial inconsistency.

⁷ *Yū'jimu*, possibly 'in Ibero-Romance'.

⁸ A major North Arabian tribal grouping (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 352-354).

⁹ A major South Arabian tribal grouping (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1155-1158; *E.I.* 2, IV, 447-449; M3, n. 21, above). What the speaker is saying is that he can be all things to all men, and loyal to none.

not discriminate between late dawn and early daybreak?

Then, after a moment, I recognized that he was Abū Ḥabīb, and said:

One thing at a time! Do not reproach me. Are you to be found even among this Berber rabble, and among these inarticulate beasts? Have you gone to all the trouble of coming west, only to join non-Arabs with Arabs in a promiscuous friendship?

He replied to me: "O Abū l-Ġamr, how ignorant you are," and he began to recite [*basīl*]:

How distressed you appear among men, while meteors and full moons delight you.

Both the Arab and the non-Arab are my friend, whenever cooking-pots boil a welcoming meal for a guest.

Forget what is said about kings who possess reception halls and castle walls;

Theirs are palaces, while these are mere tents; what can one expect of hovels and their curtained-off women's quarters?

You have left behind an abode and a home containing luxuries, but both palaces and tents are abodes and homes.

Gallop over rugged ground, or walk upon the smooth, for what is the difference between rising and descending?

Have you never noticed, O Fate's brave young warrior, that Fate toys with man and makes him go about in circles?

How many a companion and a friend have I, the one faithful, and the other faithless,

Yet I have befriended both, in order to please them, therefore, marvel at what human breasts are able to conceal!

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I complied with what he wished and, given the great numbers of those people, I proceeded to stir up what seemed to be an innumerable swarm of ants or locusts, each one of whom greeted Abū Ḥabīb smilingly, and deferred to his opinion. Then they brought us walnut bowls as large as pools, upon which were stews piled high

as hills or mountains, whose heaven rained down outpourings of fat, and whose sides glistened with cuts of meat.¹⁰ We began to eat, so filling our mouths that we were simultaneously grinding with our molars and chewing with our front teeth, until we stuffed our bellies, piling food into them, while fat poured down their wrists, so that, in that place, both valley and riverbed overflowed. Then they brought water from an ancient well, along with milk, both sour and fresh, after which, they cast upon me garment after striped Bedouin garment, raised me aloft upon their pallet of rushes, and threw down before me every one of their sharp iron daggers, as well as those short lances of theirs, that resembled sharp *nayzak*-spears.¹¹ Throughout all their behavior, I remained ignorant of its purpose, nor did I find that drink easy to swallow, until Abū Ḥabīb said to me:

This is a gift conferred by these people, and a meal offered to the guest, both in the past and in the present. Therefore, pretend to accept it, and do not appear to refuse it, or you will find yourself in trouble.

I replied:

Is there deliverance from this snare, or freedom from this whole or skimmed milk?¹²

He answered:

Let me appease these people by thanking them, while I simultaneously seek refuge in God against their cunning, for I have given them my word that you are my paternal cousin; that your concern is my concern, and that your goal is my goal. Therefore, do not contravene me for a single instant, so that we may gain possession of the cash they have at hand, and leave behind only our tracks for their eyes to follow.

Al-Sā'ib said:

We went out to a sandy area, difficult to cross, and to a plain, rough to traverse. There, the Berbers kicked up their heels in an outlandish dance, neighing and howling. What pleased them did not please me; on the contrary, it afflicted me, [while what pleased

¹⁰ D reads “. . . clarified butter and glistened with fat and small grapes.”

¹¹ From the Persian *nayzah* (“spears that were shorter than the average Arab ones”).

¹² D reads “downright importuning.”

me],¹³ afflicted them, until evening arrived, and the bedding longed for its bedfellow, who returned with them, as hungry as they were. Soon, they presented us with one stew after another,¹⁴ and honored us as outcasts or fugitives. After that, a drink called *anzīz*¹⁵ made the rounds among them. It is neither sweet nor sour. Even a small dose, if it has not been diluted with water, can kill while, taken in greater quantities, it can ravish ambushed souls. It felled them to the ground, leaving them speechless, dead drunk, snoring like young camels, and neither conscious nor unconscious.

Then Abū Ḥabīb said:

O Sā'ib, were it not that I am protecting you from bloodshed and am fearful of losing you, I would surrender you to one who would shed your blood and rid you of your last breath.¹⁶ Be that as it may, forget what is permitted and forbidden by the Holy Law, and take instead, along with us, what is sublime and honorable; come away with us, abandoning these people, who are so heedless that they install no locks or bolts before their doors.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he laid his hand on the money lying about, and took me out to the above-mentioned sandy area, where he buried it, saying:

No crime is committed, as long as one does not behave so stupidly as to get caught. May you survive¹⁷ until we meet again. Choose a road that is not my road and leave my company and group, for I plan to return to yonder Berber people, and then hunt you down, since I have left my honor in a splendid state among them, while imposing on you a heavy burden of betrayal.¹⁸

¹³ Here, something appears to be missing from the Arabic text. The bracketed insertion is conjectural, and supplied by me to complete the otherwise garbled meaning of the original.

¹⁴ *Ḍ* reads "a stew."

¹⁵ On which, see "Preliminary Study," n. 124, above.

¹⁶ *Ḍ* reads "motion."

¹⁷ *Ḍ* reads "May your waterskin serve you in good stead."

¹⁸ At the beginning of the *maqāmah*, al-Sā'ib has told us that he was standing on the shores of the Strait of Gibraltar waiting for passage to al-Andalus ('I came down to these shores . . .') when the encounter with al-Sadūsī took place. Now, at the *maqāmah's* end, he is still there, telling his story, despite the fact that he has been warned to get away from the region on threat of injury to his person. This spatio-temporal inconsistency is another example of narratorial unreliability in the text.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he left me, after having provided me with fear as my traveling provision, and entrusted to me the wisdom or folly of his words, when he said [*sarī*]:

How many a halt have you made, O Sā'ib, in which Fate turned you away from what you desired.

How fitting is humility to those who love, and how attached is uncertainty to the faraway fugitive.

Indeed, O Sā'ib, travel with right-guidance, before your jugular is severed.

If you would enjoy sufficiency in this age, then lead a life of solitude, for sweet is the life of the solitary man.

Do not associate with a depraved person, lest you perish because of him; instead, keep ahead of him, stage after postal stage in your journey.

Don't you see that Fate is resolute? I vie with the stars in my travels, as though I were a postal rider.¹⁹

I do not dread Time; I only fear a shooting star meant for Satan, the accursed.²⁰

I seek no status in this age, although my village²¹ lies desolate; my home, abandoned.

I do not care about the rabble of mankind, even if it thrusts bowls of stew my way.

By God, O Sā'ib, beware of a companion who strings the pearls of speech together, to fashion a unique necklace.

¹⁹ On the efficiency and speed of medieval Islamic postal services, see *E.I.* 2, I, 1045-1046.

²⁰ It was believed that shooting stars were stones cast at Satan by God, whenever the fallen angel drew too close to the first and lowest of the seven heavens, in order to spy on its activities. The Arabic word translated as 'accursed' is *rajīm*, an epithet of Satan that originally meant 'stoned, driven away by the throwing of stones', or 'reviled'.

²¹ Reading *ḍay'atī* with D, rather than *ṣay'atī* with W.

He pursues Fate and its misfortunes with a firm resolve, and from a socially rejected perspective.

Fate has left of him only a last breath of life, as is the case of the green date cluster that has withered on the stripped palm branch.²²

²² This poem seems to relate to the theme of forewarning. The *barīd* was the official, state information service, designed to assure that the ruler had an “early warning system” and would receive news before the general population. The shooting star probably relates to divination by conjuring evil spirits to eavesdrop on heaven.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

Coming from the land of Sind,² I had entered one of the islands of India, seeking my sustenance through commerce, and attempting to extract water from a stone. I had repressed my youthful desires, rolling them up as one would a scroll, and subjected myself to truthfulness as do those who lie in poverty and want. I was staying among a people who were submissive and obedient to God, but not believers or Muslims, although they were a people who had chosen justice as their practice, and had strongly rejected injustice. With me, was a company of merchants inspired, like myself, by greed. In our dealings with the locals, we were in dire need of an interpreter who could announce the prices of our merchandise and inform us about matters pertaining to security and safe-conduct; who could disburse cash and guarantee our contracts; dispel confusion and put an end to grumbling and harsh words. While we were in that predicament, we saw a man of tall and well-built stature, of a liberal nature, gifted with courtesy and a desire to be of help, so clever and shrewd in his affairs that he could easily have enticed timid, white-footed goats down from a lofty mountain-top,³ and drawn water from a flintstone. He was dressed, and spoke, in the style of the local people. His manners were polite and suggested good breeding. We admired the talent for mediation that we discerned in him, and assumed that it was the result of his concern for us, so we trusted him and availed ourselves of his friendship. He proceeded to undermine many of the merchants' assumptions, and to rid them of precious valuables from among their choicest possessions. He took liberties with their money, doing as he pleased with it, both legally and illegally, raising and lowering prices, all the

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 47 in D.

² Roughly coinciding with the lower Indus valley and modern Pakistan (see M27, n. 2, above).

³ I.e., mountain goats are proverbially shy of human company. This man, however, is so eloquent that he can even charm creatures as timid as mountain goats into descending from their safe haven to listen to his fascinating words.

while speaking briefly and concisely, so that we waited for him with anticipation, as one waits for the arrival of the crescent moon of ʿĪd al-Fiṭr,⁴ and met with the ultimate horizons and limits of our hopes whenever we encountered him. Inasmuch as he was dressed in the fashion of the local people, and his tongue was fluent in translating their words, remembrance of him never even crossed my mind, for I hardly could imagine him wearing anything but the knotted locks of hair and the mustache he sported. One day, he glanced at me with the look of one attentively scrutinizing me, and presented himself before me with a smile upon his face, saying:

O bravest of youths, and noblest of lords; you whose pure sincerity is of ancient lineage, whose loyalty is noble, whose oaths are reliable, whose witness and whose testimony are trustworthy, whose drinking places are dry, whose grazing-grounds are narrow, the objects of whose desires are remote, whose prosecutor is severe, where are your family and home? Where are your pole and pivot? You have traveled up hill and down dale; you have visited remote and distant lands. O you, both whose presence and whose absence are goodly, whose breast and heart are pure, whom no fault shames, since no doubt makes you an object of suspicion, know that no one suffers from the disadvantages of being a foreigner if he is clever, and that no one experiences grief, if he has money. What an excellent homeland is money, and what a terrible asset are shabby garments and worn-out clothes! Come with me to where you can spend your mornings and evenings; to where you will find tranquility and joy,⁵ a soft bed, a great number of people, total friendliness, a young girl to be your bed-partner, eating and drinking, carousing and imbibing. Relieve your exhaustion through rest, and seize the auspicious moment Time has to offer with your forearm and the palm of your hand, for an unruly steed can be reduced to submission, and wanton dalliance can relieve a young man's staidness.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I hastened to comply with his wishes, and to obey his advice and desire, yearning eagerly for what he yearned, crossing the same

⁴ The appearance of which announces the end of the month-long fast of Ramaḍān, at which moment much feasting takes place (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 417-418).

⁵ *Rāḥ*. The word also means 'wine', hence this is a pun.

river he crossed, and going to a house resembling an inn, smelling of roast meat and smoke, and containing broad courtyards and patios in which melodies and tunes could be heard. Then, he took me to a sitting-room like a tent, and to some slave-girls as slender as the suspensory-cords of swords, who shone like stars, and were handing one another⁶ winecups like shooting stars. They fell upon me, like moths attracted to the flame, both on a soft pallet of rushes and on a smooth bed. I kept sporting and dallying with them as if I were engaged in fighting and in warfare, taking my pleasure from their buttocks and flanks, while sipping from their mouths the sweetness of lip-dew, and gathering from their shapely figures the fruit that was waiting to be plucked, until night spread and darkened, and drunkenness prevailed and ruled, while I kept on alternating between taking a dawn or an evening draught of wine; and listening to the sound of a rebec or a horn, until my guzzling was interrupted, and I realized that I had been led astray. The dizziness of my hangover pained me, and so I asked: "How about another round of the cup, or listening to the reed once more?" They returned to me once again, this time feigning love and manifesting aversion, aiming at my closeness with their distance, at my "before" with their "after," at my abundance with their lack.⁷

When the myrtle and the oxeye had begun to waft their perfume back and forth; when the twittering of sparrows and the calling of male ostriches answered one another; when sleep shook its shirt free of me, and drunkenness severed all its snares and ties, I found myself alone, rejected and discarded, without a friend, without companionship, without a he-camel or a stout she-camel on which I might depart. Solitude had cast on me its burdens, and exile had stretched over me its tentropes and its veils. Suddenly, I perceived someone standing before me, who said:

O heedless one, O sleeper, nothing endures the onslaughts of Time, and no one can blame you as much as you should blame yourself. Where is your companion and leader; the one who brought and guided you here?

Al-Sā'ib said:

⁶ Reading *yatarāmaḥna* with D, rather than *yatarāsayna* with W.

⁷ Literally, 'at my long, straight hair with their short, curly hair'.

I became more and more afraid; I climbed from rough to rugged ground, from road to ever more difficult road, from pass to ever narrower mountain-pass, until a gang of evil youths surrounded me, fiercely threatening, continually muttering and growling. So I said:

May God give you life! What is going on? Is the predicament I find myself in for real, or is it imaginary?

He guffawed, smiled, looked at me attentively, and said:

O my friend, O Sā'ib, you are a prisoner, not free to wander unconfined.⁸ Don't you know the tricks and ambushes of this master, and the wily methods he's designed? Has he not already stung you, from his serpent-burrow, time and time again, and have you not known sweet and bitter experiences at the hands of Fate? He is Abū Ḥabīb, and I am his son Ḥabīb. He is no stripped palm branch, and no mere piece of fluff.⁹ His sword is not dull, nor are his clouds rainless. You were full of fun and games until you bit into hard *nab*¹⁰ and *ḡarab*.¹¹ Such is pleasure: it ends in sorrows; as for fun, its consequence is grief, whereas joy ends up in one's being fleeced. This is a house of ill repute, and you are vainglorious, but every stud eventually loses his vigor. You possess perfume, incense, musk, and sandal, not to speak of *nadd*,¹² and *mandal*!¹³ First open your palms, and then you may put on your shoes to leave! First lighten your money-belt, and then you may trail your mantle to depart! First redeem your pledge, and then you will be immune from helplessness! First loosen your pursestrings, and then you will recover your strength!

I replied:

What have I got to do with you? What is this predicament I am in, and where is my money? Am I not the guest of my dear friend Abū Ḥabīb?

⁸ *Sā'ib*. Once again, the speaker is punning on al-Sā'ib's name, which means 'wanderer'.

⁹ Literally, 'lock of hair'.

¹⁰ See M2, n. 12, above.

¹¹ See M2, n. 12, above.

¹² An incense made of aloeswood combined with ambergris, musk, and frankincense.

¹³ A fragrant wood from India.

He answered:

Shame on you, you deluded and thoroughly confused madman; you heedless sleeper! Have you ever seen a guest who stays more than three days,¹⁴ or seeks lodging in what is not a house of lodging? You have tarried here for an age and an era, having become so delighted by the place that you have stayed in it for a whole month! But the master is neither foolish nor feeble; neither naïve, nor an idiot. Is it not enough that he has brought you to the satisfaction of your desires and opened your gullet while, at the same time, turning a blind eye on your sins when, in doing so, he has reverted to procuring after having wielded authority, and returned to sin after having repented?

Then I said:

Is it possible for me to meet him, and listen to his charms and spells?

He replied:

As far as meeting him is concerned, that possibility is unlikely. How different are the miserable from the happy! He is ashamed of you, on his guard against you, and is avoiding you out of fear; as for your comrades, they are in despair over you, since they do not know whether you have succumbed to the ravages of death or whether you have been felled by the winecup.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I stripped off my clothes, and declared: "How can I return, when my money-belt and leather purse are in your power? Take a message from me to So-and-So, and secretly inform him of my predicament while, at the same time, being entirely candid with him."

Then, I saw my comrade hastening toward me, in the company of the master, who was in full control of the situation,¹⁵ while I kept away from the guardian of that place, which it was almost impossible to do. Then, Abū Ḥabīb came back and winked at me, beguiling me with his clever wit, and reciting a poem to rebuke me,

¹⁴ According to the Islamic tradition, a guest should restrict his visit to no more than three days.

¹⁵ Literally 'tying and untying'.

whereupon he struck the flintstone of my feelings and kindled their fire [*mutaqārib*]:

You are a thoughtless stranger who has longed for love-dalliance, thus reverting to your days of passion and desire.

Do you wrongfully take possession of the sensual age of youth, and then unjustly blame Sadūsī for doing so?

You used to be the foremost of mankind in good guidance for, within your lifetime, you earned its winner's trophy.

Every misfortune a youth garners to his own discredit is a very deep disaster.

Pay no heed if it is a friend who shoots you down, for the arrow of the assailant is no different from the arrow of the assailed.

The brave young hero who is on his guard against perdition, will find that the desires he satisfies are both honey and colocynt.

Live up to your origin when you travel abroad, for a stranger is judged by how well he lives up to his origin.

Maqāmah 43¹
(*Ṭarīf*)

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

On a year of drought, I emigrated to the shores and coastlands and, as I was traversing them from shore to shore, I was propelled to the peninsula of Ṭarīf,² and so loved it that, once I had observed how marvelous and unique it was, I became ready to sacrifice both my inherited and my earned wealth for it. I declared: "Perchance I have reached a fertile land, and gained prosperity from a divinely apportioned lot." Then, one day, I went down to the shore, feeling as sad as a slave or a bondsman, looking for companionship, and stirring my thoughts like a he-camel or a stout she-camel, until I saw a circle of people like the circle of a seal-ring, the stone of which was an old man imparting information about 'Amr³ and Ḥātim.⁴ He was saying:

Noble men have vanished, and mountains have collapsed; the cream of the crop is gone, and only ill luck persists;⁵ departed is

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 48 in D.

² This is the modern Tarifa, a town and peninsula on the southernmost shore of Spain. For a description, see Pascual Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y sus posesiones de ultramar* (Madrid, 1845-1859), XIV, 606-609; al-Ḥimyarī, *Kitāb al-rawḍ al-miṭṭār*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1967), p. 392; Spanish trans., María Pilar Maestro González (Textos Medievales, X [Valencia, 1963]), p. 259. "Name of the town located in the peninsula of Ṭarīfa, in the Mediterranean, at the end of the Strait of Gibraltar. The western part of this peninsula is adjacent to the Atlantic. It is a small town surrounded by earthen walls, crossed by a stream. It contains markets, inns, and baths. From the peninsula of Ṭarīfa to Algeciras there is a distance of eighteen miles" (my translation). See too, *E.I.* I, VIII, 666.

³ He may have been 'Amr ibn Ma'dikarib, a famous Arab warrior and "Transitional" poet who died, according to some, at the battle of Nihāwand (21/646), (see *E.I.* 2, I, 453). Another candidate is 'Amr ibn Sinān (d. 57/677) a famous 'Transitional' Arab poet who converted to Islam and was honored by the Prophet. See Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī ma'rifa al-aṣḥāb*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Cairo, n. d.), III, 1163, no. 1892.

⁴ Ḥātim al-Tayyīṭ was an Arab poet who lived in the second half of the sixth century AD. He was traditionally viewed as the most finished example of the pre-Islamic knight, and became proverbial for his generosity. He died in AD 578 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 274-275).

⁵ Or, more literally: "the marrow is gone, yet the flies persist."

nobility, overwhelmed by senility. Where are Zuhayr⁶ and Hārim?⁷ Fate has brought on them the bursting of the dam.⁸ Alas, this age has its unique flowers, and this time has its eminent men, yet Hārim ibn Sinān is not one of them, nor is the Brandisher of Lances!⁹ Where are the rulers of great cities? Where is Qays ibn 'Āṣim?¹⁰ Where are the sons of Jafnah¹¹ and the kings of Ġassān?¹² Where are the patrons praised by Ziyād¹³ and Ḥassān?¹⁴ Where are the kings of Kindah¹⁵ and Hamdān?¹⁶ Where are the rulers of al-Ablaq al-Fard¹⁷ or Ġumdān?¹⁸ Where are the coronets and crowns? Where

⁶ Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā was a famous pre-Islamic Arab poet and author of a *mu'allaqah*. He was considered one of the three great poets of antiquity (see M30, n. 21, above).

⁷ Hārim ibn Sinān al-Murrī was a chief of the tribe of Murrah, famous for his generosity, and praised by Zuhayr in his *Mu'allaqah*. He died *ca.* AD 608 (see *E.I.* 1, VIII, 1236-1237).

⁸ The bursting of the dam of Ma'rib, the capital of the ancient Sabæans in Yemen, is traditionally said to have led to the dispersal and obliteration of that people, and is alluded to in Qur'ān 34:16: "They turned away; so We loosed on them the bursting of the dam." See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1907, repr. 1956), pp. 4-5.

⁹ He was 'Āmir ibn Mālik ibn Ja'far of the Banū Ṣa'sa'ah, and paternal uncle of the great poet Labīd. He participated in a delegation that visited the Prophet, but he refused to convert to Islam (see *E.I.* 1, I, 329-330; *E.I.* 2, I, 441-442).

¹⁰ Qays ibn 'Āṣim ibn Sinān ibn Ḥālīd ibn Minqār ibn 'Ubayd ibn Muqā'is was the chief of his tribe, a poet, and a knight. The Prophet called him "lord of the nomad people," and he was renowned for his generosity (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 832-833).

¹¹ Jafnah ibn 'Amr, Abū l-Mulūk was a Ġassānid hero mentioned in a panegyric by Ḥassān ibn Tābit to Jabalah ibn al-Ayham al-Ġassānī (see 'Umar Farūḥ, *Ta'rīḥ al-adab al-'arabī*, 4th ed. [Beirut, 1981], I, 327).

¹² Pre-Islamic allies of the Byzantines, who ruled over a Syrian buffer state defending the Byzantines against the Persian empire (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1020-1021).

¹³ He is Ziyād ibn Mu'āwiyah, al-Nābigah al-Dubyanī, a famous pre-Islamic poet, and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 26, above).

¹⁴ Ḥassān ibn Tābit was the "poet laureate" of the Prophet (see M30, n. 48, above).

¹⁵ They were a distinguished South Arabian tribal grouping that played a decisive role in Arab history in pre-Islamic and later times. They lived near Ḥaḍramawt, in Yemen (see M30, n. 14, above).

¹⁶ Reading thus with Ḍ, rather than Hamadān (a Persian city) with W. They were a large Arab tribe of the Yemenite grouping, also important in pre-Islamic and later times (see *E.I.* 2, III, 123, 125-126).

¹⁷ This was a castle in Taymā', belonging to Samaw'al ibn 'Adiyā', a pre-Islamic Jewish-Arab poet who flourished in the mid-sixth century AD (see *E.I.* 1, VII, 133; *E.I.* 2, I, 102).

¹⁸ Reading thus, with Ḍ, rather than 'Umdān, with W. This was the castle of

are the proud-necked princes and virtuous chieftains? Where are the Tubba's¹⁹ and Qayls?²⁰ Where are the centuries²¹ and generations? All have departed like a bygone yesterday, as one past blends imperceptibly into another. Where are Jilliḡ²² and its rulers? Where is Ḥassān²³ with his accuracy in speech? Where are Ṭufayl²⁴ and Labīd?²⁵ They have departed along with all those who have passed away, indeed. I assure you that I am over one hundred and twenty years old while, in my time, I have had the bitterest of experiences. I have parted from comrade and companion as the lion abandons the thicket. Although you may observe that my skin is wrinkled, that my antiquity is renewed, that my shin-bones are thin, and that my fatigue increases, I can still marry a buxom maid, cast the dice,²⁶ surmount hardships, traverse mountain passes, vanquish warriors, and turn a contest's tide. Are you aware that my ancestor was Ṭarīf,²⁷ and that my nobility is both inherited and acquired? How much gnashing of teeth took place during that conquest, on

Ṣan'ā' in Yemen, famous for its antiquity, its size, and its splendor. Its construction was attributed to Solomon, and it belonged to the dynasty of Dū Yazan (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1096).

¹⁹ They were a dynasty of pre-Islamic kings of Ḥimyar, located in Yemen (see *E.I.* 1, III, 310-312; M38, n. 23, above).

²⁰ The title of the pre-Islamic kings of Ḥimyar (see M4, n. 5; M30, n. 12, above).

²¹ Where there is a lacuna in W, *al-qurūn* is supplied by D.

²² This was a pre-Islamic site celebrated by Ḥassān ibn Ṭābit, where the Ḡassānid princes of the Jafnid branch venerated the tomb of one of their ancestors, and built the second most renowned of their dwellings. It was twelve kilometers south of Damascus, although its precise location is unknown today (see *E.I.* 2, II, 541).

²³ See n. 14, above.

²⁴ Ṭufayl ibn Ka'b al-Ġanawī was a renowned pre-Islamic poet, famous for his descriptions of horses, who died *ca.* AD 609. See Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Šīr wa-l-šū'arā'* (Istanbul, 1865. Repr. Beirut, n. d.), pp. 104-106.

²⁵ Labīd ibn Rabī'ah was a famous 'Transitional' Arab poet and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 50, above).

²⁶ Vowelizing *kī'āb* with D, rather than *ka'āb* with W.

²⁷ He was Ṭarīf ibn Mālik al-Mu'āfirī, Abū Zura'ah, and leader of the first Muslim expeditionary force to land in al-Andalus, which he did in 91/710, one year before the onset of the actual conquest. He was a Berber client of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, and crossed the Strait with four hundred foot and one hundred horse-men, all of them Berbers. They landed in the peninsula named after Ṭarīf in commemoration of that event and, after raiding the vicinity of Algeciras, they returned to Africa with rich booty and many captives (see *E.I.* 1, VIII, 665-666).

our account, and how many glorious parents and noble ancestors, who bore aloft the pennant and rode the mount of justice, while seated on its very center; who led the troops and raised the banners high, did we possess! My own great-grandfather told me, concerning his ancestor, nine generations removed from him, that the latter possessed a lofty fortress in this very place, and that he had one son given to violence, who was fond of murderers and attracted to rapists and cutthroats,²⁸ and another, who was considered pious and was singled out for his virtue and restraint. While the father was unable to control his violent son, and was constantly filling his ear with words of censure and reproof, there suddenly came forth against the population, from this very swelling sea, a nation and a band of strangers,²⁹ but their summer campaigns³⁰ proved inade-

²⁸ Missing from W, but supplied by D.

²⁹ Undoubtedly a reference to a Viking or Norman raid. Although this particular account is fictional it clearly reflects historical incursions. Since al-Saraquṣī died in 538/1143, and the speaker in his *maqāmah* is narrating an event told to him by his great-grandfather, about an ancestor nine generations removed from the latter, we are dealing with an event twelve generations removed from the speaker. If we assume that the author is imagining the speaker to be his contemporary, and if we further assume one generation to span an average of thirty years, this would put the event somewhere back in the early ninth century AD. Specifically, there was a famous Norman invasion in 230/844 that sacked Seville, and another in 244/858-247/861, in which Algeciras was taken and its mosque burned (see R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne pendant le moyen âge* [Leiden, 1860], II, 271-500). See too, the account of a Viking voyage through the Strait of Gibraltar in *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, (New York, 1981), pp. 164-181. Although the geography of this voyage is slightly skewed (the Vikings sail from England to Narbonne [sic], then on south to Galicia, down the west coast of Spain, through the Strait of Gibraltar, on to Marseilles, Palestine, Byzantium, then back to Rome, and ride over the European Continent to Denmark, from which they cross over to Norway), the itinerary, including a dramatic encounter with a Saracen nobleman, must reflect historical reality to some extent. The term used by the Arabs in al-Andalus to designate the Vikings was Majūs (Latin 'Magus') which, in the east, had previously been applied to designate the Magians or Zoroastrians. The *Primera crónica general* explains the term by stating that the *almujuces* were fireworshippers and that, when their children were born they passed them through a fire in lieu of baptism. When a man grew old and wished to die, the *Crónica* continues, they would burn him in a fire. The latter may be a possible allusion to the Viking funerals in which chieftains' bodies were burned, as described by Ibn Faḍlān, who witnessed one in the Ukraine (see *Risālat Ibn Faḍlān fī waṣf al-riḥlah 'ilā bilād al-Turk wa-l-Ḥazar wa-l-Rūs wa-l-Ṣaqālibah sanat 309H / 921M*, ed. Muḥam-

quate to subdue the inhabitants,³¹ for the former, noble son confronted the strangers, arriving faster than an arrow or a thought, with a small group of supporters; a company whose swords were notched from constant battling. They defended their honor, standing their ground as do the noble, and causing the invaders to depart in despair, after having tasted a most bitter cup of harm. Thus, the negative aspects of the violent son's behavior became precious to his father, he gained precedence, and won the trophy from the pious son. In the meantime, the latter kept his hatred hidden secretly, and plunged his anchor into desire for glory, for he covertly murdered his brother, taking him unawares, having sought to bring harm upon him intentionally. Then he said to his father:

I have seen a terrifying dream-vision that deviates and digresses from the right path. Its interpretation is baffling and obscure, and its fruit is bitter and sour: I have seen the moon rise against the sun, along with the five brilliant planets.³² The sun turned black and the earth was plunged into darkness, while the moon shone radiantly, the stars appeared sad and downcast, individuals felt a premonition

mad Sāmī l-Dihān [Damascus, 1959], pp. 149-166). Hopelessly confusing history, but hoping against hope to relate the eastern Magians to the Norsemen, the *Crónica* proceeds to explain that the Magian sect originated in Chaldea, where it flourished until Nebuchadnezzar and Xerxes (here turned into close contemporaries) persecuted and destroyed it, because they disapproved of its erroneous religious beliefs, whereupon some of its adherents went to the "cold islands" of Norway, Denmark, and Prussia where they prospered and set out on raids to the south (see Anonymous, *Primera crónica general de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289*, ed. R. Menéndez Pidal, et al. [Madrid, 1955], I, 14-15. See too, Anonymous, *Crónica geral de Espanha de 1344*, ed. Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra [Lisbon, 1954], II, 77-79). Let me thank Professor Samuel G. Armistead who, with the generosity that characterizes him, provided me with the above material on the Vikings.

³⁰ The Vikings tended to conduct their raids in summer, before their ports, particularly those in Iceland, froze over for the winter, as Professor Alain Renoir has kindly pointed out to me.

³¹ Reading *wa-dāqat bi-him fī-him ṣawāʿifu* with ڤ, rather than *wa-ṣānat bi-him min-hum ṣawāʿifu* with W.

³² The five planets visible to the naked eye, and known at the time, were Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter. The sun and moon were generally added to this number, to produce a total of seven celestial spheres surrounding the Earth. To these was added a further sphere containing the fixed stars. Since Muslim astronomers were able to predict eclipses, here we have a perfectly ordinary event that is being presented as evoking wonder and dread.

of death, and the sky produced continuous thunder and lightning, so that it intensified the sun's disappearance, after which it replaced the sun entirely, obliterating and effacing it. Then the planets shone forth with a brilliant light, and looked on with a watchful gaze, surrounding the moon, as necklaces surround a neck, and as kings take pride in being surrounded by their ministers. After a while, the sun emerged from its eclipse in a state of confusion, and resumed its revolutions in its celestial sphere, while the moon again became dark, and the sky became clear. The stars at times receded, and at times drew near; at times they rose, and at times they set, while they filled me with terror, for many a sand-dune collapses, and many a drinker fails to obtain even a first drink; many a throne topples after standing firm; many a fate relents after acting cruelly; many a dream provides its own interpretation; many a good omen offers information; many a misfortune gives warning; many an affair absolves from guilt; many a building verges on crumbling, but is steadied; medicine often relieves the sick, and arrows must be fletched before shooting; there are forces causing even mountains to move, while during the course of Time, people wander to and fro.

The old man said:

The king became fearful upon hearing this. Foreboding doom, he commanded:

Bring me an experienced man of learning; a great scholar who can interpret dreams expertly, and provide accurate information.

The old man said:

So a man was brought to him, who was famous for his learning, well known for his intelligence, and who announced:

This is a vision that has both an esoteric and an exoteric dimension, in understanding which some men are asleep, and others are awake. No truthful tongue can give reliable information about it; it offers neither a downpour nor a drizzle. Here is the interpretation on which you should rely:³³ It is a divine decree that warns, and a fate that cautions, for the sun and moon are two kings who first rule

³³ Since "no truthful tongue" can interpret the dream, as we have just been told above, we can only infer that the following interpretation is untruthful and, hence, unreliable.

and then perish. The moon eclipses and blots out the sun, effacing and dissipating its effects. Then the sun's good fortune returns, its rising and setting revert to normal, its halo is restored, and its wonders become manifest. The moon is a brother or a son to the sun. There should never be treachery or deceit directed against royal authority, and thus the moon reaches the final night of its month,³⁴ when the stars are rid of its persistence.

The old man said:

Then the king pounced upon that son of his, intending to shed his blood, were it not that he feared he might later feel remorse, so he concealed his intentions and buried them alive. It was not long before his pious son betrayed, hid, concealed, and exiled his father, seized his kingdom, and strung it on his own necklace, taking command of it all for himself; neither disdaining nor considering any matter too insignificant in his efforts to do so, until the kingdom calmed down and submitted to him, to such an extent that he was even able to govern its baby camels and its pygmy sheep.³⁵ He then announced:

My father is one of those who perished for following the path he followed. I concealed his acts only for reasons of state, in doing which, I was merely protecting the government.³⁶

The old man said:

That son³⁷ committed certain misdeeds against his subjects, from sheer hatefulness, so that they became disloyal to him, for they knew his secret, and the truth about his crime.³⁸ Hence, they came to the place where his father was banished, and notified him of the possibility of his regaining the throne, while reminding him of his rank and glory. His people pitied him greatly, and unanimously agreed to restore him to power, clapping hands with one another

³⁴ At which point it disappears.

³⁵ I.e., he gained absolute control over everybody in the kingdom, even down to its weakest and most insignificant subjects.

³⁶ I.e., the son claims to have concealed his father's alleged abuses from public scrutiny for reasons having to do with entirely contemporary ideas of "national security."

³⁷ Reading *li-bni-hi* with D, rather than *li-'abī-hi* with W.

³⁸ I read *jarīrah* ('sin, crime') with D, for W's *jazīrah* ('peninsula'). The latter makes no sense contextually, and is a misprint involving a single, superfluous dot.

to seal the bargain.³⁹ Without more ado, they overthrew the son with extreme violence, bringing him down to the lowest level. As the father's affection and love for his son dwindled, and his heart and tender mercy became hardened against him, he rushed upon him and killed him, severing and sundering his ties to life.⁴⁰ Have you ever heard the like of such a story, or witnessed such tales of warning? Many a digger digs his own pitfall, unveiling his own death; many a malingerer really falls ill; many a man eagerly desirous of a thing chokes on his own spittle and suffocates. Evil devising encompasses those who instigate it,⁴¹ while property is a choice wine or nectar that plays games with our emotions and our minds, causing old age to covet youthfulness. This world encourages deception to the extreme while, simultaneously, it consumes deposits. Its tongue coos seductive rhymes, but its misfortune is distressing, all too many times. Behold me: Do you not see that Time has honed my blade until it has notched it, and that it has first increased my relatives and then diminished them; that it has devoured my flesh, melted away my fat, enfeebled my bones,⁴² left me in disorder, undermined my strength, and destroyed my desire? O mighty one, I am poor; O wealthy one, I am distressed; O scion of distinguished lineage, I am a wayfarer. Is there no giver for this beggar; no provider for this forbearing man that I am?⁴³ Does no one feel sympathy for this harvester? Old age has restricted my strength and wrested my spring encampments from me. Alas, have you ever seen such an outcast in his own homeland; such a fugitive from his own resting place, rejected by his people, despairing of the

³⁹ Arabs clap right hands with one another to seal a bargain, whereas we shake them.

⁴⁰ Since (seemingly) 'pious' son A killed 'rowdy' (but brave) son B, and father then killed son A, it is not easy to see how the the narrator's great-grandfather can descend from a patrilineal line left without issue by one act of fratricide, and another of filicide. At the very least, for the genealogical claim made in the old man's speech to be valid within the context of patrilineal genealogies, the narrator would have had to explain that he descended from a third son, or from a son begotten by one of the two defunct princes before he died. Such an explanation is, however, not provided, thereby strengthening our suspicions concerning the narrator's reliability.

⁴¹ See Qur'ān, 35:43: "But evil devising encompasses only those who do it."

⁴² See Qur'ān, 19:4: "O my Lord, behold the bones within me are feeble."

⁴³ *Rāsib* also means 'dregs', hence this is a pun.

day, bereft of his contemporaries, who finds his drink unwholesome, whose bed is uncomfortable, and to whom insomnia has become an ally? Indeed, give alms to one whose life has cut him off, and who has been stopped short of his designs and intentions. But now that weakness has overcome me, silence is more seemly for me, in your presence.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the audience rushed toward him like moths to a flame, and vied with one another in giving him alms, as if they were engaged in the most violent of quarrels. And so, his hands were filled, the duration of his life was prolonged, and his evening and morning pastures became fertile.

Al-Sā'ib said:

But I continued to observe his expression and to scrutinize him from top to bottom, and behold, he was the master, al-Sadūsī, behaving like an experienced camel, or a ram standing out from the flock because of its whiteness, and when the gathering dwindled in size, a glance or twinkle of the eye sped from him to me. Then he recited [*sarī*]:

O companion of Fate, awake, but be judicious when keeping company with Fate.

In how many a spring and summer pasture has Death whispered confidentially in your ear, yet you have never responded to its words.

Would that I knew, concerning my love for Mahdad,⁴⁴ whether she is unaware that, one day, her lower veil slipped down,⁴⁵

Or whether she is blind to the fact that love is so imperious a

⁴⁴ A woman's name.

⁴⁵ Allusion to a line by the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābigah al-Ḍubayānī (on whom, see M30, n. 26, above) concerning an incident in which al-Mutajarridah, wife of the Lakhmid king Nu'mān III of Ḥīrah (r. AD 580-602 or AD 585-607), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 119-120) unintentionally dropped her veil before the poet, thus affording him a glimpse of her face:

Her lower veil slipped down, though she did not wish it to fall, so she reached for it and put it back on with her own hand, in our presence.

Al-Nābigah al-Ḍubayānī, *Dīwān*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut, n. d.), p. 40, l. 4.

lord, that it imposes the wheedling manners of a servant boy upon a lover.

Everyone circles around the waterhole of love,⁴⁶ yet in front of that waterhole lies a solid dam.

If you ride upon an ass, let it graze, in spring, on dry *šilliyān*⁴⁷ or *layf*.⁴⁸

But if you ride a purebred horse, ascend the summits to refreshing rain, as does the man entering cool, upland summer pastures.

Seek your sustenance as it comes, either barefoot, or wearing well-padded sandals.

You will not be considered incapable of trickery, as long as you continue to be called powerful and judicious.

If you are refused a full share in this age of yours, be content with half a share.

Do you not observe that I am merely pretending to be old, when my skin is fresh, and my bones are solid,

And that Fate is an archer whose arrows hit the mark whereas, from the outset, the arrows of Fate's enemies miss it?

⁴⁶ Reading *hawā* ('love') with D, rather than *radā* ('death') with W.

⁴⁷ A grass favored by asses (see M38, n. 8, above).

⁴⁸ A thorny plant with a white flower, similar to a cucumber. In al-Andalus it was identified with the *scolymus*. See, R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 3d ed. (Leiden, 1967), II, 529 (see too, M38, n. 9, above).

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

On one of my distant journeys and fortunate destinations, I befriended a brave youth who was descended from royalty. We came to be as closely connected as pearls threaded on necklaces and strings so that, thanks to him, I had need of no further friend or acquaintance and, in his company, I dared to venture through every narrow mountain pass and road, while even approving of the hardship of our travels, and enjoying the wilderness of deserts and wastelands, for I had discovered, in my friend, the noblest of men, and a listener responsive to all that was asked of him. Hence, I devoted myself to him with all my heart, I offered him the purest water of my affection, and I viewed him as being my lord and my prince. One day, when we had reached a fertile valley, and were seated under the still branches of a tree, we found ourselves resting beneath an outstretched shade, next to a meandering river, and beside some plants of which the fruit was ripe for the picking.

Al-Sā'ib said:

That place reminded us of the mountain-pass of Bawwān,² so we cursed every perfidious and treacherous act of Fate, our conversation flowed along its course, and we discussed both the positive and the negative aspects of Fate, all the while that my friend declared:

Insofar as the mountain-pass of Bawwān is concerned, what a wonderful mountain-pass it is! In it, my people lived in harmony, and in it we went from feeling safety to knowing terror. Bawwān is my home, and the resting place of my camels; of it is my clay, and in it are to be found my drink and my illusions. How excellent were those former haunts of mine! May those places in which my people once assembled remain under the surveillance of God's eye! I grew

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² This was a *locus amēnus* in Persia, about twenty-six leagues from Shiraz. It became famous in Arabic literature after al-Mutanabbī (303/915-354/965) described it as an earthly paradise in a panegyric to the Buwayhid ruler 'Aḍud al-Dawlah (r. 338/949-372/983) and his two sons Abū l-Fawāris and Abū Dulaf (see A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: A Selection with Introduction, Translations, and Notes* [Cambridge, 1967], pp. 134-140, at pp. 134-136, no. 25, ll. 1-19).

up in Bawwān, and was united with my loved ones there. Alas for that time! How desirable, fresh, and delightful was that age! It was a period in which inanimate objects almost spoke aloud to us, a mere puddle of water provided us with drink in abundance, all glances turned our way, the shortness of the nights interrupted our revelry, late evenings and early mornings found us awake when they greeted us, and neither excuses nor memories ever disturbed us! We assumed that Fortune would not change, that crescents were full moons, that ends were beginnings,³ and that everything would go up hill rather than down dale, until Fate struck us with its blows, destroying Bawwān by obliterating and dividing it, exposing and laying bare its innermost secret, demanding the surrender of all its young camels, and not leaving anything else, so that Fate dispersed what had once been united, broke the bone, separated loved ones, violated oaths, severed ties, toppled lofty domes, overturned thrones and daises, and contorted faces and their features, for waterholes dried up, crops flourishing in fertile soils withered, pastures shrank, inauspicious omens stood in the way of our desires, loyalty declined, subterfuge became prevalent, noble ambitions became base, obligations were disregarded, no friend associated with another, no enemy refrained from his hostilities, no time kept the peace, and no companion treated his friend with forbearance, to such an extent that beasts of prey became more sociable than human beings, and waking became lonelier than sleeping.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I felt such pity when I heard his words, that I loosened his hobble by declaring:

Let me be your associate and your partner. If you are poor, I too, am poor; whatever suffices me, will also suffice you, and whatever stings me, will likewise sting you. I will not exclude you from enjoying the very last of my belongings, nor disassociate myself from you, except by death, for wealth, God be praised, is widespread, the Lord is forgiving, man is extremely unfaithful, Fate alternates between being friendly and being unfriendly; between veiling and unveiling, and today is followed by tomorrow. Wherever there is a drink, there is a desire; of old has ambition brought

³ Literally, "that buttocks were breasts."

good luck, whereas neglect has always caused a man's sustenance to slip away. To be lazy is to suffer, to despair is to be miserable, to act with determination is to be prudent, to be healed of a wound is to be relieved of it, to give up hope is to err, to accept consolation is excessive, taking medicine is virtuousness, sufficiency is a remedy,⁴ indolence and sluggishness are the habits of independently wealthy women, many a stumbler rises, many a complainer is cured, and how often does a distant person draw near, only to restore good fortune.

Al-Sā'ib said:

While we were thus conversing, we suddenly heard a faint voice, and saw a man who was averting his face, while simultaneously declaring [*sarī*]:

O you who despair of your condition when your Creator and Resurrector stands before you:

How many an object that lies close to you have you failed to obtain, and how many an object that is far removed from you have you succeeded in gaining!

A righteous man who, out of modesty, is content to eat dry herbage, rejoices in his success,

And is only seen humbling himself before the One who created, and will bring him back to life again.

Al-Sā'ib said:

We lent ear to those words, and said:

They must surely contain a message!

Then we grew apprehensive of the perils lurking in dangerous places and of the deadly hazards of the highways, so we arose to investigate those places wherein such perils might lie in wait, while simultaneously seeking refuge in God against Satan. Suddenly, a figure as slender as the shadow of a lance, and who was gazing at us with a penetrating glance, appeared before us, so we repaired and betook ourselves to him, whereupon he removed his veil, and his flowers bloomed impressively, for he was the master, Abū Ḥabīb,

⁴ Vowelizing *'ifāf*, rather than *'afāf*.

upon recognizing whom, our desire for him increased, and our hearts embraced him, so that we enquired of him:

Why do you conceal yourself? Why do you not receive us with welcoming kindness and show us your loyalty? Is there no cure to our longing for you and, if such a cure does exist, from whence will it appear? For often does a deceptive appearance guide one toward an underlying reality, and often does questioning remove the rust that hides an object.

Then he replied:

I have persistently traveled along the same road as the two of you, without ever attaching myself to a companion, or seeking satisfaction from the winejug, for I am wary and afraid of Time, having choked and suffocated on its offspring, since everything decreases once it has increased, and Yazīd⁵ repented of what is well known to you. Today, I am surviving on very little,⁶ I am content with no more than what is barely enough, and I am wrapping myself in virtue. What else am I to do, when my life is coming to a close, my friend has been carried off by Death, and I am surviving all alone, like a last remaining arrow in the quiver, alarmed by a mere shudder, wary of the man who seeks to shoot or break me, and harboring deep reservations about the bird of prey soaring on high or contracting its wings in its descent. God accepts repentance and pardons sins, while your loyal affection for me, O Sā'ib, has

⁵ This was the name of the second, ninth, and twelfth Umayyad Caliphs, of whom the second (r. 60/680-63/683) was the most famous. At the beginning of his reign, in the year 61/680, the martyrdom of the Šī'i Imām Ḥusayn took place at Karbala, on the Euphrates. This event provided the Šī'i cause with a strong rallying-cry. Later, in 63/683, Medina, having expelled its Umayyad governor, was sacked, while Mecca itself, where a rival Caliph had been set up, was besieged, and its Ka'bah laid in ruins. This, in turn led to further uprisings, massacres, and general unrest, to the point that, on Yazīd's death (63/683) a poet declared:

Now loathed of all men is the Fury blind
Which blazeth as a fire blown by the wind.
They are split in sects: each province hath its own
Commander of the Faithful, each its throne.

See R. A Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1907. Repr. 1956), pp. 195-199, at p. 199. Yazīd thus had much for which to repent.

⁶ Reading *atabarraḍu*, not *atarabbaḍu* or *atarabbaṣu* with W.

afforded me much joy, and your words have pleased me, for your status is exalted, your moon is full, your ambitions are lofty, and your commitments are fulfilled. Nonetheless, in every circumstance, a man must inevitably consume his traveling provisions and then shake out his empty provision-bag, once hunger has tormented him, and the poorly trimmed arrow of evil speech has imposed harm upon him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we offered him what we could, his fire calmed down and subsided, and he said:

O Sā'ib, I have never lacked for your kindness on my behalf, in spite of the fact that, for a long time, I have wronged you, whereas you have always adopted the forbearance of the noble, and refrained from imitating the bloodsucking characteristics of the camel-tick. As for you, O Sā'ib's companion, may you be congratulated on enjoying Sā'ib's loyalty toward you, and may you be given the pure water of his friendship to drink. You have been the recipient of his generosity,⁷ therefore depend upon him; you have triumphed, therefore rejoice; you have gained a precious object and become Sā'ib's right-hand man.⁸ Were it not that I am returning from a waterhole, and that my mind is in a state of confusion, I would be your ally and your intimate friend in all circumstances. But these include one's hour of death and one's character; they include wealth and poverty, fortune and talent, methods and doctrines. By means of these circumstances one's home is made to prosper, and one's fate runs its course. Such circumstances are ordained by fortune, and have been allotted to us, whether they are adorned by ugliness or by beauty. Nevertheless, despite it all, I will offer you some willing, rather than unwilling advice, which is easy to grasp, rather than inaccessible: First of all, beware of mocking one another, for it will be the cause of your separation. Next, beware of obstinacy, hypocrisy, injustice, slander, harmful suspicions, and offensive thoughts, for one aspect of the nobility of friendship is that it renounces stubbornness, while sincerity of intention encourages equality, the most pious of acts is the keeping of a secret, part of the nature

⁷ Vowelizing *ukrimta*, rather than *akramta* with W.

⁸ Literally, "you have strengthened the left hand with the right."

of a noble man is to defend his honor, part of a lofty commitment is to descend to low-lying areas; avarice is a disease; arrogance is an injustice; it is the forerunner of hatred, and travels over parched ground, whereas humility and forbearance are twin brothers whose parents are love and acceptance, and who put aside their resentments to ratify their agreements; virtue is self-evident, and righteousness is simple; it has a cheerful countenance and a gentle tongue. These are amply sufficient remarks, and unambiguous words of wisdom, a few of which are worth many, and the valuable of which are redeemed by the significant and the select, for the intellect is a radiant light, and knowledge provides decisive proof.

Then he recited, as he bid us farewell, while astonishing us with his poetic creativity [*basīf*]:

To God's protection throughout Time do I commend two sincere friends who have spent the night in safety.

I have composed my prose and poetry for them, arranging it as one pearl is joined to the next.

For their benefit, I have sifted out the choicest part of my sincere advice and love, saying what I have to say with total self-assurance.

I am the tongue of this age, yet I have spoken to my time through an interpreter,

For I am so wary of mankind that I am even wary of the very idea of safety itself.

I have spent time with humans,⁹ from the land of Najd to that of Oman, with hope as my guide,

Only to find that they are either treacherous wolves or faithful dogs; either lean beasts or fat ones.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I wondered at his satisfaction and contentment, at the contrast between the talent he had been granted and the prosperity he had

⁹ *Qaḥā'tu-hā* can also mean "I have robbed them," hence this is a pun.

been denied, at the skill that had been made so easy for him,¹⁰ and at the begging that had been preordained for him, so I invited him to stay, but he emphatically refused my invitation, declaring:

I have asked you for no gift, for I consider largesse to be an illusion; a cloud of dust floating in the air. Indeed, this world is a place of warning, the transmission of which absolves the transmitter of any share in the guilt of the sinner he warns. Therefore, leave me alone, for I am a lucky person who sometimes receives and sometimes gives, since there are multiple means of earning one's living, before which no door is ever closed.

¹⁰ Correcting *yusirra la-hu* to *yussira la-hu*.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I did not cease traveling up hill and down dale, going forth and penetrating deeply into the horizons of the earth, until I reached a certain frontier between the lands of the Muslims and those of the infidel, where I kissed the sweet mouths of a pleasant life, I felt comfortable with the character and behavior of the area's inhabitants, I was reassured by its events and circumstances, I found its men admirable, and I went from its archery to its racing contests. One day, as I was in the midst of one of that region's gatherings, hobnobbing with its men of experience and resolution, while the latter were challenging one another to participate in a raid, and were discussing the subject of racing and jumping, I saw a figure rise from the ground, like a promontory in the landscape, and heard him utter lengthy words of wisdom and learning, as he declared:

O you who have been spared the noose of captivity, and protected from subjugation and violence, whoever among you faces the enemy, let him show endurance in the encounter, and let him despair of surviving; let him beware of surrendering, as long as he has the option of striking with his sword, or of piercing with his lance, until he either comes home in triumph or utterly perishes, for there are only two alternatives: resistance or the grave; victory or the dust. How many a brave warrior has died a natural death, whereas a cowardly one has been killed against his will and despite his valor. May God not acquaint you with manacles and fetters, and may He not deprive you of strength and support. I used to be manlier than those valiant heroes and undaunted defenders whose exploits are told in the accounts of battle-days² and stations, both in verse and in prose, until I was overcome by a "distressful day"³ and an unerring Destiny, for my companions deserted me and my

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² "The Battle-Days of the Arabs" are accounts, largely legendary, of pre-Islamic tribal wars (see M28, n. 21).

³ Qur'ān, 11:77.

freedom of movement was restricted, so that I wheeled and retreated; I employed deceptive tactics and resorted to subterfuge, until my thoroughbred steed stumbled, and my body fell to the ground. Then, I surrendered—and with what humiliation!—only to find myself in the position of a careworn prisoner. Yet my captors feared to kill me, because of the daring they had observed in me, and hoped I would survive, because of the resistance they had witnessed in me. Here you have my fetters to inform you of my undoing, and my bonds to notify you of my bondage. Eventually, when God Almighty decreed my release from the snares of the enemy, and my deliverance from the noose of polytheism, He eased what had been difficult, and mended the fracture, for I donned the armor of darkness, crossed the waterless desert, was welcomed by arid lands, and contented myself with what scant water I was able to scoop out of hollows. I thus eked out a miserable existence on a diet of leafy vegetables, often being content with the scant water lying at the bottom of a well. I thus proceeded to cross from place to place, and to travel over sloping and level ground, guided by the stars, fearing projectiles, and associating with ravenous beasts of prey and fierce wild animals. I eventually arrived at Diyār Bakr⁴ where, having experienced events both “old and young,”⁵ I spent some time, for I deeply desired to slake my thirst at its waterhole, but this weary man that I am was not well received, nor was this broken man that I am mended; this beggar was not responded to, this stooping man was not raised, save with a bare amount that was not enough to fill my cup; with a mouthful that left me thin, and did not quench my thirst, and with a time that went by, but did not sweeten or embitter me. I submit my complaint to God, and to His approval do I hereby devote the Holy War I have waged, and the suffering I have endured. O you men who are both healthy and sufficiently wealthy, I have offered much to the one who asks for much, I have raised the stumbler, clothed the destitute, and reassured the stranger; I have generously bestowed gifts; I have defended my friends and trampled underfoot my enemies, until my fortune lost its footing,

⁴ An extensive territory on the River Tigris constituting the ancestral lands of the tribe of Bakr (see *E.I.* 2, II, 343-347).

⁵ Qur’ān, 2:68.

and I was deprived of my daily nourishment, at a time when my shield forsook me and so, unfortunate that I was, I railed against my fate. The customs and habits of this age, as well as its desire and will are the following: Precaution and security, lean men and fat ones, exploitation and embezzlement, success and despair.

Then he began to recite [*basīl*]:

“Hardship leads to ease,”⁶ whereas the weak, miserly man “will suffer a loss.”⁷

How often have I engaged in an endless assault that would make the battles of Qār⁸ and al-Nisār⁹ seem insignificant!

Morning and evening, I have waged a Holy War, retreating at times, and then stealthily advancing by night.

In doing so, Time has notched the edge of my sword by subjecting me to humiliation, subjugation, and captivity.

Behold me now: I am free and unrestrained, although my luck is still in bonds!

I vie with the stars in their nightly travels. O Lord, help me along my path!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did gifts rain down upon him, and he swallowed their cool water and refreshing red wine, as wealth trailed the hems of its garment over him. I looked at him attentively, and lo, he was al-Sadūsī, from whom both wild beasts and humans have encountered nothing but distress. He looked at me askance, thereby imposing a heavy burden of complicity upon me, while speaking little, but letting his tears flow down abundantly. Then he recited [*ḥafīf*]:

May God have mercy on the man who weeps for me, and thereby refuses to make an example out of me.

⁶ Qur'ān, 65:7.

⁷ Qur'ān, 17:82; 35:39.

⁸ Possibly the pre-Islamic battle of Dū Qār (ca. AD 610), a place near Kufa, Iraq, in which a Persian army was defeated by the Arabs (see *E.I.* 2, II, 241).

⁹ A pre-Islamic battle between the tribes of Ḍabbah and Tamīm. See al-Qalqaṣandī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī ma'rīfat ansāb al-'Arab*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyarī (Cairo, 1959), p. 457.

I am like a thoroughbred steed whose hooves have been released from the hobble.

God is the only Protector I need, and in His pardon do I place my reliance.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I turned away from him, until he had gathered together the gifts he had collected, and prepared to leave, having decided to do so. Then, he lowered his veil, tightened the girth of his camel, said goodby, and addressed me as follows:

I pray that good may befall you, therefore, go without ignominy, but beware of one who can open his mouth.

Then, having conveyed his threat, he turned away and goaded his camel forward, reciting, as he left [*sarī*]:

How many people have censured you, O Sā'ib? Would you then censure this act of mine?

I would be more deserving of your reproof, had it been you who conferred and lavished these gifts upon me.

How can you expect affection from a friend, if you balk at his reins?

How deserving, indeed how deserving, is the man who endures a sorrow of which the cheerful, happy man is unaware!¹⁰

¹⁰ C. E. Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, 1976), I, 86-87, mentions the scam of claiming to be a prisoner who has escaped from the infidel, or a refugee from border wars, as a standard ruse employed by the Banū Sāsān. See too, *ibid.*, II, 194, l. 37; 195, l. 45. The theme was also cultivated by al-Ḥarīrī (see Bosworth, *ibid.*, p. 100). See too, *E.I.* 2, IX, 70.

Maqāmah 46¹
(The Jinni)²

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

I tarried in the land of Raqqah,³ for I was visibly thin and emaciated, since spells of noonday heat had made me dissolve, and obstacles had kept me awake at night, until I had become like a twisted and dessicated old palm branch, tossing and turning inside the two robes of impoverishment and deprivation. On that account I was referred to as “the sick man,” I was looked upon as being lowly and insignificant, and I was shunned as is the mangy camel whereas, previously, I had always been the favored racehorse honored by its master. One of my neighbors in that town took pity on, and felt sympathy for me, so that he implored the Benevolent and Gentle Lord on my behalf. He established ties of friendship with me, cleared up the dimness of my vision, relieved me of my grief, and kept me company in my exile, until a certain day arrived, when Death was hovering eagerly over me, in which he said to me:

Recovery sends you its congratulations, for in front of your troubled waters lie limpid ones. A skilled physician has appeared unexpectedly; one whom the Creator has fashioned as He alone might have wished; one who disperses knowledge and clothes the blunted sword with lustrous sheen. I have described your complaint and expounded your ailment to him, and he has promised a cure and

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 49 in D.

² In the Islamic view of things, *jinn* are intelligent creatures, imperceptible to our senses, but with the power of assuming different forms, and carrying out heavy labors. Unlike the two other categories of rational beings, namely angels and humans, who are made of light and clay, respectively, *jinn* are made of smokeless fire. They are capable of salvation and belong to different religions. Some will be granted entry into Paradise, and some will be confined to Hell. Like Arabs, they are organized into clans and tribes. They are able to enter and possess human beings, who are then driven mad (*majnūn*, literally, ‘bejinned’) by them. Finally, according to the Islamic religion, they are as real as humans, angels, and God, not creatures believed in by the superstitious (see *E.I.*, 2, II, 546-550).

³ A city on the bank of the Middle Euphrates, in Iraq (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 410-414).

an alleviation of the strange disease that afflicts you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we proceeded toward him with the wing of hope fluttering, and the lightning bolt of success flashing, until I saw an old man like an eagle contracting its wings to descend upon its quarry or an ancient vulture tearing the flesh from its prey; a man with a handsome appearance, yet a scowling countenance who, as he spoke, raised and lowered his voice, organizing his speech into paragraphs and sections, mentioning the ancient philosophers and learned scholars, providing information about their knowledge, and recognizing their contributions to it. Before him was a youth dressed in rags, who was rolling in the dust⁴ like a donkey. Then he moaned, brayed, and his lungs became filled with air to the point of bursting, until he stretched out languidly, and shrank like a hedgehog threatened by monitor lizards, while one of his sides drooped, froth drooled from his mouth, his arm became contorted, he crossed his eyes, saliva clogged his mouth, and grief gave him its full meed. While he was still agitated and struggling, the old man put his arms around him and lifted him up by the armpits, seizing him by the hand and head,⁵ and fearing for his suffering and misery, while people craned their necks to witness the absurdity of it all, and sought refuge in God from his evil condition. I, among others, felt sympathy for him, and mourned for his beauty, saying: "What is this? Is it a fainting spell or a touch of lunacy; is it abnormal or normal behavior?" Then the old man came forward and said: "Seek refuge in God against these symptoms, and implore Him to lighten your complaints and maladies," and he began to employ incantations on him, to administer a medicine to him through an instrument placed in the corner of his mouth, and to give him to drink, while declaring:

O refractory demon, your arrow pierces its prey; O rebellious spirit, what do you want? How tyrannical and rebellious you are! How far; how distant you are from good! Come out, O intruder, for you cause great concern! Begone, O deceiver, for you are a

⁴ *Yatamarraḡu* can also be translated "who was foaming at the mouth." Neither rendition seems impossible.

⁵ Reading *bi-ra'si-hi* with D, rather than *bi-ra'yi-hi* with W.

killer! "You shall not pass through except with an authorization!"⁶ Keep away, you devil! Indeed, if you do not go peacefully, I will most certainly cause you to endure fatigue, return you to the black earth, and heap perfidy on your betrayal; I will most assuredly "rally troops against your horsemen and foot soldiers,"⁷ pour the water out of your bucket, and do away with both your ancestor and your offspring; I will send against you troops of Qur'ānic recitation, and drive to your side docile horses and young she-camels of Qur'ānic memorization, that will scatter you in every direction, and destroy every *'ifrit*⁸ and vain suggestion of the devil. Dare you rebel against *me*, unsheath your sword against *my* patient, and come down to drink from *my* waterhole? May your face be disfigured; your path and direction go astray! Depart, O intruder, as al-Ḥallāj⁹ departed! Free yourself from this body, otherwise I will bind you with a rope of palm-fiber and make you dwell at the bottom of the seas; I will enclose you, along with your nation, in deserts, and imprison you within dumb rocks, after I have restrained you with every kind of charm and fumigant. Then he recited passages from the Qur'ān to him, mumbled, contracted his body, shrank, opened his mouth, gaped, and attacked him, coming at him from all directions, like a wolf. Next, he turned to the bystanders and said:

O people, concerning this case, I possess certain secrets, hidden knowledge, and indispensable information, all of which I obtained from scholars, and gathered from the learned. Where is the one who complains of these same symptoms? Where is the one who has been afflicted by these same desires? Where is the one whom harm has tormented? Where is the one whom a passion, or a sore on the sole of his foot is troubling? Where is the one whom insanity has disabled and whose sinews have betrayed him? Where is the one whom longings and temptations have overwhelmed; with whom murmuring and whispering voices play havoc? Where is the one whom a sorcerer has enchanted or an assailant has put to rout?

⁶ Qur'ān, 55:33.

⁷ Qur'ān, 17:64.

⁸ A malevolent demon (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1050-1051).

⁹ Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr, al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, III, 90-104) was a famous mystic who was executed by crucifixion for his unorthodox ideas, during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Muqtadir (295/908-320/932).

Where is the one upon whom an eye has cast its evil influence,¹⁰ or whom a debt has overwhelmed? Let me be responsible for curing him, and he will be free of the disease, for if I guarantee his cure, happiness will be his. I possess exclusive and rare items of information; background and prior knowledge, in which the man who is afraid may trust, and the man who is in love may find consolation; I have a cure for the ear and the eye, all that is needed by accident and substance, a charm for the one afflicted by the evil eye, and a method for clearing the eyes. My knowledge can cure all complaints, draw water from a well, and even from an eye, that from lengthy weeping has gone dry.

Al-Sā'ib said:

The bystanders hesitated, and were on the point of rebuking him.¹¹ Suddenly, a youth appeared before them, displaying a touch of insanity and weakmindedness, trailing his mantle, and wearing a turban wrapped around his head.¹² The old man hurried toward him, greeted him, and said:

I had detected the fragrance of this youth's scent some time ago.

Then he consulted his astronomical tables, beginning with the proper position of the moon and the latter's deviation therefrom, saying:

I implore you by God, O hero in battles and penetrator of narrow mountain passes, would you kindly vouchsafe to these people that what I am about to report to you is as true as the information about you that I am now going to disclose to you? Behold, I have calculated your ascendant, and identified the star of your rising good fortune, while my investigation informs me that you are a youth from whom great things are expected, and that you will gain command and wield power, in all of which an angel and a demon will accompany you. One of the two will encourage knowledge and

¹⁰ Within the context of the Islamic religion, belief in the influence of the evil eye is an article of faith, not a mere superstition as it was and is in the Christian religion (see *E.I.* 2, I, 786).

¹¹ On account of his excessive claims.

¹² Although it is never explicitly stated in the text, one has reasons to suspect that the two young madmen who appear in it are al-Sadūsī's sons Ḥabīb and Ġarīb, that their madness is feigned, and that they are acting in league with their father to fleece the gullible public, as occurs in other *maqāmāt*.

forbearance, while the other will promote injustice and oppression. Then, terror after terror will pursue you, and possession after possession will escape your hand. After that, your situation will increase, as do the crescent moon and the afternoon and morning shadows. And the proof of all this is that, at present, you possess a herd of one hundred camels, plus ten thousand *dirhams*, because of which you enjoy a high rank and a plenitude like that of the full moon, and that you own a singing-girl as rare as a gold nugget, who has large, bright eyes, who is a pleasure to behold, who is endowed with a voice that arouses desire, a brilliant cheek, a short-necked lute, and a frame-drum; who rivals Ma'bad¹³ and al-Ġarīḍ,¹⁴ and offers you a novel and tender form of companionship. What a fine girl is she, whom you purchased for one grand, all in one lump sum! She distracted your mind from your worries and made you forget your own paternal cousin.¹⁵ Yesterday you requested her to sing a song expressing auspicious or inauspicious hope, so that she was stirred by her skill and nobility, and sang you a song that you had not previously heard her sing, as follows [*mutaqārib*]:

O you, who retreat when passion approaches, may a falling shower of rain refresh and restore those days when we used to enjoy intimacy.

I woo, in you, a gazelle of the sand-dune and, on the day of battle, a lion surrounded by its cubs.

I have been overcome by an amorous rapture for you, even though love should infatuate or utterly consume me.

I can speak about my condition in your absence, but when we meet, I am tongue-tied.

How many an attack have I launched in the face of fear, therefore, why can I not attack where love is concerned?

¹³ Ma'bad ibn Wahb (d. ca. 126/743) was considered the most famous Arab singer of the Umayyad period (see *E.I.* 2, V, 936-937).

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Malik al-Ġarīḍ (d. ca. 95/714) was considered one of the most skillful singers and musicians of his time (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1011).

¹⁵ Who, in normal circumstances, was either destined to be the young man's wife, or was already married to him. This was the case because the preferred form of marriage was between paternal cousins.

Then the youth said to the old man:

May your inspiring demon perish, and may your ties to life be severed! Indeed, you have put an end to my secrets, and bared the torrent-bed by sweeping away the rubble covering it; you have revealed what was veiled, and aroused one who has been wronged by the murder of a blood-relative, but to whom vengeance has so far been denied. It is as if you had personally witnessed my situation and felt disgust over what is inaccurate. You have spoken with the tongue of truthfulness and given information about an important and sensitive matter. Indeed, I am of the opinion that you are a soothsayer, and believe that you fraternize with, and can outwit the *jinn*.

The old man replied:

That is so and, furthermore, I know the science of physiognomy,¹⁶ in which I have experience and practice. Through it, I can discern natural instincts, and I can distinguish the loser from the winner, just as I can see that you are the precious son of “a mother with few children,”¹⁷ and the offspring of an important, much-visited lord, who has bequeathed to you his innate qualities and placed on you his sword-suspensories, inasmuch as you possess part of his strength and courage, and part of his nobility and skill, save that Fate made you fall short of his full range, insofar as you do not cut with his knife, nor equal his all-encompassing rain, for you do not display a generosity comparable to his, nor have you struck fire with his fire-stick, nor climbed up his mountain. Vain desires sway you in every direction, hence you have never been appointed a guarantor nor made responsible for anything. Such is the case of one who surrenders to his desires, obeys his passions, puts his faith in ease and tranquillity, accepts rejection and humiliation, relies on the age he lives in, and trusts in its safety for, today, you wish to act but cannot do so, and you are faithful to the age you live in, when it betrays you. You have reached the limit, trodden on knives, then halted as does a desperate and miserable wretch. Confusion

¹⁶ *Firāsah*, a science whereby the inner nature of a person can be discerned from his outward appearance and behavior (see *E.I.* 2, II, 916-917). In sum, it was pre-Freudian psychology.

¹⁷ Allusion to a verse attributed either to Kuṭayyir or to the ‘Transitional’ poet ‘Abbās ibn Mirdās al-Salmī. See M32, n. 12, above.

and stupidity have pervaded you, and you are unable to achieve patience and resignation. Yet a door to your daily sustenance *will* be opened for you, and ties to life, along with means of subsistence *will* be extended to you. Then calm and tranquillity, war and peace, and dawn and darkness will alternate.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, the bystanders craned their necks to hear his call, waited for his assistance, began asking him about personal matters, and judged him in their minds, while he began hinting and suggesting, arousing hope and desire. Soon, he interrupted his activities and said:

I took an oath in this field of knowledge, and one such as myself cannot lie. You have seen the seedling, therefore give fully of your offering, for the ailing patient has recovered, and I have little cash at hand; I am enduring a state of poverty from which there is no recovery, whereas you are benefactors, and some of you are wealthy, therefore, first hand over your money and then claim payment for the debt I owe you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

On hearing this, people outstripped each other in being the first to bring him a *dīnār* or a *dirham*. After that, they questioned him about every difficult and obscure disease, while he responded with words based on conjecture and guesswork, thereby thoroughly testing their mettle.¹⁸ Next he said: "O people, your questioning is extensive, yet my reward is paltry; whoever among you shows up is cured, but my payment is not being received in full; the Mother of Gossamer¹⁹ is close to setting, yet we have entered the narrow roads and winding mountain-paths of endless discussion. Tomorrow, God willing, my obligations toward you will be satisfied, and whichever of us is the liar will be exposed.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Having said that, he withdrew from them, leaving what was there, while I followed him, for I felt contempt for his opinions. Therefore, I said:

¹⁸ Literally, "gnawing on their wood both with his front and with his back teeth."

¹⁹ An epithet of the sun.

Abū Ḥabīb, long may you be given life, my friend! You have devoted all your efforts to cunning, and exceeded all bounds in ascribing to yourself the knowledge of others; you have misrepresented matters to the very *jinn* themselves, making an unwarranted claim upon every genus and species of knowledge. "To begin over again, with a clean slate, would be most laudable"²⁰ since you are praiseworthy. How fair it is to keep one's promise! How ugly it is to be disloyal! How foul is treachery! How clear is the full moon! How long will you fail to prosper, when the breast from which you suckle is a large one?²¹ How long will you be greedy, when you are in charge? How long will you betray your promises when, in this age, you lie in the path of a flowing torrent of milk? You have donned the cloak of wickedness, and lodged within the dwelling of perfidy.

Al-Sā'ib said:

He looked at me and replied [*mujtattī*]:

To break a promise is to keep it, for what have I got to do with sincerity?

I was fond of righteousness for a time, until cruelty became overwhelming.

I would sacrifice my soul for a freeborn man, for a freeborn man has no equal.²²

I used to be satisfied by less than what is due, when promises were kept,

And yet, this age of ours is a torrent, whose sons are the rubble it sweeps away.

How long have I lived granting favors and being kind to people,

Yet I have never found a freeborn man who keeps his promise.

²⁰ An Arabic proverb. See *M.A.*, II, 373, no. 2543.

²¹ Reading *al-darī'u* with D, rather than *al-ṣarī'u* with W.

²² The second hemistich of this line can also be translated: ". . . but no one is equal to a freeborn man." Hence this is a pun.

I have sharpened my spearhead²³ in every valley when dust²⁴ is stirred up by war.

I have never begged from a miser—may misers be effaced!—for avarice is a disease from which there is no recovery.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I realized that he was an incorrigible profligate whose bridle could not be turned away from sin; a sleeper whose slumber could not be dissipated, and an eloquent speaker with whose message and verbal skill none could compete. I determined to abandon him, and declared: "May God protect him²⁵ both in Syria and in Iraq!"

²³ Reading *ḥarrabt[u]* with Ḍ, rather than *jaraytu* with W.

²⁴ Vowelizing *al-ʿafāʿu* with Ḍ, rather than *al-ʿifāʿu* with W.

²⁵ *Yaklaʿa-hu* also means "whip him," therefore, this is a pun.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām informed us and said:

In the prime and flower of my youth, when I was culling the fruits of my vigor and sowing wild oats, I was very fond of the company of pure-blooded, Bedouin Arabs, a people endowed with reliable genealogies. I marched over their winding dunes and sandy hillocks; I tended their large camels and little sheep; I was very fond of their orations and poems; I imitated them by wearing their outer and inner garments; I considered them to be a superior nation, a community of protectors, gifted with courage and loyalty, endowed with honor and honesty in their speech, a group faithful to their oaths, who were masters of uplands and lowlands, of steadfastness and forbearance, and of self-restraint and gentleness. I considered that, because of their knowledge of divination from the flight of birds,² their expertise in tracking, in soothsaying, and in prognostication, they had been singled out for the loftiest of goals, for being loyal to their treaties of protection, for offering abundant gifts, for lodging guests, for giving away both infant and full-grown camels, for making peace with the humble and the defenseless, for putting up with hunger without resorting to beggary, and for preferring death to surrendering, along with other virtues the enumeration of which would be far too extensive, and the inexhaustible well of

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² *Ẓajr*, an ancient Arab science according to which a pebble is thrown at a bird, and if, in flight, it turns its right side toward the observer, he augurs good from it, whereas, if it turns its left side, he augurs evil. See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-1893), III, 1216b-c, for further details. This is the famous *corneja diestra* and *sinistra* at the beginning of the *Poema de mio Cid*:

A la exida de Bivar ovieron la corneja diestra
e entrando a Burgos oviéronla sinistra.

[On leaving Vivar, / a crow turned its right side toward them, but as they entered Burgos, / it turned its left side toward them (my trans.).]

See Anonymous, *The Poem of the Cid: A New Critical Edition of the Spanish Text*, ed. Ian Michael, trans. Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry (New York, 1975), 22-23. The translation provided in the text obscures this point.

which would never dry up, to wit: Respect for ties of relationship and kinship; the mingling of the healthy among them with the mangy; the fact that, out of a sense of honor, they do not contract debts, nor do they submit to being ruled; the fact that, out of a sense of pride, they can neither be made to budge, nor can they be led; the fact that they are a brave community never subdued by a king, or taken captive; that they are a nation of traffickers; that they are the stay of the howdah and supporting frame of the camel-saddle; yes, a sovereign and a powerful people. Every land is a home to them, and every location, a way-station and watering place for their camels. They live remote from the squalor of cultivated areas, and from the discomfort of being a guest; they have been spared the promiscuity found in large cities, along with the seductive charms offered by tender young beauties, and they have occupied themselves with cultivating virtuous characters rather than with acquiring precious possessions; they delight only in the mention of battles and warfare, they go down to drink only from fresh, pure pools and rocky hollows where rain has collected, and only boast of commotion and strife; spears and swordblades. They are familiar only with the mention of So-and-So, who drove a spear into So-and-So, or reached the finish-line ahead of So-and-So on the day of betting and competing.

Once, when we were among a party of travelers, including seven noble youths who were resting their spears from Ḥaṭṭ³ and their bows of *nab*⁴ wood between their shanks and their stirrups, as they rode along, and while we were in the desert of the Banū Asad,⁵ among loping wolves and lions, attempting to hunt the oryx and gazelle, and discussing battles and feuds, there suddenly appeared before us a herd of oryxes as numerous as flocks of sandgrouse, while around us could be found all the lurking lions and loping wolves one might desire. So we charged after the oryxes in detachments, and wrested their lives from them in battle, for we soon caught up with them, since they were not far off, and we dyed the

³ A strip of coast in Oman, on the Persian Gulf, famous in pre-Islamic times for its marketing of superior lances imported from India (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1130-131).

⁴ See M2, n. 12, above.

⁵ A North Arabian tribe (see *E.I.* 2, I, 683-684).

surface of the plateau with their blood. Then, we headed toward some nearby pools, containing both still and running water, where we all took off our waist wrappers and cloaks. No sooner had evening arrived, than the oryxes' hindquarters were sundered from the sinews of their legs, and we detached the flesh between the clavicle and the breast, along with several other cuts of meat, using the animals' manes as napkins on which to wipe our hands. We kindled *marw*⁶ and 'afār⁷ wood, with which we illuminated plains and wastelands; we carved pieces of roasted meat, raised a banner and pennant aloft, to notify any prospective guests of our presence,⁸ made an offering to the wild beasts, and let the hyenas get a meal. Then, when pitch-black night had arrived, and every nighttime visitor and indefatigable traveler was lying still, we suddenly heard a voice that pierced the passages of our ears, bridging the empty void⁹ of the desert, as it announced:

Greetings to the heroic youths of the Arabs, to the bright stars that alleviate cares, to the offspring of combat and war; to those who are well acquainted with piercing lances and striking swords. Will you take in a phantom arriving by night; a penetrating arrow whom routes have betrayed and brigands have scared away, so that he has donned the night as his coat of mail and, in this fashion, crossed the desert?

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we accepted his words at face value and relieved him of the headache of his misfortune by giving him a generous gift, until the fire revealed his face to us, and lo, he was our master, Abū Ḥabīb, so we offered to sacrifice ourselves for him, exchanged greetings with him, fortified him against Fate, and remained, all night long, greatly relishing his rare anecdotes and experiencing passionate fondness for his disposition, until we found ourselves in the vale of love poetry and erotic verse, for every one of us was attached to it by the firmest of ties and bonds, so that tenderness and passion

⁶ *Macrua*, a tree producing a fragrant firewood much used in cooking.

⁷ See M5, n. 10, above.

⁸ In keeping with the rules of generosity toward strangers that operated in the desert.

⁹ Correct *ḥarf* to *ḥarq*, and see W, p. 442, n. 29, where the word is spelled correctly.

overwhelmed us, not a single remnant or leftover of self-control was left to us, and there was not one among us whom passion did not pursue, and whom sorrow did not assail.

Then the master said:

Let each one of you recite some lines of verse in which he expresses his love-longing with clarity, and informs us of it with the ease and facility for composing eloquent discourse that characterizes him, for each individual experiences his own unique situation, nor is love an emotion for which one should be faulted or dishonored. Rather, it is an indication of the nobility of one's character and of the refinement of one's virtues; it emanates from the purity and sincerity of one's soul, and from the latter's constancy and loyalty; it refines one's thoughts and understanding, and produces a light drizzle and a heavy downpour of rain from one's mind.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then a youth from among them named Abū Sinān,¹⁰ who was keen and lively in the eloquence of his speech, came forward to compete, and recited [*ṭawīl*]:

My two friends,¹¹ self-control is a deterrent to man, yet what is one to do with a heart that has never had any restraints placed upon it?

I always struggle against a warrior, namely my heart, who sues for peace with me, when I seek him out, and so, I come to be reconciled with him.

Yet, in the adversities of Fate, I have the deadliest companions, who deceive me in matters of love, and whom I deceive.

Fate ravishes my heart whenever the latter seeks to win the object of its desires, even though my heart is not deterred by the fact that its desires are illusory.

My two friends, how sweet and how bitter is passion, when obstacles interrupt one's union with the beloved.

¹⁰ Most of the seven youths who appear below bear names suggesting heroic activities. This one means 'father of the spearhead'.

¹¹ It seems to have been a frequent convention of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabic poetry for the poet to use the dual form in addressing his companions.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the second youth, who was called Abū l-Sibā',¹² who was eloquent and generous, and who had many supporters and followers, came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

My two friends, although white hair places constraints upon a man, the heart lodged within my breast is still full of longing.

When I say this, after I have found consolation from love, she expresses affection for me, in the name of tender cares.

When I wish to conceal from my enemies this love I feel for you, my hostile opponent speaks of you in glowing terms.

The deadliest danger in love is the cunning of an envier who opposes and struggles with one to tie love down.

My two friends, when will there be a love-union for a man driven to impatience, now that a certain lady traveler has departed down the windings of the valley?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the third youth, who was called Abū l-Layṭ,¹³ who was more generous than abundant rain, and more daring than a lion,¹⁴ came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

Was the camel speeding toward your Laylā¹⁵ when, in front of your Laylā spears were aimed at you?¹⁶

Would that my camel, at the time when night-travel causes it to speed forth, were provided with pure water to drink at its waterholes.

Now that the female travelers have crossed the land of al-'Uḏayb,¹⁷ what do you think they will do, when mountain summits appear before them?

¹² The name means 'father of wild beasts'.

¹³ The name means 'father of the lion'.

¹⁴ *Layṭ*. Therefore, this is a pun on the youth's name.

¹⁵ The beloved's name.

¹⁶ Presumably, in defense of her honor.

¹⁷ The word is a diminutive meaning 'fresh water'. There are several places with that name in the Arabian Peninsula (see *J.G.W.*, I, 341, and *passim*).

As for you, your heart does not obey you, your passion gives you no rest, and you have no thought beyond your separation from the one you love.

I wish that love were my opponent in battle, coming to blows with me on the day of combat, so that I too, might come to blows with it.

Then the fourth youth, who was called Abū l-Rijāl,¹⁸ who was a man of strife and contention, with a wide scope and range to his talent, came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

My two friends, how can anyone reunite a couple, now that tearducts have betrayed the secret of their passion?

And how can this lover that I am be patient in the absence of his darling Lubnà,¹⁹ after flashing bolts of lightning have smiled from the bright teeth of her mouth,

And one has been reminded of her by camomile blossoms whose petals are separated from one another like delicately spaced teeth? They were blossoms watered, because of the two rain-producing stars²⁰ of her weeping eyes, by a flowing cloudburst.

Despair is more appropriate to men than is hope, when unattainable desires humble proud-necked men!

Behold: a slain heart is to be found along the path of love, as well as an eyelid prone to shed tears in the wake of those it loves.

Then, the fifth youth, namely Abū Umāmah,²¹ who was more

¹⁸ The name means 'father of men', or 'father of footmen' (as opposed to riders on horseback).

¹⁹ The beloved's name.

²⁰ The Arabs believed that certain pairs of stars (one of which was rising when the other was simultaneously setting) announced the coming of rains (see *E.I.* 2, I, 523-524). Hence the complicated conceit in this line, according to which the lady's teeth are likened to camomile blossoms watered by the tears of her two eyes that, in turn, are likened to rain-producing stars. Furthermore, the conceit is inverted, because, rather than comparing the lady's teeth to camomile blossoms (which is normal), the poet compares camomile blossoms to the lady's teeth.

²¹ An epithet of the lion.

hostile than a lion, more generous than a raincloud, and more liberal than Kaʿb ibn Māmah,²² came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

My two friends, will the days spent together at the little date-palm²³ return, now that returning camels have brought back the ladies who once departed in their howdahs?

I invoked your name, O Laylā, when people were spending the night awake in prayer,²⁴ after eyes that slept peacefully had ignored you.

Today, just as I have done yesterday, I fear for what the distressing nights may garner for me.

When cooing doves mourn, my love for you fills me with longing, if cooing doves can be said to fill a man with longing.

The ties of love have overwhelmed my heart and my insides. If only the ties to those I love were beneficial to me!

Then the sixth youth, who was called Abū ʿUrwah,²⁵ who was a better love poet than Qays,²⁶ and more inclined to youthful, amorous dalliance than ʿUrwah,²⁷ came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

My two friends, have fears haunted anyone beside myself, and have paths to water inflicted harm on anyone other than me?²⁸

²² He was Abū Duʿād Kaʿb ibn Māmah ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿAlabāh al-Īyādī, a pre-Islamic personality proverbial for his generosity (see *E.I.* 2, I, 115b).

²³ The place where the lovers trysted.

²⁴ An Islamic example of the “heresy of courtly love,” in which the poet is invoking his lady’s name, rather than that of the divinity, in his prayers.

²⁵ The name means ‘father of a bond, or tie’.

²⁶ Since all these poems are composed after the ʿUdri fashion, this poet is either Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, al-Majnūn (d. ca. 68/688), one of the most famous ʿUdri poets, who is reputed to have gone mad over his lady Laylā (see *E.I.* 2, V, 1102-1107), or else he is Qays ibn al-Darīh, another ʿUdri poet (d. ca. 68/688), on whom, see Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Šiʿr wa-l-Šuʿarāʾ* (Istanbul, 1865; repr. Beirut, n. d.), p. 147.

²⁷ ʿUrwah ibn Hizām was another famous ʿUdri poet (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 989b).

²⁸ The second hemistich can also be translated “. . . and have religious ordinances been compiled other than to my detriment?” This is an instance in which a pun conceals a veiled example of the “heresy of courtly love.”

Lo, I would sacrifice my father for a certain person, in exchange for whom, I would not accept the riches of this world in payment, although that person sold me at a bargain price.

O you, for whom I would sacrifice my own self, I have committed no offense against you in my love, for neither has the secret of my love been openly divulged, nor has the oath I swore to you been betrayed.

When I wish to incline my heart away from you, it reverts to its love, for my intention is not accepted by my heart, nor is my heart obedient to my intention.

Lo, how excellent is a heart that has been placed in your trust, even if all objects left in your trust must eventually be forfeited.

Then the seventh youth, namely Abū Mālik,²⁹ a rapacious wolf among outlawed brigands, and a brave young highwaymen, came forward to compete, and recited [*tawīl*]:

My two friends, will one of you be an advocate on my behalf today, for advocates have often been loathe to provide me with their services?

My two friends, when will I meet my love, now that the slopes of Salmā³⁰ and its obstructing hillsides lie between us?

By your luck, do you expect faithfulness from the faithless, now that the women's howdahs have been hoisted on the backs of their camels, in readiness for departure?

There is nothing wrong with me, save that my love for you is killing me, as long as a hostile Fate keeps me away from you,

And that Death has inflicted the discomfort of snaffles that prevent me from reaching you, this being no beneficial act when one is in love with such a shapely, slender lady as yourself.³¹

²⁹ The name means 'father of a lord'.

³⁰ There are several locations bearing this name in Arabia, including a place in Najd, a stone fortress in Ṭā'if, and a mountain belonging to the tribe of Ṭayyī' (*J.G.W.*, I, 114, and *passim*).

³¹ Not only are the above poems recited by the seven youths all five lines long,

Then the master, Abū Ḥabīb, said:

How excellent are the unsheathed swords of your eloquent tongues, your happy faces, virtuous souls, intelligent minds, sweet temperaments, outpoured charms, easy dispositions, and swiftly-flowing words! How excellent are your utterances, and how well have your nobility and memory expressed them! How refined and sweet, how solid and polished they are! You have silenced all tongues and put all talents to shame, therefore, let no one scatter the carefully strung pearls of your verse, or stumble in reciting what you have composed on so serious a subject.

Al-Sā'ib said:

We made our camp for the night, after which, we ended up engaging in a lawful activity, for we took pleasure in the fresh, cool water of Abū Ḥabīb's conversation and permitted magic. We thus honored his abode and dwelling, for the surface meaning of his words distracted us from his underlying, secret intention. But all too soon, he lost no time in girding on a sword and mounting a thoroughbred steed,³² thus transforming the bright joy of his presence into the black sorrow of his absence. He left a note behind him, in which was written [*ramal*]:

O noble youths, I will now depart, for a noble youth is master of his bow.

Oh, may God preserve any noble man who says to me: "Oh, may God preserve whatever road you travel!"

He has the right idea, and where is the man who has led him, in this age, or the man who has ruled over him?

I am like a star in splendor and brilliance; one that travels constantly in its celestial sphere.

Of old have men parted from the one they love! Oh, how

and all couched in the same meter, namely *ṭawīl*, but they all exhibit the same rhyme of the final consonant, namely *ḥamzah* (i. e., the rhyme in 'ū runs through the seven poems). In contrast, the *luzūm* rhyme of the penultimate consonant is the same within each poem, but differs from one poem to the next (1 *ādī'ū*, 2 *āzī'ū*, 3 *ārī'ū*, 4 *āmī'ū*, 5 *awqī'ū* [*w-j-*: rhyme of three consonants!], 6 *ā'ī'ū*, 7 *āfī'ū*).

³² Both of which would be property stolen from the hosts as they slept, as what follows, below, in the *maqāmah*, seems to imply.

much did Sulayk³³ cause Sulakah³⁴ to miss him!

During the course of his life,³⁵ no man cares about a Time he finds easy to bear or one that destroys him.

Only the weak man is incompetent, and only the violent man fears destruction.

Do you think I will achieve royal authority, when Fate has decreed beggary to be my lot?

Some day, it will be enough for a thoroughbred steed merely to obtain its fodder and to champ on its bit.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thus was I left in shame by Abū Ḥabīb's behavior, for he had clothed me in the two garments of fear and dread, so I said: "How long will his vices visit affliction upon me, time after time? How long will his snares enfold me, and his *nab*³⁶ and *ḡarab*³⁷ wood provoke me?" For I knew far too well that the purest of his wine was nothing more than boiling water,³⁸ and that the most laudable of his qualities was, in fact, entirely blameworthy, for the sweetness of his honey was, in actuality, the bitterness of colocynth, and the joy of associating with him was, in reality, a total disaster. Thus, I asked God to do away with, and rid me of him; to obliterate and destroy him.

³³ He was the pre-Islamic brigand-poet Sulayk ibn 'Amr ibn Yašrabī al-Sa'dī, one of the "Crows of the Arabs," so called because of the blackness of their skin, which resulted from their fathers having sired them with African slave girls (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 864a).

³⁴ She was Sulayk's mother.

³⁵ Correcting *'iṣyati-hi* to *'iṣati-hi*.

³⁶ See M2, n. 12, above.

³⁷ See M2, n. 12, above.

³⁸ And, therefore, painful and unpleasant to drink.

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

I settled in Raḥbat Mālik² ibn Ṭawq,³ when my life was in its

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² Correcting *Malik* to *Mālik*.

³ A town on the right bank of the Euphrates, the modern al-Miyādīn (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 393-396; *J.G.W.*, I, 567, and *passim*). The name means literally 'the courtyard of Mālik ibn Ṭawq'. It was so named after a famous general and governor of Damascus, who founded al-Raḥbah during the days of Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 170/786-193/809). He was also a distinguished literary patron, whose entourage included the famous 'Abbāsid poets Abū Tammām (d. ca. 236/850) and al-Buḥturī (206/821-284/898), both of whom composed panegyrics in his honor (see *E.I.* 2, I, 751b; 1289b; 'Supplement', p. 122b). He died in the year 260/873. The following anecdote about him is provided in one Arabic source:

Mālik ibn Ṭawq al-Taḡlibī, the founder of al-Raḥbah.

He was a noble and valiant chevalier, who governed the prefecture of Damascus for al-Mutawakkil [r. 232/847-247/861]. After sunset, he used to call out at the door of his house in al-Ḥaḍrā' [the palace of Damascus, built by Mu'āwiyah I (r. 41/661-60/680), (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 268b)], which was the seat of his authority: "Break your fast, may God have mercy on you," while his doors were kept open so that the people could enter.

It was he who built al-Raḥbah, named after him, on the Euphrates. The reason for it was that Hārūn al-Rašīd [r. 170/786-193/809] was sailing with his boon companions, among whom was Mālik ibn Ṭawq, in a fire-throwing boat on the Euphrates, and when he drew near to the water-wheels, he said: "O Prince of the Faithful, if you go toward the shore we will avoid those water-wheels." The Caliph said: "Are you afraid of them?" Mālik replied: "May God recompense the Prince of the Faithful for any calamity that may befall him." Al-Rašīd said: "I augur ill from your words." Then he jumped ship and made for the shore, and when the abandoned fire-throwing vessel reached the water-wheels, it span around in a circle and then capsized with all that was in it. Al-Rašīd wondered at that, knelt in gratitude to God Al-mighty, distributed much money in alms, and said to Mālik: "It is our duty to satisfy some need of yours, so ask what you will." Mālik replied: "Let the Prince of the Faithful give me, on this spot, a piece of land to develop, to be named after me." The Caliph responded: "No sooner said than done, for we will assist you with money and men."

Once Mālik had developed his land, his affairs had prospered, and people had settled in it, the Caliph sent him a message requesting money of him, but Mālik made excuses, rejected the request, offered resistance, entrenched himself in his castle, and summoned his troops, so that prolonged battles between him and al-Rašīd ensued, until al-Rašīd's general overpowered him and bore him off in irons, to languish in prison for ten days. Then the Caliph ordered him to be brought before a group of leaders and notables of the dynasty,

whereupon Mālik kissed the ground but refrained from speaking. Al-Rašīd wondered at his silence, was angered by it, and ordered his head to be cut off. The leather execution-mat was rolled out, the sword was unsheathed, and Mālik was brought forth. Then the vizier said: "O Mālik, speak, for the Prince of the Faithful will hear your words." Then Mālik raised his head and said: "O Prince of the Faithful, I have been reduced to silence out of fear, having been too afraid to greet and salute you, but if the Prince of the Faithful will allow me, I will declare: 'Peace be upon the Prince of the Faithful, as well as God's mercy, along with His blessings! Praise be to God who created man out of clay!' O Prince of the Faithful, may God mend, through you, the fissure in the Faith, may He straighten out the muddled affairs of the Nation, extinguish, through you, the blaze of error, and illuminate, through you, the path of truth. Sins silence eloquent tongues and break men's hearts. I swear by God that my crime is great, my defense is stymied, and naught remains but your forgiveness or your revenge." Then he composed a poem, saying, after having turned right and left:

I see Death, as it lurks between the leather execution-mat and the sword,
gazing at me wherever I turn.

My prevailing thought is that you will kill me today, and what man can
escape from what God has decreed?

Standing still is difficult for a man of Aws ibn Taglib, for the sword is
brandished against me, yet I remain silent.

What man can offer excuses, or an argument in his defense, when the sword
of the Fates is unsheathed before his eyes?

In me, there is no fear to be suppressed, for I know well that Death is an
appointed end.

Rather, my fear is for my boys whom I have left behind, and their hearts
are torn apart from grief.

It is as if I can see them well enough to announce my death to them, while
they claw at their faces and raise their voices high in mourning.

If I live, they will survive peacefully and in bliss, with me to avert Death
from them; but if I die, they will be left to perish.

How many a man entreats God not to cause his home to perish, when
another is cheerful, and rejoices over the misfortunes of his fellow.

Then Hārūn al-Rašīd wept and said: "You have refrained from speaking, out of a highminded purpose, and now you have spoken with forbearance and wisdom. Hence, I forgive your youthful and impulsive indiscretion, and release you to your boys, so return to your children, but do not repeat your offense." Mālik replied: "To hear is to obey," and he departed.

See Muḥammad ibn Šākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1951), II, 294-295, no. 362. See too *J.G.W.*, II, 764-767, where the same anecdote is recorded.

prime and flower, when my years had outgrown the collar of their childhood, when I had endured every oppressive burden and weight, when I had doffed the garment of dearth, and donned the flowing robe of wealth, when *belles lettres* favored me, surrendering to me both their heavy and their light loads, when I had applied myself to knowledge, had relied upon forbearance, had become noted for my skill and keen perception, and had become as famous as a radiant star.

One day, when I was in a certain area, a summoner from the Sultan reached me, so I followed in his footsteps, and was hastened from my unbridling and unsaddling, only to behold the Sultan in all the power of his rank; in all the severity of his forbidding appearance. Thereupon, I greeted him with reverence and extolled his royal authority and kingship.

Then the Sultan said:

Approach, O learned man, for you are a person of high standing, whom others treat with deference.

Then he added:

This old man composed a poem about us, that is neither smooth nor rough, that is expressed in words involving much effort on his part; words that are neither hackneyed nor commonplace, in which he inverted the order of the metra,⁴ and with which he succeeded in breaking the heart and soul of every individual moved by the poem. But the community of our secretaries has remonstrated with him on the subject, to the point that they have vied with one another in reproving him, and in attempting to make him renounce the error of his ways, yet they have accepted you as a decisive judge and definitive arbiter in their disagreement with him.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the old man stood up and repeated his recitation, raising his voice in praise, and declaiming [*wāfir*]:⁵

⁴ See below, n. 5.

⁵ This is one of three strophic *musammaṭ* poems (on which, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 660-662) included in al-Saraqṣṭī's collection of *maqāmāt*. As has been shown by Ignacio Ferrando Frutos, the non-classical meter of this poem superficially appears to be of one kind, when it is actually of another. In the first two strophes, it exhibits the following regular sequence of metra: *mafā'ilun, fa'ūlun, mafā'ilun, fa'ūlun*, which appears to be an inversion of the normal order of metra found in the *ṭawīl*

*Lo, I would sacrifice my very soul
 For a young hero of those people who bring me good fortune
 Who, in every form that glory takes, resembles
 One whose luck is lofty and well-built.*

He is a noble hero; a downpour in times of drought,
 A lion in battle,
 A helper when one is overturned,
Be he near or far.

When he attacks, he is severe,
 You see, in him, the edge of an unerring sword;
 You see his munificence, in the form of cash
*That is received without vain promises.*⁶

Whenever I greet him with praise,
 He awards me a gift:
 How lucky and fortunate am I,
To have won over a full but tender moon!

He is a mere youth, yet a heroic one;
 A sword, yet not a blunt one;
 A heavy rain, and not a drizzle,
That pours down without thundering.

meter (*fa'ūlun, mafā'ilun, fa'ūlun, mafā'ilun*). Then, in the last line of the third and fourth strophes, we encounter for the first time the unexpected sequence *mafā'ilun, fa'ūlun, muḥā'alatun, fa'ūlun*. The metron *muḥā'alatun* is not found in *ṭawīl*, but is instead a variant, but allowable, form of *wāfir*, a shortened form of which may scan *muḥā'alatun, fa'ūlun, muḥā'alatun, fa'ūlun*. After returning to its initial, inverted *ṭawīl* pattern, the poem again repeats this anomaly in the second line of the last strophe (*mafā'ilun, fa'ūlun, muḥā'alatun, fa'ūlun*). Put differently, the author bases his poem overwhelmingly on a variant form of *wāfir*, using the standard form only in three metra. As a result, the poem appears to be in a reversed form of *ṭawīl* when, in fact, it is based on exceptional but permissible metra proper to the meter *wāfir*. To complicate matters further, W (mis)scans the meter as *hazaj (mafā'ilun, mafā'ilun)*. What we have, therefore, is something like the metrical equivalent of a pun of the type known as *tawriyah*, in which the poem appears, on the surface, to be in one meter, but in reality, is in another. See Ignacio Ferrando Frutos, "Andalusī *Musammaṭ*: Some Remarks on its Stanzaic and Metrical Structure," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXX (1999), 78-89.

⁶ I.e., he produces his money on the spot, rather than promising to hand it over at a later date, in order to get out of doing so.

What is hidden within him becomes manifest,
 Like the fragrance of a chastely covered bosom;
 So does his outpouring of gift after gift,
Be it large or small.

He is sweet honey in his qualities,
 Much concerned with noble matters;
 He can neither be declared free of love,
*Nor obsessed with Da'd.*⁷

When Fate is oppressive,
 He prevents it from striking you;
 When you receive his generous gift,
He provides support against all afflictions.

Praise of him spreads his perfume,
 And his favor spreads joy,
 Just as scent is spread by the flower
Of myrtle or sedge.

Lo, how excellent is a young hero
 Whose eminence is increased by his ornaments,
 When sweet love turns to bitter,
According to the vicissitudes of Fortune.

I asked Glory about him but,
 Since it is difficult to define his essence, Glory replied:
 "How can any other people compare with him,
Either in the past or in the future?"

Al-Sā'ib said:

When the speaker came to a halt, I gazed attentively, only to discover that he was our master, Abū Ḥabīb.

So I said to the Sultan:

This man's discourse is indeed eloquent; it belongs to the genre of what is serious, rather than to that of what is frivolous; it penetrates the body to the very joints, and drinks from the limpid water of rocky mountain-hollows; its author is lavish yet selective in the

⁷ A lady's name. I.e., the patron is neither entirely heartless, nor entirely governed by his emotions. Instead, he is a well-balanced individual.

choice of words with which he conveys his meaning; he picks his expressions carefully, digs deeply to find them and, even if it must be admitted that he has deviated in his discourse from the regular meters of Arabic poetry,⁸ thereby exposing himself to serious objections and to severe criticism, he has, all the same, adhered to a single rhyme and rhythm; he has, in fact, ridden over a mountain pass and a rugged area that he is the first to have traversed. Moreover, had he composed these words in mere prose, they would still be worthy of transmission. How can this not be so, when he has made them as sweet as the honey that bees suckle;⁹ as smooth as cloth woven from single strands, or as if they were fertility following upon barrenness? For they are eloquent indeed; they are unique in their skill, pleasing in their creativity, superior in the impression they make, while no one else is able to cross their mountain passes or surmount their difficulties, for their author is a horseman unique among horsemen; the very pupil of a man's eye. As for you, Abū Ḥabīb, why have you rejected the precepts of al-Ḥalīl,¹⁰ neglecting the sound in favor of the defective, and the abundant in favor of the sparse, now that a consensus has been reached, and all individual innovations have ground to a halt?¹¹ What is the reason for this metrical deviation on your part, when you are an outstanding poet? Adhere to the practice adopted by the majority and, for the sake of well established norms, abandon your idiosyncratic meter.¹²

Abū Ḥabīb replied to me:

O Sā'ib, you began by exercising firm control over this subject, but now you are wandering astray!¹³ Of what an erroneous evaluation have I been the victim! How can any thorough investigation

⁸ See n. 4, above.

⁹ Correcting *raṣ'i* to *raḍ'i*.

¹⁰ The grammarian and philologist al-Ḥalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhidī (d. 174/791) derived and systematized the rules of Classical Arabic prosody from his study of pre-Islamic poetry (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 962-964; M7, n. 23, above).

¹¹ That is to say, sixteen meters are acceptable to Classical prosody, and the invention of new meters is not permitted (see *E.I.* 2, I, 667-677).

¹² This is an excellent example of the dim view taken by Classical scholars of any attempt to change the basic pre-established rules of literary composition. But the fact that this view is being promoted by an unreliable narrator raises questions about the author's true opinions on the subject.

¹³ *Wa-'anta l-sā'ibu*. Once again, the speaker is punning on al-Sā'ib's name.

take place when defects and difficulties stand in one's way; when, far beyond what little was recorded by al-Ḥalīl, one prosodic measure after another is to be found, both smooth and rough? There are those who are far greater experts than al-Ḥalīl in this¹⁴ art of prosody, whereas he is far more competent in other arts, for he only considered the usage of the Bedouin Arabs; he only concerned himself with the rules of grammar and *īrāb*;¹⁵ with explaining the irregularities that affect the *watid* and the *sabab*,¹⁶ thereby ignoring the *musammaṭ* genre and the *ḥabab* meter.¹⁷ Why did he not check the *Nūnīyah*¹⁸ of the Wandering King¹⁹ for metrical irregularities?²⁰ What do I care about the broad, well trodden path, when I can compose poetry that pleases and delights; poetry on account of which lightning bolts smile, revealing the flash of their teeth; poetry by which sunsets and sunrises are astonished? Is not my poem in the *ṭawīl* meter, even though a prosodic inversion makes it fail, strictly speaking, to be in normal *ṭawīl*; even though no one can produce an ancient, documented precedent to vouch for its metrical validity, and even though no one can rely upon it?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I replied to him:

¹⁴ Correcting *hādīhi* to *bi-hādīhi*.

¹⁵ The system of grammatical inflections specific to Classical Arabic. These inflections indicate mood in the verb, and case in the noun (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1248-1250).

¹⁶ Units of the Classical Arabic metron. The *watid* is the rhythmic core, and is highly stable. Depending on the meter, it is composed either of a short+long syllable or, more rarely, of a long+short syllable, of which the long syllable is always stressed. The *sabab* is made up of the remaining syllables in the metron, none of which are part of the core. They are placed more rarely before, but normally after the core, depending upon the meter. Containing no stressed syllables, the *sabab* is consequently less stable than the stress-bearing *watid* and, therefore, exhibits numerous variations both in length and in number of syllables (see *E.I.* 2, I, 667-677).

¹⁷ A variation of the meter *mutadārik*, the sixteenth and last meter of the Classical system, which was not included by al-Ḥalīl in his repertory, but was, instead, added later.

¹⁸ A poem of which the rhyme is based on the consonant *nūn* ('n').

¹⁹ Imru' al-Qays, the most famous of the pre-Islamic poets, and composer of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 7, above).

²⁰ The specific poem by Imru' al-Qays, rhymed in *nūn*, and containing metrical irregularities, that is alluded to here, has not been identified.

Speak to your heart's content—so skillful is your argumentation, so solid are your proofs, so original is your disputation, and so sweet to the mouth is the pungency of your salt! Therefore, switch and invert your metra, surpass and charm, profit and gain, for no one can prevail against one such as you; you remain unchallenged and unrestrained; rather, others surrender and defer to you, you are much quoted, and knowledge is acquired from you. As for this high-minded Sultan; he is the only audience you will ever need. Can this not be so, when you possess an intercessor in him, as well as a source of protection? He will assist you against the tyrannical²¹ age in which you live, and favor you with the marks and traces of his presence. All the more so because, in praising him, you have traversed an untrodden path, and governed reins not previously governed, thus bestowing upon him pure, unadulterated honey, previously untasted. How inferior is the known to the unknown, the deflowered woman to the virgin, sobriety to intoxication! Coming up with something new constitutes the very essence of originality, while daybreak clarifies and dispels all doubts.

Al-Sā'ib said:

The Sultan was swayed by my words, and rejected the arguments of those among the old man's detractors who were present, declaring:

The words that have been exchanged between the two of you heal the sick and quench a man's thirst; they exert a permanent influence on one's soul, and are highly specific.

Then he bestowed a large gift upon Abū Ḥabīb and myself, he offered us a clear apology, and manifested the affability of his countenance to us. Once the two of us were alone, away from the Sultan, after we were safely rid of his presence, I said:

Abū Ḥabīb, you have won both precedence in the race, and the stake you bet on it. Therefore, abstain from your morning and evening carousing, and you will enjoy your sugar-candy and ascend the lofty mountain of your eminence. Raise high your banner and pennant, inhale the fragrance of your myrtle and laurel, and use your firestick to strike fire from the wood of a solid, upright tree-trunk, and from your friend and boon companion, your old and

²¹ Correcting *fašūm* to *ḡašūm*.

new acquaintance, for you are well-known, and have been unleashing and launching your attack against Fate for a long time, despite the fact that a man's acts are known in advance, that Fate pursues him, that protection is close at hand, and that many years and periods have gone by.

Then Abū Ḥabīb replied:

Let your loved ones greet you on my behalf, O Sā'ib, and let the gentle zephyr of the east, as well as the moist south winds, visit you, for you have relieved one who was short of breath, you have aided a man suffering from back pain, you have concealed a notorious individual and, in all circumstances, acted as a helper and assistant. How easy it is for you to make things easy, how praiseworthy it is for you to make things difficult, how clear is your explanation, how free is your captive, and how generous is your journeying and traveling in the service of charity. Therefore, take this money, and wait until I return to you.

And he recited [*mutadārik*]:²²

Listen, my friend: By your father, I have been entrusted with your secrets.

My friend, you are as full of hope as you are worthy and deserving of everything.

Therefore, seek to obtain glories, and let dungheaps not deceive you with the false splendor²³ of their vegetation,

And move, with your praise, a generous man, whose emotion moves all of Yemen.

When you complain of one of Fate's hostile acts, note that it is the kings of this age who are your Fate.

Moreover, the value of life is precious; therefore, let neither lean nor prosperous times deceive you.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I asked him:

²² A meter not included by al-Ḥalīl in his repertory. See n. 17, above.

²³ Vowelizing *rayyiq*, as required by the meter, rather than *riq*, which violates it.

Considering that generous men are radically different from you, when do you plan to return? How long will you continue to shake the dust out of your saddle-blankets,²⁴ only to dwell in the company of insolvency and hopeless destitution? Why do you not settle down in a home or establish a family?

Then he motioned to me with his head and said [*mutadārik*]:

How far removed from me is a family or a home when, for whatever reason, its inhabitants are starving.

The earth can provide many homes, as long as one's foot induces one to travel [.].²⁵

Yet beware of people's deceptions, and let their banners not deceive you with their splendor.

Take care lest Time hunt you down, for no nest²⁶ of yours will avail you against [.].²⁷

Then he turned away from me and departed, leaving behind a bittersweet memory of himself.²⁸

²⁴ I.e., "until when will you continue to arrive at your destinations, and never settle down?"

²⁵ Lacuna in the text.

²⁶ Correcting *al-waṭānu* to *al-wakanu*, as is required in order to maintain the bi-consonantal rhyme.

²⁷ Lacuna in the text.

²⁸ This is one of the rare *maqāmahs* in which al-Sā'ib winds up with all the loot. This indicates that the genre is not as predictable as the reader may at first be led to believe.

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

I halted at a certain watering place, after having been sorely tried by an arrogant companion whom pride had puffed up and made conceited, whom Fate had honed and sharpened, making him swallow the choking agonies of his adversity, while reciting the narrative of his misadventures to him; one whom the forces of Time had constantly buffeted and made to rise and fall. Despite this, no misfortune could divert him from his purpose, no emaciation could reduce him to misery, and no reality or illusion could overwhelm him. The road had brought us both together, and the cold blast of exile had enveloped us in its wrap, so that, in him, I was continually having to deal with a coarse individual, I was constantly attempting to move an immovable man, to melt a solid, and to derive light from spent ashes, until I became impatient with him, found his waterhole and pasture unwholesome, and wished I had been provided with someone else in his stead; someone who was better mannered and more suited to be my friend. Then, I suddenly saw a party of travelers who had alighted at the waterhole just as we had alighted, and had withdrawn just as we had withdrawn. Thereupon, I went down to the watering place, goaded on by thirst, but another drinker vied with me in reaching it; one who appeared to be neither shy nor intimidated, for he hastened and rushed to the water, both helping and cooperating with me in drawing it up, and reviving me with bucketful after large bucketful.

So I said:

How excellent is this water you are offering me! May God preserve your home, given the generosity of your diligence! May He water your districts, given the abundance of your raindrops, and your skill in moving and speeding over the ground! Despite its avarice, Time has been generous to you,² for good fortune and security have befriended you. The refreshment your company provides has cured my distress, your peace has calmed my conflict, and your arrow has honed the sharp edges of my sword, ever since I left

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² Vowelizing *jāda bi-ka*, rather than *jādaba-ka*.

my companion, for he is difficult to deal with, whereas you are solicitous of my concerns.

Then the man at the waterhole replied:

How can I deserve your praise, when all precedence and distinction reside with you? Is this not but a duty I owe you, that I am fulfilling, and a good deed toward you, that I am performing? By God, I would like friendship to join us, and harmony to unite us, so that I might do everything possible for you, to the full extent of my ability; so that I might watch out for dangers lurking in the narrow stretches of the land; so that I might tighten the camel's cinch and saddle-rope, saddle it, and face drought and mud under your command. But, were it not that you might think my company is delaying you; were it not that you might rebuke me, and thereby miss my point, I would gladly remain on intimate terms with you, and pitch a shelter for you in this rocky land. And, were it not for my father, over whom I must keep an eye, for I am both imminently expecting to hear the news of his death and hoping he will go to the effort of summoning me before it occurs, I would gladly attach myself to your rope³ and become one of your servants. But perhaps Time will still allow this to happen, and my glance will yet have a chance to look up to, and be directed toward you.

Then, after having promised to return, he left me, while my soul longed for him, and the divinatory bird of hope turned its propitious right side in his direction, for he showed up in front of me once again, after a brief night's rest, coming back once more while, this time, an old man hobbled along in his company. He was an elder from a bygone age, who had lowered his face-veil, was peeping through its aperture, and was uttering words that sounded foreign and were incomprehensible. The old man secretly motioned to me, warmly greeted me, and said:

Acquaintance requires mutual protection. This is my son, whom you have amazed, for his tongue has spent the night sleeplessly invoking you, while it has been said: "Exile establishes a bond of kinship, and virtue establishes a bond of merit between men," there-

³ Vowelizing *tiwali-ka* rather than *tawli-ka*, as the rhyme requires. Strictly speaking, the *tiwal* is a rope tied to the foot of a camel to keep it from wandering too far.

fore, from whence have you come, and where are you going? Perhaps your separation from home can be made to harmonize with ours.

So I replied:

I come from the land of the east, and I am going to that of the west, of wondrous report, and of the remarkable phoenix.⁴ I am going to where kingship is magnificent, honor is resplendant, magnanimity is inexhaustible, sport is serious, glory is widespread, no goal is unattainable; Time smiles, the breeze of prosperity blows, generosity pours forth its gifts, and praise spreads its fragrance; I am going to a ruler⁵ whose robe is ample, whose acts of generosity flow freely, whose disposition is loyal, whose glory is limitless, whose favors are noble, and who boasts freeborn ancestors; I am going to a young man⁶ on whom leadership and command shine, and in whom resoluteness and political ability are transparent; I am going to one, of whose courage the misfortunes and calamities of Fate are terrified, and whose mention songs and orchestras are asked to repeat; to a sovereign who is magnanimous when difficulties incapacitate; to one who is generous when the generous are avaricious; to one who is bold when the feet of the timid stumble.

Then, the old man said:

You have been lavish in your descriptions, you have surpassed all describers in striving to reach your goal and being equitable. Yet what poem in honor of this grand monarch have you composed, since you have so much talent and ability?

I replied:

I am neither used to composing poetry, nor has fortune ever assisted me in doing so; instead, I am relying on the high hopes I arouse, and the good opinion I inspire in the ruler.

The old man replied:

I have come to realize that poetry is the noblest means of gaining

⁴ The '*anqā*' or 'phoenix' was believed to dwell in the wildernesses of Arabia (see *E.I.* 2, I, 509). Yet M36, above, also places it in the Maghreb. Since, in that *maqāmah*, al-Sā'ib clearly saw through al-Sadūsī's deceptive claim to the effect that the phoenix was a western phenomenon, we can only conclude that he is also lying here.

⁵ *Malik*.

⁶ *Ġulām*.

favor; it is the most effective medium for conveying messages, the most impartial mediator, and the most highly regarded benefactor; it sways the intractable man and brings the remote one near. It is a rare gift, truly worthy of kings; a distraction for the lonely and the destitute, while, were I to produce such lines of verse for you, I would smooth the path of your assault by night, and ease your life for you.

So I said:

Produce them! By God, produce them! How well you clarify all doubts!

Then the old man said [*wāfir*]:

O, she-camel, halt and kneel, for the presence of the Prince allows us to dispense with your trotting.

My she-camel's eagerness to travel is postponing the attainment of my hopes, when you, O Prince, are the only leader or guarantor I need,

A dawn that shines forth after a year of gloom resembles your praiseworthy night-travel, O she-camel.

I have lofty ambitions that insist on reaching the Prince's glory, that being the only preference or inclination I need.

In the dew of his generosity, I will most assuredly sip from a full well, whereas thirsty camels sip from mere dregs left in puddles.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I said:

What an excellent poet you are for having thus praised the illustrious! Let your rhyme proceed along its course,⁷ and let its diversions exert their influence!

⁷ The four sections of poetry that follow, below, are all in the same meter (*wāfir*), and all of them end in the same final rhyme-consonant (*-īlī/-ūlī*) found in the previous section, above. This suggests that they are all meant to be part of a single, longer poem. In contrast, the penultimate rhyme-consonant varies from section to section (*-mīlī, -hīlī, -mūlī, -līlī*). Al-Sā'ib is, therefore, asking the old man to continue his poem, which the latter does, thereby displaying his powers of improvisation.

The old man replied:
So be it [*wāfir*]:

This is true royalty, therefore, tarry on its summits, and spare me the need for lamenting over the barren trace of an abandoned encampment.⁸

Here I am, after having traveled toward His Excellency. What a triumph for my hopes have I attained through my traveling!

I have traveled to where the third and second strings of lutes reverberate to humming and to husky voices.

I have strengthened the single strand⁹ of my resolution by doubling it, for helplessness lies in a weak¹⁰ intellect.

Thus, whenever we dismount in a place, it is because its glory is impressive, and restores an emaciated man's last breath of life.

O, eyeshadow of the darkness, be off with your blackening, for it causes the ducts of an eye, blackened with eyeshadow, to flow with tears.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I said:

May your teeth not be broken, and may you abound in supplicants! You have outdone yourself in your poetic composition! If only you would let the rope out farther.¹¹

So he said [*wāfir*]:

How many a sigh has revealed its passion for me, and how many an eye has shed ample tears over my tracks.

Toward the King of Kings do my cares ascend, and toward his court do my howdahs hasten.

I traversed the carpet of the earth's surface, both folded and

⁸ The lament over the abandoned encampment was, conventionally, the opening theme of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*.

⁹ *Sahīl*.

¹⁰ *Sahīl*. The line plays upon two meanings of the word *sahīl*.

¹¹ I.e., "if only you would continue with your rhyme."

outspread, on a sturdy, swift she-camel that trotted at a gentle pace.

O robe of renown, you are the robe I'll wear, when I meet the King, rather than the robe of the long-suffering.¹²

What have we to do with drought, when you are an abundant flow of rain that descends in a deluge or torrential downpour?

From remembering him, the fragrance of my sweet basil and my wine derive, when cool wine¹³ is perfumed with musk and ambergris.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

You are such an expert, and so generous with your words, that you can make the sword-suspensory follow the sword.¹⁴

Then the old man said [*wāfir*]:

O Tāšufīn,¹⁵ the appeal of a freeborn man invites you to accept his love and deep thirst for you.

In you, that appeal is addressed to one endowed with all-consuming glory, whereas all other appeals are addressed to lowly, baseborn men.

What excuse can I offer, when my hopes ascend toward you, for you are a man of majestic proportions?

How can any path lead me astray from him when, in his glory, I have the surest of all guides,

And His Excellency has guaranteed—and it is only right that he should do so—that I should remain under his refreshing shade,

¹² Vowelizing *hamūl*, rather than *humūl*.

¹³ Vowelizing *šamūl*, rather than *šumūl*.

¹⁴ I.e., "you can make further lines of poetry follow these, in a perfectly logical sequence." This is a hint for the improviser to continue.

¹⁵ This *maqāmah* appears to be a means of dedicating the entire collection to the person named above. He is Tāšufīn ibn 'Alī, the third Almoravid ruler to take the title of Amīr al-Muslimīn, who was first appointed governor of al-Andalus in 519/1126, and then deposed in 532/1138. For further details, see "Preliminary Study," n. 110, above.

And that, on his summits, I should be lodged in an impregnable fortress that repels Fate, wearying its eyes?

Then the old man unveiled his face and laughed, saying:

O Abū l-Ġamr, may your desires be fulfilled within your lifetime! Since these verses are the product of my thought, where is my gain from your gratitude, and my profit for having mentioned them? The claim you have on me has caused me to utter them, and my anxiety and concern for your plight have unleashed them. Were it not that the king to whom you are betaking yourself, and upon whom you are lavishing your praise, both in particular and in general, possesses a wide range, a brimming bucket, [. . . .]¹⁶ cisterns, and fair gardens, I would deprive you of nothing, nor demand any reward from you. Nevertheless, my aloeswood has released its fragrance, so where is your gift to me? This is the consolation I can offer you, so where is the gratuity you plan to grant me in return? These are the steps and staircases that will let you ascend toward your goal, so where are this physiognomist's and this sorcerer's wages?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I gazed at him attentively, and lo, he was our master, Abū Ḥabīb, so I said to him:

Welcome to you, dearly beloved friend. Since I offered you my sincere friendship, and generously granted you my faithful allegiance, why did you not dispense with your disguise, granting me the satisfaction, and giving me the pleasure of recognizing you, when you know full well that "all that dwells upon the earth is impermanent?"¹⁷

Abū Ḥabīb said:

That is so, but Fate is miserly, thought is confused, sincere advice is sufficient, love is rewarding, man journeys abroad, bones grow thin, contests are prolonged, travel on highways is restricted, meeting is unlikely, and no one lives forever.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I hurried to catch up with him in order to requite him

¹⁶ Lacuna in the text.

¹⁷ Qur'ān, 55:26.

favorably. I only had one riding beast with me, on which I mounted him, and some leftover traveling-provisions, that I relinquished to him,¹⁸ after which he left me, while thanking me, reminding me of our former ties of friendship, and saying [*mujtatl*]:

How excellent is one who is mindful of our claim, despite the onslaughts of Time.

The noblest of men is the one who is solicitous of you.

Leave dribblets of water to the thirsty, for I have gone down to drink at wells that are full.

Kings are rainclouds, so ask them for herbage,

And, with your praise, approach a generous, heroic man, whose gifts are munificent.

If you should ascend a hill, let it be Yadbūl¹⁹ or Šamām.²⁰

If a generous man summons you, turn your bridle toward him,

But if a miser summons you, by no means respond to him.

Do not tarry among men who only offer you *tumām* grass.²¹

Let your soul remain aloof from them, even if, as a result, you should encounter death.

Generosity is a garden. Therefore, draw near to it, and pluck the petals of its flowers.

¹⁸ If this is so, one is led to wonder how the narrator, who is at a waterhole in the middle of the desert, will manage to leave it with neither camel nor food. Nor is one told what became of the arrogant companion introduced at the beginning of the *maqāmah*. This is another instance of inconsistency that calls the veracity of the narrator into question.

¹⁹ A mountain in Najd, mentioned in pre-Islamic poems, including the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays (see Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* [Bombay, 1893], p. 27, l. 74). The name means 'it grows thin'.

²⁰ A mountain in Najd, in the territory of the tribe of Bāhilah. The name means 'the lofty one' (see *J.G.W.*, II, 288, and *passim*). Thus, the names of the two mountains suggest the idea of height and slenderness.

²¹ *Tumām* grass (on which see M30, n. 29, above) represents what is undesirable or of little value.

You are a generous man, yet you complain both of hunger and of plenty.

Never rely on a sincere friend who considers passion his leader.

Strive to avoid him, as you would avoid poison.

Fear passion, for there is a good reason why one dove mourns for another.

Time destroys the vulture²² just as it causes the swallow to perish.

Death will inevitably appear, either from behind, or from in front of us.

Deficiency will one day be your lot, so how can you hope for perfection?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he left me without returning, whereas I made his sayings the subject of constant repetition and reiteration.

²² In Arabic literature, the vulture or eagle (the same word is used to designate both species) is considered proverbial for its longevity.

Al-Mundir ibn Ḥumām narrated and said:

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām narrated and said:

When middle age made me follow in its course, when I surveyed the towering, spreading sand-dune of my life, when I despaired of being granted a respite, and came to be content with having drunk a first draught to the exclusion of a second, I was spurred forward by my nostalgia, having become aware of the loss of my brethren and of my intimate companions. The master, Abū Ḥabīb, was still my close and sincere friend, even if his travels had taken him far away from me, for he had bequeathed and willed me much learning by experience. Therefore, I began to make inquiries of travelers, and of those who had been away, and to seek information from those returning and coming home, but news of him remained completely veiled,² and his affairs only grew more hidden and concealed from me, until I feared, indeed, that Time had consigned him to the grave and done away with both his vices and his virtues;³ that tombstones had concealed him, or that morning and evening clouds had hidden him, until a man descended upon us, who had set out from Kufa, and who belonged to the *sufi* order, the hair of whose temples had turned white, and whose cheeks pensiveness had furrowed, whom worship and asceticism had inflamed, and whom work and exertion had emaciated, for he did not cease exhorting people to practice piety and virtue, and to adopt no more than what was absolutely necessary and moderately sufficient to sustain life, until he said, in the course of speaking, and as a preamble to his admonitory sermon:

The master, Abū Ḥabīb, that ascetic of ascetics, and witness among witnesses, who is unique in his effort and exertion, informed me that, during one of his journeys, he met a noble youth who was gifted with piety, had withdrawn from worldly affairs, and was endowed with an authority that was respected and obeyed, and Abū Ḥabīb mentioned and described that youth's exemplary life,

¹ This *maqāmah* is not included in D.

² Reading *ig̃tamma* . . . *ig̃timāman*, rather than *i'tamma* . . . *i'sāman*.

³ Literally, "had spilled both his diluted and his pure milk."

up to the moment when the wind of Death blew the young man away.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I waited for him to wind up his sermon, and then went down to drink from his cisterns and pools, for I arose to ask him for further information about the man he had mentioned, and where he was to be found in his comings and goings, to which the *sufi* responded: Yes indeed, at present, he is in the outermost limits of Khorasan,⁴ having renounced both sharp spearheads and the eloquence of his tongue, having embraced both good deeds and beneficence, having drawn near to righteousness, having become attached to it as if bound by ropes and cords, while he has also turned away from, and shunned evil, for Fate has drained and emptied him of wickedness, and he has donned a humble wrap and an ascetic's coarse woolen mantle;⁵ he has definitively repudiated the temptations of this world, withdrawing from, and abandoning it, and he has relinquished such vain pursuits to those who revel in them for, today, he is made of that very generosity for which rain is sought from the clouds. Doves feel safe from him; guidance in coming to agreements, plus profound knowledge, are sought from him; he has donned repentance as his badge, and has come to the realization that the robe of life is nothing but a borrowed garment, for he takes full advantage of the opportunity offered by life, prepares the gear necessary for his final departure, regrets every chance for beneficence he allowed to slip away from him, is grieved over the sins he previously committed and incurred, flees from human beings as one might flee from a lion, and wishes that his soul might part from his body. Through him, God benefits whomsoever He benefits and, through his knowledge, He elevates whomsoever He elevates.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did I quiver like the swordblade of Yemen in my excitement over the *sufi*'s words, as my hopes drove me toward him, while the more I consulted him, the more my heart's passion for Abū Ḥabīb increased, until I said:

⁴ A province in northeast Iran, of which the capital is Mashhad (see M10, n. 9, above).

⁵ The distinctive garment worn by ascetics and *sufis*.

Perhaps, by meeting him, I may rise after having stumbled.

So I determined to journey forth, I strengthened my resolve, and I readied a long-tailed, thoroughbred stallion. Then, I set out, traversing land after land, and crossing their every length and breadth, until I reached the town of Āmul,⁶ and held the meeting with Abū Ḥabīb for which I had hoped, for I found him in his mosque, wrapped in his striped garment, and extolling the greatness and unity of God, bending and contracting his fingers,⁷ and saying:

O my God, my negligence has been great, and my disobedience, extensive; my sins have grown dense, I have spilled my large pail and my bucketful of water, wasted my life in erring ways, and been put off by vain desires and distractions, until old age has restrained me, weariness has tied me down, death has seized me, and rest has fled from me. O my God, I have come back to You, I have uttered rhymes in my invocation of You, and I seek Your reward. O my God, Your favor is lavish and much desired, therefore, make me one of those who do not fail to obtain, and are not distant from, Your mercy.

Then he looked at me and said:

O Sā'ib, I have repented, but have you returned to God?

So I replied:

Such is the way of the faith and of Islām. Greetings and salutations unto you.

Then he said:

An act is judged according to its intention⁸—may you be reward-

⁶ There are two towns by that name. The one intended here is three miles from the left bank of the Oxus (Jayhān). In the Middle Ages, it lay within the province of Khorasan. Until recently, it was in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic with the new name of Charjūy. It is surrounded on all sides by desert, but was of great importance to the caravan trade, because it was the point of intersection for roads connecting Khorasan with Transoxania and Khiwa (see *E.I.* I, I, 459-460).

⁷ In order to keep count of the number of his prayers.

⁸ Allusion to a *ḥadīṭ* that is the basis for a major predestinarian doctrine: Since all human acts are predetermined by the will of God, humans may well intend to perform an act but be prevented from carrying out that intention. Therefore, God rewards or punishes human beings according to their intention, not according to their actual performance of the act. In this sense, it may be said that, in Sunni Islam, and contrary to Christian views, the path to heaven is paved with good intentions, and the path to hell, with bad ones. See *C.I.T.M.*, IV, 380.

ed according to your design and purpose. I am occupied with matters that leave me no time to devote to you. A companion is a misfortune, Death's watchful eye ignores all desires, and we must part, so be off with you to Iraq!⁹ Be on your way, bearing my farewell with you, and let us speak no more! God Himself bears witness that I mourn and yearn for you; that I am passionately fond of meeting you, and that I deeply desire you to remain, but I must disobey both passion and Satan, and reject all ties of friendship and bonds of comradeship, for the more affection increases, the more it becomes necessary to visit the object of one's affection on rare occasions. Friendship is respectable, "every stranger is related to another stranger,"¹⁰ "souls are soldiers,"¹¹ meeting is obstinacy, the best kind of love is that in which souls remain united with the object of their affection, whilst bodies remain separated from those who desire them.¹² Nevertheless, a guest deserves a hospitable meal, while an eyelid deserves slumber.

So he took me to his dwelling, gave me his gift, handed me a loaf of bread and some raisins, and said:

Eat these, my dearly beloved friend.

Then he left me, to pass the night reciting passages from the Qur'ān, and to empty out the conduit of his tears and, once night had melted away with the coming of daybreak, and its locks of hair had flowed over the horizons, he returned to me and said:

This world is merry and gay, and the workings of man are a form of error and heedlessness, for he alternates between traveling

⁹ Among al-Saraquṣṭī's two famous predecessors, al-Hamadānī's (358/969-398/1008) "*Maqāmah* of the Exhortation (*al-wa'zīyah*)," and al-Ḥarīrī's (445/1054-515/1122) "*Maqāmah* of Basra" both take place in the city of Basra, Iraq and, in both of them, the rogue makes a show of repentance, as is the case here. The recommendation to go to Iraq may, therefore, be a veiled intertextual allusion to the two *maqāmahs* written by the author's predecessors, and to the subject of repentance with which they deal.

¹⁰ Quoted from a line by the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays:

O neighbor of ours, we are both strangers here, and every stranger is related to another stranger.

See Imru' al-Qays ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ibn Abī Šanab (Algiers, 1974), p. 410, l. 3.

¹¹ Allusion to the *ḥadīṭ*: "Souls are enlisted soldiers, hence harmony is approved, and disharmony is disapproved, in them." See *C.I.T.M.*, I, 385a.

¹² Reading *adwā'*, rather than *adwār*, as the rhyme requires.

over smooth and rugged terrain, and experiencing fears and sorrows, while one of the factors that has guided me aright, led me forth, and urged me on—since it has been stated that prophethood possesses the attribute of providing authentic dream visions¹³ and, praise be to God, calamity and misfortune have abandoned me—is the fact that, in one of my moments of sleep, and after having abandoned some of my errors, I saw a speaker approach me, while uttering the following words [*ḥaffī*]:

O peaceful sleeper, you are dwelling in an abode in which no living man will ever find eternal life.

No amount of doubting can free you from Time, for even the hardened miser fears Time,

Considering that a robust, sturdy man and a soft, flabby one are all one and the same to Time.

Abū Ḥabīb said:

Then I awoke and paid attention; I restrained and controlled my soul. Soon slumber came back to me, visiting me like a dream-image, as did sleep, flying to me like a spell,¹⁴ and there the ghostly speaker stood, appearing before me, to repeat, confirm, and refine his admonition, as he said [*basīl*]:

O sleeper, whose best interests have been ignored by your own thoughts, return to your senses for, after the evening is over, dawn will arrive.

Where are you going blindly in this world when, before your very eyes, there is a lamp with which to detect the days of Time?

Never be deceived, for this world will not endure: There you have its tombstones, and here you have its open fields and empty spaces.

Abū Ḥabīb said:

So I considered matters carefully; I realized that I was approach-

¹³ Allusion to two *ḥadīṡs* (see “Preliminary Study,” n. 230, above).

¹⁴ Reading *siḥri*, rather than *saḥwi*.

ing the age of one hundred years,¹⁵ and that I had mourned the deaths of my equals and contemporaries. Then, my desire for sleep, along with the eloquent vision I had seen in my slumber, bore down upon me again, for that dream-image appeared before me, and said [*rajaz*]:¹⁶

Hurry up and return to your senses!
And spend a very fearful night.
Perhaps dawn will emerge
From moonless nights.

Weep with flowing tears
Over the departure of a group
Of non-Arabs or of Arabs,
Who are going to drink at the watering-place.

Say to the one who weeps over abandoned traces
In Jāsim¹⁷ or Malal.¹⁸
“Put aside your mention of encampments
Lying between al-Liwā¹⁹ and al-Ajra‘i,²⁰

And remember a Time, now departed,
In which you were²¹ a plunderer,
And a lavish giver,
Of every outstanding, precious gift.”

Those who have vanished are gone for good:
See how suddenly they have died,

¹⁵ Whereas in “*Maqāmah* 43 (Ṭarīf)” the speaker claims, albeit untruthfully, to be over one hundred and twenty years old. There are then, not only inconsistencies within specific *maqāmahs*, but also between one *maqāmah* and another.

¹⁶ The poem that follows is the third strophic *musammaʿ* included in the collection.

¹⁷ The name of a town in Syria, in the province of Jawlān, close to Buṣṣā (*J.G.W.*, I, 333, and *passim*).

¹⁸ The name of a place between Mecca and Medina (see M10, n. 22, above).

¹⁹ The word means ‘a curving edge of sand’, but it also designated a place often mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry, for example, in the *Muʿallaqah* of Imruʾ al-Qays (see Captain F. E. Johnson, *The Seven Poems Suspended in the Temple at Mecca* [Bombay, 1893], p. 2, l. 1). It was identified as a valley in the territory of the Banū Sulaym (*J.G.W.*, I, 81, and *passim*).

²⁰ The word means ‘sandy ground’. As a place, it has not been identified.

²¹ Vowelizing *ḡadawta*, rather than *ḡadawtu*.

And are now reduced to bones and mortal remains?
Oh the horror of that place where men are felled!

Many a king, who once reigned,
 Has traversed that same road.
 Of no use to him, when he perished,
Was the power of a supreme potentate.

Do beware then, of Death
 As if it had already arrived to drink,
 For how often, oh how often, has it previously watered
Its flocks upon these sandy hills!

The nights of Time complain of you
 To the dream-image and phantom of the imagination,
 In my presence, about the youthful behavior,
To which you have devoted yourself, along with your carousing.

You spent those nights in merriment,
 In folly, and in negligence,
 And you did not run calmly,
But in the reins of speed.

You renounce the verses of the Qur'ān
 In favor of the highest and the second strings of lutes,
 While no one can divert you
From the folly of youth, and from stringed instruments,

Since you have persisted, for a long time,
 In disobeying God openly.
 Be amazed at that; be amazed
At the sins you have committed!

You have been deluded, O fool,
 By tender, supple maidens,
 While your sword lies blunted
Before the fates, who aim their spears²² at you.

Why, my dear one,
 Does the thorny tragacanth beguile you,

²² Reading *šurra'i*, rather than *šura'i*.

When before you lies the stuff
Provided by a fertile plain?

You recite the Book,
 Yet think not to repent,
 And bear in mind no blame:
The view of one who is weak and timid!

All your life, you have consistently
 Failed to perform the duty required of you,
 Yet, have you ever seen a wonder
Like unto speeding Death?

It travels by night to terminate lives,
 With a foot whose stride is swift,
 And it enters the racecourse
Like a bald²³ serpent.

Verily, noble youths are impatient;
 They are inclined to satisfy their desires,
 And know no incitement to virtue
Other than a close and very pious friend.

Therefore, choose, among friends,
 One who is humble and compliant,
 Who is generous, but impartial,
So that, when you decide upon a course, he will do the same.

O you, who are just as immune from Death,
 As you are from your enemies,
 Have you ever seen a man far-ranging in his scope
Who has never felt fear, in his lifetime?

One with certitude in his eye appeared,
 The blackness in his heart having disappeared,
 While your hour is at hand,
So gnash your teeth, and gnash them yet again!

How many a powerful, glorious man
 Whom an imperious passion turned tyrannical,

²³ I.e., a particularly venomous serpent, since it is believed that hair falls out due to an accumulation of poison in the head (see W, p. 471, n. 62).

And who paid no heed to him who kept a nightlong vigil,
Eventually spent the night with a humbled cheek.

How excellent is the one who strives hard in the path of faith;
 Who avoids his bed,
 And wears, in sleeplessness,
The robe of piety and godliness.

May he find both pasture and water,
 As well as mercy and eternal life.
 What a victory he will achieve when he encounters
The beauty of those gardens!

Abū Ḥabīb said:

Then God made repentance available to me,²⁴ and perhaps I will bring it to Him when I meet Him. That is why I have parted company with every friend and associate, and come to be in the refuge of this, my prayer niche, associating only with solitude and seclusion, and hoping for success only in my isolation and in my stepping with a heavy tread.

Then, Abū Ḥabīb looked at me attentively and with sympathy, his heart beat and throbbed, and he said to me:

O Sā'ib, do you know how the winner succeeds and the loser fails?

I replied:

Yes. But provide me, nonetheless, with a useful reminder and an argument that speaks on my behalf.

Abū Ḥabīb replied:

Adhere to the standards of the community, and abandon greed; be forbearing and beware of arrogance; this world is a place in which you may dwell in this life, but the next world is the place reserved for your afterlife and, how well suited for, and deserving of it you are! Beware of wicked friends and evil lads, for youth has its tempestuousness, and ignorance leads to a form of disorder that removes veils and reveals immodesty. Among elders, frequent those who steer a virtuous course in the most honorable manner, otherwise you will experience isolation and obscurity; you will shed tears

²⁴ It is a basic Aṣ'ari/Sunni doctrine that every human act is preordained. As a consequence, an individual cannot repent unless God first allows him to do so (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 365-367).

and weep, for “every sheep will be hung by its leg,”²⁵ and there is no anchor of hope in this world. Therefore, make preparations for your religion and your duty, for “this is the parting of the ways between you and me.”²⁶

Then he began his ritual prayers and litanies, and forsook me, just as he had previously forsaken his morning and evening carousing. So I turned away and left him, never ceasing to be informed about him until, while I was traveling in the middle of the road, the announcement of his death and demise reached me,²⁷ as well as the news that earth had been piled over his grave, so that nothing remained of him but the memory of him and of his attributes. Then did I pray for him the Prophet’s prayer for the Negus,²⁸ and said: O my God, bless him, morning and evening, and grant him the bed and mattress of Your mercy.

I frequented his grave, regretting that the moment of his burial and interment had eluded me and, on his tomb, I inscribed some verses of poetry that he had once entrusted to me, while requesting of me:

Perhaps you will inscribe these lines on my tombstone, so that whoever comes to me, early or late, may read them, and perhaps I will encounter a pious man, “and I shall not be, in calling upon my Lord, unprosperous.”²⁹

These are the verses [*basīl*]:

O you who contemplate this tombstone, slow down: Everyone advances toward its like.

²⁵ An Arabic proverb the meaning of which is “every transgressor will be undone by his own transgression.” See *M.A.*, III, 7, no. 2995.

²⁶ Qur’ān, 18:78.

²⁷ The narrator is traveling away from Abū Ḥabīb, from Khorasan to Iraq. In a pre-electronic age, it is difficult to understand how news of Abū Ḥabīb’s death could have caught up with the narrator in the course of his caravan journey. This is an instance of narratorial implausibility.

²⁸ Title of the Christian king of Abyssinia who, around the rise of Islam, received a group of persecuted Muslims who were fleeing Mecca, into his kingdom, where he granted them refuge. According to legend, the Prophet sent him a letter exhorting him to accept Islam, which he did. Upon hearing of his death, the Prophet prayed for his soul (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 862-864). The grotesque parallel being made here, is that al-Sā’ib is also praying for the miscreant Abū Ḥabīb’s soul.

²⁹ Qur’ān, 19:48.

It is an abode in which humble clients, magnificent lords, and misers are all equal.

I have been deposited in its hollow, all by myself, as though I were bound and restrained.

Here I am, beneath the ground, by myself, with nary a helper or assistant.

By God, offer a sincere prayer for me, whereby my confined strength may rise.

I was immoderate, O my Lord, in committing those sins with which You are all too familiar, and of which You are far too well aware.

Therefore, grant me pardon, and be generous in Your mercy, for it is toward You, O my Lord, that we are destined to return.

I remained beside his grave for a week, staying in his neighborhood, going morning and evening to visit him, offering and presenting him a prayer for forgiveness. And, while I was at his grave, a dream-image appeared to me in my sleep, and stayed with me as a guest, assuming a corporeal shape before me,³⁰ and smiling as it gazed upon me, while it said [*basīl*]:

O you who visit me when my sincere and close friends have all shunned me, though the place you visit is remote,

May the Lord of His worshippers compensate you for my loss, for His generosity is ample and universal.

Excellent be he whose friendship is close, but may he whose friendship is blameworthy fail to succeed.

³⁰ The dream-image, as will become clear, is that of Abū Ḥabīb. Let us recall that, according to a *ḥadīth* (see n. 13, above), prophets have the power of appearing in people's dreams and, when they do so, the dreamer may be assured that the vision he experiences is authentic (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 645-649). This being the case, either the narrator is lying, he is deluded, or Abū Ḥabīb has attained the rank of prophethood, which would be a gross contradiction of the Islamic principle that there can be no prophet after Muḥammad. This is another inconsistency in the narrative, leading us to suspect the veracity of the narrator.

By God, halt before a tomb in which a decayed corpse offers itself up in sacrifice for you.

Proclaim God's mercy and the downpour of His generosity: Perhaps it will produce verdant plants

That you will see rising tall around the grave, like the upper shafts of spears brandished by Qays or Tamīm.³¹

Everyone is a hostage in the vicinity of Death, be he an intruder in the larger tribe of humanity, or a pure-blooded member of it.

On the day the fates cling fast to you, no place of refuge, and no amulets will avail you.

Death and misfortune destroyed the tribe of Ṭasm, and there are no members of Jadīs left, and none of Amīm.³²

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

After Abū Ḥabīb's death, I remained with no hope of being granted a respite, I took no pleasure in a second or even a first drink, I became unconcerned by the travel over smooth or rugged ground that had been ordained for me by Fate, seeing that I was a last remaining arrow in the quiver, and a sturdy camel exiled in a waterless desert, while Abū Ḥabīb's dream-image visited me repeatedly and at all times; his *ṭalḥ*³³ and *sayāl*³⁴ trees grew tall and green over me, things known and unknown served to remind me of him, as did recent and old events, while I waited for the predetermined hour of my death, hoping for forgiveness, yet fearing punishment. Perhaps God will reduce the heavy burden of my sins and make Abū Ḥabīb's grave an auspicious place to have visited, for God is Generous, Abounding, Great, and Exalted.

³¹ Two Northern Arab tribes with a reputation for heroism, from the second of which al-Saraqṣṭī claimed descent (for the former, see M14, n. 10, above; for the latter, see M1, n. 12).

³² Three legendary pre-Islamic Arab tribes that became extinct (see *E.I.* 2, X, 359-360).

³³ *Acacia gummifera* (see M30, n. 28; 39, n. 9, above).

³⁴ *Salix Aegyptia* (see M39, n. 10, above).

Colophon

The Imām Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī—may God prolong his glory and incline men’s hearts to honor and exalt him—said:

Here end the *maqāmāt* that we have agreed to divulge in these sessions of ours, which have provided an occasion, for him who would take advantage of it, and an opportunity, for him who would seize it, to do so. These *maqāmāt* have issued from a mind exhausted by its effort, and from a goal neither wished for nor desired by me, but rather, from the darkening of horizons and the concern and apprehension over the passing of life; from the vain departure of words, from the failure of truth to praise those words from the moment it first goes to drink from them to the time it leaves, even if they have only issued—as God be my witness—from a soul that hovers over truth, grazes and freely pastures on the meadow of hope, consistently offers guidance toward righteousness, and constantly proceeds in the direction of repentance while, at the same time, it aims at seriousness in its jesting, and follows the path of earnestness in its joking. In the name of God—may He be exalted—we implore whoever considers and takes note of these words of ours, and strives and aspires to understand them with a critical appraisal, to be judicious and apply allegorical interpretation¹ in his examination of them, to make it his practice and conclusion to judge them favorably, and to realize that the human soul can move from one state to another, can change its condition, and can alternate between truth and falsehood, whereas God, in His excellence, erases its sin, hastens its return to Him, and accepts its repentance.

¹ *Ta’wīl*, i.e., a method introduced by Mu’tazili theologians and adopted by the Šī’i confession, according to which an esoteric or figurative meaning (*bāṭin*) is derived from the exoteric or literal dimensions (*zāhir*) of a text, particularly the Qur’ān (see *E.I.* 2, X, 390-392). The author is, therefore, saying that his *maqāmāt* are not to be taken literally, as an overt recommendation to practice dishonesty, but that a hidden, and more subtle truth is embedded in the text, and should be sought by the reader. For further details, see the “Preliminary Study,” n. 90, and *passim*, above. The closest (though not exactly equivalent) term to *ta’wīl* in English, is ‘allegorical interpretation’.

He is, indeed, the Acceptor of repentance, the Forgiver of sins and misdeeds! There is no Lord but He, and no good but His good—blessed be He—! It is He who is our sufficiency! What a good Manager is He! Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

APPENDIX 1

SUPPLEMENTARY MAQĀMĀT

*Maqāmah 51*¹
(*Rhymed in Hamzah*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

During the age of my youth and development, I was passionately fond of contests in shooting and archery,³ and made frequent attempts to obtain *nab*⁴ and *sarā*⁵ wood; I endured journeys all day and travels all night, I wore the coat of mail of darkness, and I wandered without a guide through unmarked deserts. On one occasion, while I was in an empty wilderness, spotting only slender-necked gazelles or gray⁶ ostriches, while I was far from the shelter of morning or afternoon shadows, remote from encampments and tribal settlements, suddenly a figure like dust swirling in the air, and a voice like that of a lion roaring in the canebrakes became manifest to me, just when I had begun to feel that I was safe from hostility, and that I was rid of my enemies. Yet the chant with which the stranger urged on his camels did not cease to rise, and his call did not cease to ascend, until we came face to face, and were able to distinguish one another's aspect and appearance. Then, he seized the honor of being the first to offer his greeting,⁷ by announcing his wishes for my long life, by ritually offering to sacrifice himself for me, and by requesting that I grant him security from harm and aggression, so I requited him by making my welcome and safe-conduct correspond to, and reciprocate his kind wishes, whereupon he said:

There must be a good reason causing you to travel over this rugged, rocky terrain, and a pressing need making you approach

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 32 in D.

² The *tour de force* in this *maqāmah* is that the final rhyme-consonant is the same throughout, in this case, *hamzah* ('glottal stop'), whereas the penultimate consonants mostly rhyme in couplets (*namā'i*, *rimā'i*, *sarā'a asrā'a*, *zalmā'a*, *yahmā'a*, etc.).

³ Reading *rimā'* with D, rather than *rimāl* with W, since the latter violates the rhyme.

⁴ See M2, n. 12, above.

⁵ A species of tree the wood of which is used for making bows.

⁶ Reading *rabdā'* with D, rather than *raydā'* with W.

⁷ It is an act of politeness for a Muslim to greet another before the latter greets him.

this unexplored, uneven land. Why have you parted company with lush⁸ meadows and dark green *sarḥ* trees?⁹ To what land are you traveling and journeying by night, and what is your purpose in saddling your horse and racing forth on it? Therefore, out with your news to me, and tell me all about your lineage, going all the way back to your ancestors from Muḍar¹⁰ and Sabā',¹¹ for uncertainty about you has penetrated my heart and affected both my liver¹² and its membrane.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I responded to him by aiming an arrow at him, thus interrupting his rash behavior, and his jumping ahead of proper formalities. Then I asked him about his own lineage and origin and, had he not answered me, I would have made my arrows the source of his misfortune and the cause of his being mourned.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then he restrained his improper conduct, relaxed his knit eyebrows, and said:

Please excuse my rudeness, and grant me your loyal protection once more, for he who has many enemies and few friends; he who is abandoned by his patience, and afflicted by misfortunes, is understandably suspicious, even of an oblique wind;¹³ he is niggardly of himself, fearful of going down to drink water at a well, and watchful of the enemy approaching him, be it from land or sky. My father possessed a home and a courtyard, he had kinfolk, as well as strangers from other tribes, in attendance; he was blessed with easy circumstances and wealth, spacious shelters and protective lodgings; his lineage was distinguished,¹⁴ his splendor was lofty, but I was attracted to wine, the purchase of which consumed all my

⁸ Reading *ḡannā'* with Ḍ, rather than *ḡinā'* with W.

⁹ Reading *al-sarḥati l-ḡaynā'* with Ḍ, rather than *al-sardi wa-l-'aynā'* with W. The *sarḥ* is a tall tree without thorns, largely used for shade, that grows in Najd.

¹⁰ The ancestor of the Northern Arab confederation of tribes (see M3, n. 21, above).

¹¹ A legendary people who flourished in Southern Arabia roughly from 800 BC to AD 500 (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 663-665).

¹² In Arab medicine, as in that of the Greeks, the liver was the seat of the passions.

¹³ I.e., a wind blowing from a direction located between two cardinal winds.

¹⁴ Literally, 'his tent was high'.

wealth, so that my companions forsook me, my sincere friends came to loathe me and, inevitably, Fate alighted, my hour of reckoning arrived, evening betrayed me, and rising at dawn and staying up through the evening to carouse destroyed me. No one had any confidence in me, and no forgiveness or postponement of my debt was offered me, so that another son was appointed to lead in my stead, I was expelled from my kinsmen's bosoms and breasts, I was viewed with a dismissive eye, and I was continually glanced at with loathing. Thereupon, honor and pride stirred within me, and I declared:

Death rather than captivity!¹⁵

I thus withdrew to this desert, learning to be satisfied with a mere trifle, in exchange for the loss of loyalty I had experienced; I stretched out on esparto grass, and shunned women with finely chiseled noses, for only a crone followed me; one so aged that her staff could no longer support her; one who was treating the incurable disease of old age, who was suffering from the exhaustion and fatigue of senility, who sought the shade of *arṭā*¹⁶ and *alā*¹⁷ trees, and praised her Lord despite her misfortunes. Often did ghouls speak secretly to her about her final port of call, and converse with her about its riches, for she had worn out life's every mantle and skirt, and left Fate's drinking cups empty. As for me, I associated with lizards and chameleons, and chose to wear sackcloth and a woolen cloak. I thrilled at the howling of the wolf, and never complained of Fate or its adversity. During the late-forenoon, in the desert, I used to hide in wooded areas, befriending broad-breasted ostriches,¹⁸ establishing a brotherhood with the wolf who attacks by surprise, chasing the infant and the young onager,¹⁹ and sneaking up on the biggest and boldest of them, never minding that I lacked

¹⁵ *Sibā'* also means 'buying wine to drink', hence, this is a pun.

¹⁶ A species of tree growing in sandy soil. The oryx takes refuge under it by burrowing at its roots to hide itself therein, and thus protect itself from the inclemencies of the weather.

¹⁷ A species of tree with green foliage and a handsome appearance, under which, according to popular belief, ghouls seek shelter (see *E.I.* 2, II, 1078-1079).

¹⁸ Reading *ṣa'l* with D, rather than *ḏā'n* with W.

¹⁹ Reading *wa-muṭāradatu l-jahšī wa-l-farā'i* with D, rather than *wa-muṭārahati l-firā'i* with W.

enough to eat, and that I had failed to strike a bargain with wealth. I beheld no one who hated me, and I flattered no slave; I was inhibited by no fear and bore no burdens, I encountered no difficulties and minded no distances, I looked upon no great lords as being important and took nothing from the rich, I avenged no grudge and rejected no strangers of unknown ancestry, I camped upon no sun-baked ground, and sought no satisfaction, I walked on no soft, crumbling earth and allowed myself to be led by no mob. Neither did I lurk in the shadows of wooded areas, nor did I travel in the company of indecency, nor did I doff the mantle of high rank,²⁰ nor did I surrender my leadership.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

How excellent are your noble ambition, your firm resolve, your overwhelming enthusiasm, and your proud defense of your honor. How often have you impelled your arrow to a great distance, distributed buckets and pails of water, avoided diseases, forsaken kings,²¹ sought a cure, uncovered what was hidden, spurned what was futile, and rejected mistreatment. Yet how can I escape from this misleading, waterless desert and calamitous place of destruction, never having been acquainted with any misfortune quite like it, since I have been unable to keep any of my traveling provisions or waterskins intact in it? And how could they have lasted when I prepared no protection or defense for them!

Then my host replied:

The well-trodden highway you seek is far away, indeed. How many toils and troubles are in store for you before it can be reached, so come with me to a dwelling place and a sheltering abode, for there you will find *qayṣūm*,²² small palms, along with grazing camels and sheep. Once there, we will drink colostrum and eat red truffles, and your supper will make you discover that you have fallen in with a generous man, while the ties of hospitality will deliver you to a friend.

²⁰ Reading 'alā' with ڤ, rather than *galā'* with W.

²¹ *Al-adwā'*, specifically, a pre-Islamic, Himyarite dynasty of kings whose names all began with the word *ḏū* ('possessor of'), (see M30, n. 13, above).

²² *Qayṣūm ḏakar* ('male *qayṣūm*') is *artemisia abrotanum* or 'southern-wood'; *qayṣūm unṭā* ('female *qayṣūm*') is *santolina*.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I went along with him, traveling up hill and down dale, adding strength to speed, until a new tent and an open yard appeared before us and, suddenly, we beheld an aged crone, like a worn-out waterskin complete with nether spout, who was thin as a staff or a palm thorn.²³ Then my host slaughtered a big-humped she-camel, he carved²⁴ its flesh rare, and he offered me some roasted²⁵ meat, some large bowls filled with stew, as well as milk, melted honey, and plentiful water. Then, when a part²⁶ of the night had gone by, and the moment for sleep had arrived, we heard a murmur and a call that we imagined to be owls responding to one another's echoing cries, but the call continued, the shepherds bethought themselves of wolves, while before us was a man coming by night toward our light, and advancing blindly as he did so.

So I said to the stranger:

Who are you, who visit us during a portion of the night, "returning from whence you have gone?"²⁷

He replied:

I am one whom forking roads have exhausted, and with whom pitch-black night has toyed; one of those whose desires have been circumvented, whose hope for rain the stars have disappointed; one of those who have been torn limb from limb and cut to pieces by exile. Moreover, hunger has overwhelmed me, toil and emaciation have tormented me, therefore, is anyone able to give me a second drink in order to revive the last breath of my life, and to quench my burning, raging thirst, considering that stagnant pools have been stingy to me, and that both my luck and wits have betrayed me?

Al-Sā'ib said:

So my host took pity on the newcomer's distress, felt compassion

²³ Reading *sullā'* with Ḍ, rather than *silā'* with W.

²⁴ Reading *ʾitabaṭa-hā* with Ḍ, rather than *igtabaṭa-hā* with W.

²⁵ Reading *muḍahhab* with Ḍ, rather than *muḥaḍḍab* with W.

²⁶ Reading *hūtā'* with Ḍ, rather than *ahtā'* with W.

²⁷ Allusion to a line of poetry by Mālik ibn Nuwayrah:

Yesterday, we repaid the Banū Šaybān for their loan, returning from whence we had gone, for returning is most admirable.

See *M.A.*, II, 373-374 where the proverb "returning is most admirable" is recorded, and the line of poetry by Mālik is cited in explanation of this proverb.

for his dilapidated state as well as for his courage, and offered him some roast flesh, some hastily boiled meat, and some clarified butter. Then the stranger spent the night filling up on sleep and food, and began to speak and rave to excess, informing us of the news he had come across, and what he had dared do to pure-blooded Arabs, saying:

I have guided myself through the deserts by observing al-Simāk²⁸ and al-ʿAwā,²⁹ and directed myself by observing the equatorial line, although I have often been guided by al-Jawzā,³⁰ and scrutinized minute details. Yet when I came to al-Waʿsā,³¹ and walked proudly over al-Ajārī³² and al-Aḥsā,³³ I alighted at the encampment of a people whose courtyards were empty, and of whom ruin had taken possession, for their opinions had diverged, disagreement and discord had taken control of them, and they were regretting their careless arrogance in having failed to support their chieftain, who was a glorious and heroic man, so that they presently sought to remove all blame from him, and to free him from any stigma and brand of infamy.

Al-Sāʿib said:

Then our Bedouin host trembled, just like an arrow shot with such enormous strength that it oversweeps its target, and he said: Tell me all about those noble, high-ranking chieftains.

Then he squatted on the ground, looked around with a despondent eye, and added:

I am that man who suffered injustice at the hands of his family and brethren, and who was hounded into exile by his paternal uncles and their sons. Therefore, begin by telling me your news all over again, and speak to me about those people's current opinion regarding the matter, as well as how it originally stood with them.

²⁸ Either Arcturus or Spica Virginis (see M31, n. 12, above).

²⁹ Boötes.

³⁰ Gemini.

³¹ A place on the main route of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The name means 'the sandy hillock' (see *J.G.W.*, II, 96, and *passim*).

³² The name means 'the sand-dunes', but the place has not been identified.

³³ There are numerous places with this name, which means 'sandy terrains', in the Arabian Peninsula, including a town in Baḥrayn (*J.G.W.*, I, 109, and *passim*).

Al-Sā'ib said:

So the stranger did not cease, throughout that dark, moonless night, to provide our host with the information he so desired and needed, but sleep overwhelmed me, so that I only overheard a portion of their conversation and only pastured a part of their camels with them. When radiant dawn broke forth, and the earth's expanse became visible, our host arose and walked with a humble demeanor³⁴ in the direction of al-Simāk,³⁵ he mounted the newcomer on a tawny-white she-camel, wrapped him in a mantle and a cloak, dressed him in a turban and a robe, and gave him roasted lizards and kids as provisions for the journey, for the newcomer had loyally promised and sincerely agreed to return to him, by the very certainty of his hope and, in the interim, to explore the outlying areas and regions for him, in exchange for which the stranger was to be the beneficiary, on the part of our host, of the generosity of a gift, and of the kind favor one bestows upon one's closest kin.

My host said to me:

This man is the only guide who knows this desert thoroughly, and he is traveling toward the Banū Ṣaydā',³⁶ so go along with him, and you will be delivered, thus escaping from your wretched plight.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So when the stranger and I were riding over the surface of that vast expanse, and had penetrated deeply into that desert, he removed his veil of innocence, displayed his face of cunning, and said [*ḥafīf*]:

O Abū l-Ġamr, dawn would be evening, if dawn and evening could keep you away from me.

How often does Time deceive the heedless man that you are, who is not disturbed by being neglected and forgotten.

Every day, a promise is made in our favor, against Fate; a promise that a thoroughbred, tawny-white she-camel causes to be kept.

³⁴ Literally, 'with his cheek cleaving to the dust'.

³⁵ See n. 28, above.

³⁶ A clan belonging to the Muḍarite (North Arabian) tribe of Asad (see *E.I.* 2, I, 683-684).

A firm-backed she-camel to cross the desert, and a robe, are enough for an intelligent man, for a freeborn man is ever effective.

How excellent are toil and exertion in obtaining one's daily nourishment if, in the course of them, one's sciatic nerves are not severed.

If a rugged terrain impedes a freeborn man's progress, he shall have smooth ground, and hard, compacted earth, over which he will find it easy to ride.

And when cisterns are niggardly of their water, excavations into sandy soil, where much water collects, shall pour forth their bounty.

Some day, plunder what is fresh, from the Age you live in, for withering will eventually overcome the freshest of fruits.

What survivor, who hangs on, despite Time, has not been affected both by joy and by misery?

Do not be concerned, during the passage of Time, over any people's betrayal of you,³⁷ be they righteous or unrighteous in their patronage.

Seek your daily sustenance both among town and desert dwellers, for only women remain attached to their homes.

So I said:

Abū Ḥabīb, is trickery and deceit to be found in every land, and is a slave-girl and an adulteress³⁸ to be found in every tribe?

Then he said [*mujtattf*]:

Fate involves trickery, deceit, cunning, and malice.

How can any place be deemed narrow, when the earth is broad and spacious?

If cisterns treat you cruelly, before them lie pools,

³⁷ This phrase may also be translated: "... over your betrayal of any people . . ." Hence, it is a pun.

³⁸ Literally, 'a woman with a widely-stretched vulva'.

So know that want, and want alone, is a fate that brings on the evil eye,

Whereas a man's *dirham* is an ornament, a splendor, and a brilliance.

Therefore, let no ascension or resplendancy in man cause you unease,

For polishing will eventually shine the sharp sword, even after much use,

And a man who is incapable of effort, is nothing but a foolish maiden,

Whereas a single, brave man clad in full armor need fear no hostile band of men.³⁹

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, Abū Ḥabīb chose a way and direction along the road, and we traveled up hill and down dale, until we arrived at some encampments and groups of tents, where we alighted at the freshest of waterholes, and the healthiest of climates. Then, Abū Ḥabīb plunged in among those tribes, and left me worn out by exhaustion and fatigue.

³⁹ Reading *min al-rijālī zuhā'u* with D, rather than *min al-raǧā'i dahā'u* with W.

Maqāmah 52¹
(*Rhymed in Bā'*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

I took up residence in Aleppo,³ alternating between life's abundance and the milking of it, plunging into seriousness and sport, and taming every headstrong and difficult steed, as I inhaled the fragrant myrtle of youth, and swaggered through the racecourse of merriment and liveliness, not thinking of any misfortune that might occur, and not knowing how the east or south winds might blow. In this wise, I did not cease to flay skin and hide, and to lavish silver and gold, neither fearing the accidents of Fate, nor bewaring of its misfortunes. Rather, I seized the goals of my hopes by their forelocks, and gained possession of those camels among them that had strayed or been set free,⁴ until Time shot me down with the arrow of its misfortunes, confronted me with its frowning and scowling, snatched away the new, clean garment I was wearing, and replaced my youth with gray hair. Thereupon, I shortened the trailing hem of my robe, turned toward an open road, leaving aside narrow pathways and steep mountain-trails; I shunned rugged and difficult places, I fled from my intimate friends and companions, I suppressed my compliant and friendly disposition, and I began to frequent the circles of secretaries, the assemblies of the learned, and the gatherings of students of the Holy Writ, ridding myself of doubt, and cultivating everyone who had a rare anecdote and a novel tale to tell; seeking the abodes of high rank and station, and imbibing knowledge from them, night and day. Whilst I was looking for a certain prayer-niche, alternating between running and galloping, I

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 33 in D.

² The *tour de force* in this *maqāmah* is that the final rhyme consonant is *bā'* throughout, whereas the penultimate consonants rhyme in couplets (*halabī*, *ḥalabī*, *la'ibī*, *mustaṣ'ibī*, *ṣabābī*, *ṣībābī*, *tanūbu*, *janūbu*, etc.).

³ In northwest Syria. The city was a key point on the major caravan route across Syria to Baghdad (see *E.I.* 2, III, 85-90).

⁴ *Sawā'ib* are grandmother camels, that is, camels that have lived until their offspring have, in turn, borne offspring of their own, when they are set free to pasture at liberty, and not ridden, nor laden with burdens for the remainder of their lives.

suddenly saw the obscure figure of a man on the road and way, like a dark mountain towering in the distance. I left him behind, following me, for I was wary lest he be lying in wait for, and spying on me, hence I continued to keep him at a distance, but he drew near; I continued to desire peace with him, but he sought war, until he was riding alongside and parallel to me,⁵ going in the same direction as I was. Then he said:

Let me not frighten you, but befriend you instead, for I can be an excellent companion and escort if I extend my ties of friendship to you. You will find me with you in all your galloping and trotting, I will help you obtain your reward, I will assist you in reaching your goal, encourage your every effort and desire, and understand the speech of whatever Arabs and non-Arabs you may know. I will also accompany you in your exile, console you in your sorrow, and only ask you for inner sincerity, loyalty of heart, true friendship, and the kind of faithfulness that loved ones have to offer. I have sampled every experience, devoted all my efforts to exile and emigration, associated with many tribes and peoples, and escaped from the hands of Death, but I have never won a friend, or stumbled upon and gained a prudent companion, save after tiresome opposition and permanent distress, despite the fact that I have generously offered the purest and the best in me, both in the midday-mirage and in the wasteland. Yet in doing so, I might as well have caressed the back of a serpent, or joined the palms of my hands together to grasp bubbles. Furthermore, I have never burdened any friend of mine with reproach, but rather, I have always given him ample satisfaction and contentment.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I felt sorry for him, and the brooks and torrents of my friendship flowed in his direction, so we traveled forth together, until we ended up at a prayer-niche toward which people were going in droves and flocks. Then we got ready to enter the narrow mountain pass of exertion and to mount the steed of difficulty, namely night-prayer, until the Mother of Gossamer⁶ drew near to the hour of setting, and people began their worship in different manners and ways.

⁵ Reading *muwākiban* with D, rather than *munākiban* with W.

⁶ An epithet of the sun.

Soon my companion raised his voice and expressed himself clearly in prayer; he was both innovative and astonishing in the words he pronounced, beginning one manner of prayer after another, crying loudly, as he called out to utter everything required and sought of him, until hearts poured out their affection for him, and both the constricted⁷ and the free-flowing she-camel responded to him with the abundance of its milk, so that he won the most intense love of every soul there present, as his voice quavered like that of a boon-companion reeling from drunkenness and thrilling his listeners with his song.⁸ When dawn unveiled its face, and the moment arrived when men's eyes could perceive it, he began to dedicate himself entirely to prayer and lamentation, to acknowledge his sins, and to adopt a contrite attitude; he prepared himself for action,⁹ adjusted the sound of his windpipe, repeated sweet expressions, and voiced his fear of disgrace and punishment. Then, he bowed down in prayer, recited the *Fātiḥah*¹⁰ out loud, manifested humility, and asked for forgiveness, so that everyone viewed him with good will, was drawn to him, and found his recitation pleasant and agreeable. He continued in this wise, prolonging his prostration and his bowing, occupying our hearts and minds, until he withdrew from his prostration and fled, and went either east or west, taking with him the property upon which he had laid his hand. Finally, once the congregation had despaired of his return, and was unable to find him, it surrounded me with a view to robbing me, after having gotten the better of me by force and by combat, and it said:

You are either that man's brother or a relative of his, for you both resemble, and are similar to one other. You are thus answerable for him, since you have been defeated by us despite all your efforts, and all his ties of kinship, both near and far, are connected to you, aside from which, his activity and skill have enjoyed your support.

So I replied:

⁷ I.e., a she-camel the ducts of whose teats are narrow.

⁸ To compare the sound of a man's voice as he prays, with that of a drunkard as he sings, is the height of irreverence.

⁹ Literally, "he struck the shin-bones of his camel (to make it go)."

¹⁰ The first *sūrah* or 'chapter' of the Qur'ān, consisting of a short prayer in praise of God.

By God, I never even knew what his goal or purpose was! I did not even know whether he was a non-Arab or an Arab, save that we were both traveling along a single road that can just as easily bring a man and a dog together, and that can contain help just as easily as it can harbor hostility. In the meantime, here I am, dwelling and residing among you, and loving and cherishing the same friend as you!

Then they said:

A hypocrite and a slanderer can never be one of us, nor can a suspect, about whom we harbor doubts, be considered our friend, and you have aroused our suspicion, therefore, leave this land!

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I departed from them with flowing tears, with a soul bursting with, and disturbed by, grief until, when I arose in the pre-dawn hours, I saw a suspicious character nearby, peeping through the aperture in his veil and examining things in great detail while, at the same time, he was on his guard against, and spying on, people. On his back he bore a load that he could hardly stand up straight to carry, so weighed down by its possession was he. Then I turned toward him, he removed his veil, ceased scrutinizing me, and said [*wāfir*]:

Lo, how excellent is all that God grants, while this daily sustenance of mine has been won by plundering it,

Therefore, plunder whatever you possess, for the Time you live in consists entirely of plundered booty.

Ask Time how much it has oppressed, how much it has ravaged, and how much it has plundered,

Whilst man is a creature whom no fear can turn away from his daily sustenance.

How many a man comes at dawn to a settlement of town-dwellers, concealing a blazing fire within his breast!

How many men have passed away, yet none of them has ever denied the truth declared by a truthful man!

Can skin remain healthy on the body, if it lacks wealth?

So I said:

Abū Ḥabīb, will you never cease your swindling and stealing, and never stop going from Egypt to Aleppo?¹¹ How often have you betrayed me as a friend, and left me to trail the hems of the robe of disgrace!

Then he approached me and said [*mutadārik*]:

O Sā'ib, when will your turn come? Neither Fate nor the times have subdued you.

Always beware of your friends, and let the fact that your neighbor is close by never lull you into being deceived.

How often has an artificial shade of color, or a veil I put on, deceived your understanding,

Whereas a visible mark, or a surname, can betray the identity of your friend to you.

The prudent man is the one who, when the day is done, is mindful of the slightest suspicion,

While wealth is a friend, when friends abandon you, or when a decree of Fate causes you harm.

Fate has dressed wealth in the garments of majesty, so that, through wealth, glory is seen to beget offspring.

Wealth supports glory, just as a heel is supported by its foot,

Although a thoroughbred steed may well attain its goal, it can either have bright blazes on its forehead and pasterns, or scabs and ulcers on its sides.

Whenever you travel over a smooth plain toward your goal, Fate will place rugged mountain-roads in your way,

And whenever you journey along a well-beaten path, steep mountain-passes and narrow roads surely lie behind you.

¹¹ Let us recall that this *maqāmah* begins in Aleppo, from which the narrator has subsequently departed, bound for an unnamed land. In an unexplained manner, he now seems to be back in Aleppo. This appears to be another instance of narratorial inconsistency.

Then he came up to me and said:

Avoid rainless clouds,¹² in preference to the milk of camels,¹³ and you will get your share of all this tribute, for a man like me always hits his target when he aims at it. Therefore, cease your reprimanding, for the time has come for you to run and gallop off.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I left him, and alternated between galloping and trotting, while I felt a loathing for the trickster and impostor that he was, and heaped blame and abuse upon him.

¹² Emending the meaningless *jilāb* (D, W) to *ajlāb*, plural of *jilb* ('a rainless cloud').

¹³ *Ajlāb*, specifically, 'camels being taken to market in order to be sold'.

Maqāmah 53¹
(*Rhymed in Jīm*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

I halted in al-Karaj,³ upset by my distress, with the flame of my lamp extinguished, with my bridling and saddling renounced, having lacked guidance along the road, and having been endlessly exposed to Time's summer heat and burning sun so that, when darkest night had spread its shadow, and I had withdrawn from every insincere and hypocritical friend, I used to take great pleasure in observing the shooting stars, and in becoming familiar with every sparkling, fixed star. Then, when dawn arose, and its brilliant light appeared, I would awake agitated by my cares, with my thoughts in a state of commotion, and my illusions departed and gone.

One night, when sleep had come my way, and plunged me into the sandy stretches and meandering bends of the river of hope, I seemed to see that I was in a raging ocean, and in a torrent of water, into the center of which I had plunged, and in whose jet-black garment I was clothed, until I reached a shore with estuaries for ships to ascend and frontier-ways giving access to the interior, with pleasant pastures and meadows, in which I gathered box-thorn,⁴ picked oxeye⁵ and violets, walked over the pointed iron heels of spears sharp as swords, over broken fragments of glass, over deadly serpents that had been aroused, and scorpions that had been stirred up, yet I felt no fear or distress, neither did I experience any dread or unease, save that I limped forward like one whose soles were sore. In this manner, I went to and fro, lame, exhausted, and with a troubled breast. Suddenly, I heard a voice that alternated between *ramal*⁶ and *hazaj*,⁷ that was emanating from

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 34 in D.

² In this *maqāmah*, the final rhyme consonant is *jīm* throughout, whereas the penultimate consonants rhyme in pairs (*karajī*, *harajī*, *sinājī*, *isrājī*, *nahajīn*, *wahajīn*, *dājī*, *mudājī*, etc.).

³ An ancient town in Iran, located between Hamadhan and Isfahan. Its location is unknown today (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 598).

⁴ Certain trees with thorns, producing an acid, red fruit.

⁵ See M5, n. 8, above.

⁶ The word designates both a poetic meter and a rhythmic mode (see M16, n. 10, above). The latter is intended here.

⁷ This word also designates both a poetic meter and a rhythmic mode (see

a tall, vaulted building, and that was saying [*ḥafīf*]:

O you who have crossed the sea,⁸ slow down, for this meadow has a beauty and fragrance of its own.

Before you lie a meadow and its brooks, therefore, tarry awhile, before taking to the hills.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Why are you in such a state of confusion? Beware of the black and white⁹ male ostrich and of the lame *sim'*.¹⁰ Escape as does one who is successful in obtaining victory, trust in one who addresses you in order to confide a secret, prolong your life step by step, bring no harm upon yourself, and be not seduced by a sweet fragrance, for al-Karaj¹¹ is not your home.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I awoke, tormented by a burning curiosity, torn apart by anxiety, and said:

Some Ma'bad¹² or Surayj¹³ must have sung, and some Šurayh¹⁴ or Jurayj¹⁵ must have called out to me.

When I arose in the morning, I began to look for some passer-by who could interpret the vision within my heart¹⁶ and bring me

M16, n. 10, above) of which the latter is intended here.

⁸ Vowelizing *al-jāzī'u l-ḥiḍamma* with *Ḍ*, rather than *al-jāzī'u l-ḥiḍammu* with *W*.

⁹ Reading *al-aḥraj* with *Ḍ*, rather than *al-aḥraj* with *W*.

¹⁰ A legendary, mongrel beast of prey, said to be the offspring of a she-wolf begotten by a male hyena. It is susceptible to no diseases, hence it does not die a natural death. See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863-1893), IV, 1428c-1429a.

¹¹ See n. 3, above.

¹² Ma'bad ibn Wab̄b was a famous Arabian singer from Medina, who flourished in the first/seventh century, and died in Damascus in 125/743 (see M46, n. 13, above).

¹³ Abū Yahyā 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Surayj (40/660-96/714) was a famous Arabian singer from Mecca (see *E.I.* 2, III, 950).

¹⁴ Abū Umayyah Šurayh ibn al-Hārīt al-Kindī (d. 78/697) was an early Islamic specialist in jurisprudence, who occupied the position of judge in the city of Kufa, and possessed a broad knowledge of poetry and *belles lettres* (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 508-509).

¹⁵ 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Jurayj (80/699-150/767) was a Meccan jurist and a leading figure in his field, in the Ḥijāz of his day (see *E.I.* 2, Supplement, p. 386).

¹⁶ In Arabic, as in Greek medicine before it, the heart was considered to be the seat of the intellect.

joy, or some companion who could travel and journey with me through the darkness of despair. While I was in this state, distracting my soul, yet harboring hope for it; struggling with it, yet gently encouraging it, I suddenly saw al-Sadūsī, swooping down like a falcon from on high, or like an arrow speeding forth, so I said:

Greetings, my dear rescuer, and effective knotter of all ropes, be they long or short; my verdant hope, and opener of every door locked before me.

He replied:

I see that you are in a state of confusion. Has the hot, summer wind of some adverse Fate blasted you, or has some perfume done so? I am of the opinion that the enigma posed by some frightful horror that has reduced you to silence, and the confiding of some matter that has left you unable to speak clearly, have greatly disturbed you, and have made you appeal again and again for help, and I am of the further opinion that the bearing of some burden has aroused your anxiety, and that the barring of some door has thwarted your efforts.

I replied:

Who has informed you of my deepest secret and my most hidden source of trouble?

He answered:

Mine are the very essence and substance of speech, along with clear proofs and demonstrations, therefore, examine and extract information from my mind, and follow your path without deviating from it.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I revealed my vision to him, just as it had occurred, allowing him to grasp its details and particulars, whereupon he said:

The direction your vision took is clear, and its course is distinct. You have plunged into the abyss of Time, donned the years of life, climbed the stairs of knowledge, and reaped anguish from this nether world, until circumstances have eventually led you to a certain place, and allowed you to see the goal of your aspirations, for you have witnessed a clear vision, and wrapped yourself in a resplendent robe. As for the creatures you saw creep along the ground, they are veiled enemies, and enviers who disfigure your reputation, making it ugly. As for the human beings, they are the safety that is

granted to men's hearts, and the freedom from such troubles. As for the male ostrich, it is the doubt that distracts you, plus your wavering suspicion and, as for the one who addressed you, it is a voice that interprets, expounds, clarifies, and explains.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I said:

How excellent you are at getting to the intrinsic rather than wasting time on the extrinsic aspect of matters, and following the roads and pathways of knowledge. Knowledge is adorned by proofs, just as eyebrows are adorned by length and narrowness; eyes, by deep blackness, and cheeks, by dazzling whiteness. You have considered and interpreted my vision by carefully guiding yourself toward the conclusion to which you have arrived, without ceasing to provide brilliant arguments or clear methods. Therefore, will you stay with us, and lodge with us as a guest, so that you may illuminate and bring light to my courtyard, and so that you may bridle and saddle my noble steed?

He replied:

Yes, it is my obligation to stay with you, since you have so noble and swift a steed.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So I presented him with everything that crept on all fours or walked on two; everything that swam or ran, and he filled his guts, stuffed his belly, requested a cup of wine and someone to temper it for him; a boon companion to offer him one drink after another, as well as a singer. Thus, what he had hoped for materialized, his expectations won the favor of my friendship, and he continued thus until we deemed that it was his wine bottles that had felled him to the ground, and that it was his drunkenness that had raised his dust in the air. Then, when the spears of darkness had become entangled, a sound of snorting and braying arose from him, he concealed himself in the dark of night, mounted a tawny, sturdy she-camel, crept away at a shuffling pace toward the women's howdahs, after having stuffed his camel-sack and saddlebag, and filled his leather container and his jewelry box, while I found that he had inscribed on the wall [*ḥafīf*]:

What sea is like the generosity of your raging sea, in lavishing its flowing waters upon my garden?

From beginning to end, your vision has not inhibited me, for one wine bottle has caused me to sip from another.

Moreover, my blame of you is as sharp as the pointed iron heels of spears, which pierce just like those you saw in your vision.

As for the winecup, how bitter is its taste, save that the liquor of joy is sweet.

Dark, deadly serpents made their peace with you, whereas, in the morning, dark eyebrows attacked you.

Therefore, beware of any friend in this age, and fear him as people fear the assault of al-Ḥajjāj.¹⁷

Guard yourself against being betrayed by those people who are wolves in preachers' and holy pilgrims' clothing.

Such trouble has prevailed for a long time among humans, so that whoever continues to be troubled by it is set in his ways.

A noble youth's wealth is a skin that covers him, and it hurts the skin to scrape the scab off a head-wound.

Therefore, don the garment of despair, with regard to finding a sincere friend, and throw your prolonged vain hopes outdoors.

In loving a friend, you will merely go down to drink from the depths of a sea that is salty and bitter to taste.

Every day, al-Sadūsī leads men down the right path with his good advice. If only he were listened to on roads and mountain passes!

¹⁷ Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714) was appointed governor of Iraq by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65/685-86/705). There, al-Ḥajjāj restored order after a revolt against the Umayyads, and ruled the province with an iron fist. As a result, he became proverbial for his severity (see M13, n. 11, above).

On the day of the race, when bets were placed, Tābit¹⁸ flagged and Sulayk¹⁹ faltered, as they ate my dust.

¹⁸ Tābit ibn Jābir ibn Sufyān al-Fahmī, nicknamed Ta'abbaṭa Šarran was a famous pre-Islamic poet, assassin, outlaw, and brigand (see *E.I.* 2, X, 2-3).

¹⁹ Sulayk ibn 'Amr (or 'Umayr) al-Sa'dī was also a pre-Islamic poet, brigand, and assassin (see M47, n. 33).

Maqāmah 54¹
(*Rhymed in Dāl*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

I alighted in Zabīd³ at a time when I was in control of horses and slaves, swaggering about in mantles, sipping from the refreshing drink of a life of luxury, feeling attracted only to maidens, and fond only of squadrons and detachments of cavalry, all the while that I was embarking upon dangerous and difficult enterprises and going down to drink both from pure ponds and inexhaustible wells. At times, I devoted myself to charging on my horse and to hunting fleeing beasts of prey and, at others, to engaging in battle and to lavishing both my earned and my inherited wealth.

Once, I was in an empty desert, assuaging my hunger with *sal'* and colocynth,⁴ in the company of brave and courageous men, intrepid and skilled⁵ at piercing their enemies in war, at girding Indian swords,⁶ and at seeking shelter on the lofty summits provided by the backs of their thoroughbred steeds; men who were concerned only with commemorating glory and discussing Tihāmah or Najd,⁷ and whose interest was aroused only by the length of their sword-suspensories⁸ and by the cleanliness⁹ of their striped mantles; men who were all allies of generosity and avengers of Time's injustice.

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 35 in D.

² In this *maqāmah*, the final rhyme-consonant is *dāl* throughout, whereas the penultimate consonants rhyme variously, in pairs (*zabīda*, '*abīda*, *burūdi*, *barūdi*, *harīda*, *jarīda*, *šidāda*, '*idāda*, etc).

³ A town in Yemen named after a valley in which it was built. It was founded during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 198/813-201/817), (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1183-1184).

⁴ Both are bitter plants. The first term designates several plants as well as a tree. In Yemen, it is identified with the *selanthus quadrangus* as well as the *cacalia sonchiflora*.

⁵ Vowelizing *mujīd* with ʾ, rather than *majīd* with W.

⁶ Proverbial for their excellence.

⁷ Deserts to the southwest and northeast of the Arabian Peninsula respectively, between which lies Mecca (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, X, 481-482; for the latter, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 864-866; cf. M3, n. 4, above).

⁸ To declare that a man's sword-suspensory is long is to imply that he is tall.

⁹ Reading *safwu* with ʾ, rather than *safu* with W.

Al-Sā'ib said:

While we were harvesting and picking the fruit of our mutual conversation, and releasing the unerring arrows and keen lances of our utterances, we suddenly saw a herd of camels and an advance party of scouts, so we declared:

Welcome to the illustrious, the brave, and the courageous.

Then, the newcomers drove the pointed iron heels of their straight lances into the ground, they stretched out hands that were anything but miserly, and asked:

From whence have you strangers appeared, and are you unruly brigands?

We replied:

We are a hunting party, and noble young heroes of impressive strength.

They said:

How would you like some assistance and help, and a lengthy march up hill and down dale? We may well reach a fertile pasture, and achieve our desire, for following behind us is every liberal and generous man from the tribes of Dārim¹⁰ and Sa'd,¹¹ to whom beds are attracted, and for whom mattresses long. It is their custom to travel night and day, while their ally is the polished, curved sword; they are not concerned with picking the fruit of palm trees or with harvesting crops,¹² and they know no fortress or summit other than their own thoroughbred steeds; they suffer no misfortune lying in wait for them, and only traverse the path of glory on the way to their destination; on their hilltop, they maintain a fire that never goes out¹³ and, in order to display their hospitality, they maintain a cistern that does not freeze over; they only sleep upon the thorns of the tragacanth, and only store terror as their traveling equipment. We are the nation of the Arabs, and have no rival, nor can any number or quantity of men surpass us, for our honor is truly

¹⁰ A large subdivision of the North Arabian tribe of Tamīm (see M21, n. 2, above).

¹¹ The name of several Arabian tribes and clans (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 697, 701-703).

¹² I.e., they are camel-breeding nomads, not sedentary agriculturalists.

¹³ To indicate, by night, their presence to strangers whom, being generous, they are anxious to receive as guests.

fortunate, and the protection extended by our shadow is indeed far-ranging.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we accompanied them, repairing to their tentropes and tent-pegs, and we followed them in search of every refuge and place of herbage, until we alighted in the valley of a river, and halted before the most verdant of plants and trees. We continued in this wise, camping on hard, elevated ground, avoiding puddles; racing our noble steeds, and displaying leadership through our courage. Often did we give chase to the hunted ostrich and the pursued oryx herd, becoming attached to those onager colts that got away, and growing fond of those that bolted and gave us the slip, after which we returned to sup on a fat camel-hump and to sleep on a carefully made bed.

Al-Sā'ib said:

One night, after sleeplessness had exhausted our strength, and our beds had felled us, somebody's call awoke us, striking an insistent note, so we listened to the caller's mysterious words, but could not distinguish his obscure form. In the meantime, his voice did not cease to rise and to reverberate, and our suspicion did not cease to sport with, and to treat us seriously, to the point that we became alarmed about the intruder's purpose, and deemed it necessary to get a look at him. So we flew in his direction, frightened and terrified, uneasy and disconcerted, and we asked him:

What is the matter with you, you piercing arrow and clever devil, who have wandered here aimlessly by night, and have emitted an unintelligible sound, much like the chattering of an ape?

He replied:

Calm down, people, calm down, for I conceal no treachery or deceit, and have merely been led to you by your burning fire, your sleeping dogs,¹⁴ your raised banners, the beasts of burden you control, and the fragrance that has guided me toward you. Oh, what an effort have I put into reaching you!

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we offered him the remnants of our traveling-provisions and

¹⁴ Sleeping dogs would make no sound and, therefore, attract no attention. This is another inconsistency in the text.

the leftovers of our generous men, and remained with him, partaking of a conversation whose novelty was anything but boring, and lying in the shade of a friendship whose breadth did not shrink, while he conferred upon us every rare anecdote, and gave us pleasure by means of every way and means, until the radiant asterism¹⁵ dozed off, and sleep¹⁶ cast its cloak over it,¹⁷ whereupon the stranger unfastened the hobble of a noble steed and disappeared from the valley through a mountain-pass, after having wrapped himself in cloak and mantles, after having removed every threadbare and worn-out garment on him so that, when waking caused us to rise, and our beds no longer suited us, we found that he was missing, and suspected his treachery and malice, so we split up into units and individuals to pursue him, and we lavished, upon his cunning,¹⁸ our attempts to reach him, going out of our way to do so. Thus, I did not cease making enquiries throughout the entire surface of the highlands concerning his whereabouts. I was not far from him, however, so that, eventually, the movement of his dimly-perceived figure came within my view, and I heard the neighing of his noble steed. When he became aware of my presence, he put the notch of his arrow to the string of his bow, aimed it at me, and let his gaze wander repeatedly over me, as he clambered up a rocky elevation, declaring:

I see you close to death. Where can you flee to, when my arrow is a piercing one, and its plunder is easily wrested? Therefore, choose the sensible lot of the well-guided man, and avoid the hapless predicament of the man who seeks to win a lost cause.¹⁹ Then he composed poetry, saying [*sarī*]:

¹⁵ I.e., the sun.

¹⁶ Reading *ruqād* with D, rather than *ruqqād* with W.

¹⁷ Note that the intruder originally arrived by night, above, after the group of hunters was already in bed. Now, he keeps them up with his fascinating conversation, till the sun sets. When he arrived, the group had been unable to distinguish his form in the dark. Below, the narrator will see him leave through a mountain pass, again in the dark. These temporal inconsistencies raise questions about the narrator's reliability.

¹⁸ Vowelizing *wa-awsa'nā kayda-hu* with D, rather than *wa-awsa'a-nā kaydu-hu* with W.

¹⁹ Literally, "to find a lost animal."

Fear God, O Sā'ib, in a predicament that spares you the promise of reward, and the threat of punishment!²⁰

By God, were it not for the protection that my nobility offers you, and that restrains my thunder and lightning,

The arrows of Death would not have bypassed you, nor would the marauding lion have done so!

Don't you see that Time, as well as my activities within it, alternate between riding over smooth plains and up rugged mountains?

How many an act of violence, that sheds light on the fate of Tasm and of 'Ād,²¹ have I committed, O Sā'ib,

Yea, how many, oh how many a visit in the dark have I made, like a dream-image granting a love-union and bringing joy.

It is as if you and I, as we meet again, agree upon a date for our next encounter, at the very moment of our meeting.

We meet every day, though no love is lost between us whenever we meet and part.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I was amazed by his violence, I feared²² his weapons,²³ I disliked his stubbornness, and I could not kindle my fire without the benefit of his firesticks, but he prevented me from returning to him.

I said:

²⁰ According to the Mu'tazilī doctrine of *al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id* ('the promise of reward, and the threat of punishment') God has promised to reward good deeds and threatened to punish evil ones on the Day of Judgment, and He will not change His mind. As a corollary, man exercises Free Will, in that he is granted the ability to choose between good and evil, and will be held accountable for his acts. Here, al-Sadūsī is telling al-Sā'ib that he has no choice in the predicament he is in, for he is in the power of al-Sadūsī, and should, therefore, fear God, lest he be shot. Put differently, one man's fate is, paradoxically, another man's choice (for further details, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 783-793).

²¹ Two legendary pre-Islamic peoples who were violently destroyed (for the former, see *E.I.* 2, X, 359-360; for the latter see *E.I.* 2, I, 169).

²² Vowelizing *fariqtu* with Ǧ, rather than *faraqtu* with W.

²³ Vowelizing *'udadi-hi* with Ǧ, rather than *'adadi-hi* with W.

The victim of this murderer will have no one to pay his blood-wit.²⁴

Then he left for Nihāwand,²⁵ having already traversed China and India.²⁶

²⁴ I.e., "I will have no one to avenge my death if he murders me."

²⁵ A major city of the Hamadhan governorate, in the province of Kermanshah, western Iran. It was the scene of a decisive victory of the Arabs over the Persians in 20/641. According to legend, it was founded by Noah (see *E.I.* 2, VIII, 23-24).

²⁶ Since the entire episode takes place in Zabīd, Yemen, from which al-Sadūsī now departs for Nihāwand, Iran, after having arrived from India and China, his travels appear, at best, to be geographically circular, if they are not, at worst, actually skewed. This is another example of narratorial inconsistency.

*Maqāmah 55*¹
(*Rhymed in Nūn*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

I arrived in Ḥarrān³ grieving and thirsting, for my ancestral homelands had mistreated me, the places where my camels parked and those near water, where they rested, had rejected me; the members of my household lay far away, only the greedy and the gluttonous among men approached me; I could only drink from wells with scant water, and only aroused suspicions. Nonetheless, my supply of water was steady, my resolve remained unbroken and unsubmitive, my life was cheerful, my Fate was a wolf, my hope was in its prime, and my vigor was intense. Thus, while I was wandering about like one intoxicated, thinking about my loved ones and friends, I suddenly came across three persons, who swooped down upon me like eagles from Ajā'⁴ or Abān,⁵ who grasped me by the sleeves and said:

O son of a noble fool, would you escape like the slave you are, and disappear into foreign lands, arrogantly refusing to submit? You have now been captured. Far from you are your helpers and supporters,⁶ now that shame and disgrace have overwhelmed you. People of distinction have borne witness against you and, in your case, the hearsay report about your behavior matches the eyewitness account of it. Come before the judge, for he will grant you no respite, and show you no mercy.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then did every devil and demon from among the descendants of

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 36 in D.

² In this *maqāmah*, the final rhyme consonant is *nūn* throughout, whereas the penultimate ones rhyme in pairs (*ḥarrān/ḥarrān*, *awṭānu/a'tānu*, *qatīnu/batīnu*, *zanūnin/zanūnin*, *makīnun/mustakīnun*, etc.).

³ Among the various places bearing this name, the most famous is an ancient city of Mesopotamia, now in southeast Asiatic Turkey, twenty four miles southeast of Urfa (see *E.I.* 2, III, 227-230).

⁴ An Arabian mountain in the territory of the tribe of Ṭayyī' (see *E.I.* 2, I, 203).

⁵ An Arabian mountain in the territory of the tribes of Fazārah and 'Abs (see *J.G.W.*, I, 75, and *passim*).

⁶ The passage in italics is missing from W, but provided in D.

‘Adnān⁷ and Qaḥṭān⁸ surround me, and it was not long before I was hauled into the presence of the local judge, who was a man of high rank and standing. A youth dressed in two tattered garments stepped forward, and said to the judge:

By Him who adorned the two holy sanctuaries⁹ with your justice, and exposed every lie with your veracity, justice will not be served in accordance with the established legal practice of the two ‘Umars,¹⁰ if you do not pass judgment in favor of the ragged speaker that I am. This fellow was a slave of my father’s, born in our household, of slave parents. My father never granted him his freedom or released him from his bondage, but sent him instead, a long time ago, with priceless treasures and precious valuables, to the land of Tabaristan¹¹ and the country of Sijistan,¹² where the slave settled down and took up residence, pitching his tent and remaining in that place. Then, years followed upon years, and “Fate’s uncertainties”¹³ overtook my father, for debts overwhelmed him, and envious eyes exerted their evil influence upon him, so that his wealth came to be depleted¹⁴ save for a small amount with which to pay off a debt; a remnant left in either hand. The old man, my father, was very fond of this slave, he missed him greatly, and constantly grieved and mourned over his loss, for close ties and a deep affection bound him to the slave, and moved my father to feel love and compassion for him. In the interim, my father made us partners in his affairs, thus providing us with a means for our defense.¹⁵

Then, he pointed to a youth like the full moon, and an old man like a twisted, withered date-cluster, and said:

Here you have a witness as convincing as the clarity of dawn,

⁷ Eponymous ancestor of the North Arabian tribes (see *E.I.* 2, I, 210).

⁸ Eponymous ancestor of the South Arabian tribes (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 447-449).

⁹ Mecca and Medina.

¹⁰ A reference to the first two “orthodox” caliphs: Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r. 11/632-13/634), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 109-111) and ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb (r. 13/634-23/644), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, III, 982-984).

¹¹ In present-day Armenia, its capital was Āmul (see *E.I.* 2, X, 18).

¹² An area of Khorasan province in eastern Iran, next to Afghanistan and Beluchistan (see *E.I.* 2, IX, 681-685).

¹³ Allusion to *Qur’ān*, 52:30.

¹⁴ Reading *fa-stanfadat* with Ḍ, rather than *fa-stanfadat* with W.

¹⁵ Literally, “. . . thus preparing a sharp sword and speartip for us.”

and a proof as definitive as an irrefutable argument: Both these men recognize this slave with utter certitude, and can clarify any doubt that may arise.¹⁶

Then the old man said:

I happen to be aware of certain hidden secrets, by God, and can confirm the validity of this accusation, for I know things, both private and public. Thus, I am able to recognize certain beauty marks and moles between the shoulders of the accused, and know that his master used to call him Sa'dān, and often used to say: "This is good pasture, but not as good as *sa'dān*,"¹⁷ out of deep fondness for, and in order to protect, his name, and also because of his long attachment to the man, until matters turned out the way they did. And how swiftly and rapidly does Time go by!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the judge made me join the ranks of the slaves, while I had no way of defending myself, other than to say to him:

O judge, by Him who implemented the judgment of the two arbiters,¹⁸ and preserved the structure of the Pyramids, justice will not be served if you do not further examine my case with restraint and piety, for often does one who cannot explain things clearly attempt to clarify a dispute, thereby turning the victor into the deceived. By God, if only my oath could be accepted, or a guarantor or surety could be made responsible for me! I do not recognize these people, and I am like one who has been placed in his winding sheet, for I am a freeborn man, and a descendant of distinguished,

¹⁶ Literally, ". . . and, with regard to him, can clarify milk by pouring it into a churn in order to remove its cream."

¹⁷ An Arabic proverb (cf. M33, n. 22, above). *Sa'dān* is both the name of a person, and that of a plant considered the best pasture for camels.

¹⁸ *Al-hakamayn*. A reference to Abū Mūsā al-Aṣ'arī (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 695-696) and 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 451). The "orthodox" Caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 35/656-40/661) appointed al-Aṣ'arī as his personal representative, while Mu'āwiyah, then governor of a province and 'Alī's challenger (r. 41/661-60/680), matched al-Aṣ'arī with 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. The two arbiters (*hakamayn*) met and held a public session in Rajab, 38/January, 659, at Aḍruh, on the main caravan route between Medina and Damascus. The resignation of 'Alī on this occasion, paved the way for the accession of the Umayyads to the caliphate (see Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 7th ed. [London, 1961], p. 181; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991], p. 25).

freeborn men, not the offspring of slaves or singing-girls. I descend from a father who is as liberal as the water of rainclouds, and whose lineage is as lofty as a high, mountain meadow, clearer than the brilliance of dawn, and more distinct than a brow upon its head. But exile is one of two forms of captivity, a profession is one of two gifts, one who is restrained by evidence given against him will find himself in deep trouble, and one against whom judgment is passed is bound to comply with the sentence. Whatever can he shield against the injustice of authority, or protect against the trickery of devils?

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, my words grieved and saddened the judge, so that he rode over every kind of ground, be it smooth or rugged, in the course of his investigation, saying to my accuser:

Accept a guarantor for him, or else appoint a guardian to oversee him, thereby sparing him the sorrow of imprisonment and of being forced to associate with riffraff and scum, for I note a distinguished bearing, personality, diction, and eloquence in him, while perhaps he will be "cleverer than you in adducing arguments in his defense,"¹⁹ for freeborn men are often subjected to trials by the wicked.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then I said:

By God, I have no guarantor I can appoint, nor can I rely upon anything after this experience.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Then the young man changed his tactics,²⁰ moderated his attack,²¹ and said to the judge:

My father favored this slave, and was full of compassion and affection for him. I noticed, in times gone by, that my father always hoped he would see him once more, and used to make excuses for

¹⁹ Allusion to a *ḥadīṭ*: "I am only a human being, yet you appeal to me to render a judgment in your litigation. Perhaps some of you will be cleverer than others in adducing arguments in your defense" (*C.I.T.M.*, I, 183a).

²⁰ Literally, "... turned his reins to one side," reading *tanà* with D, rather than *tanà* with W.

²¹ Literally, "... blunted the point of his spear."

his failure to return, saying: "Perhaps the distractions of Time have diverted his attention and, in his predicament, he has wavered between caution and safety, or perhaps he has been deprived of his substance and accident, or perhaps all trace and sight of him have vanished, for I used to know him to be a simple, kind man, and I was unaware of any defect or vice in his character."

The young man turned to me and added:

As for you, my slave, were it not for my need and debt, my eye would visit no evil upon you. Nevertheless, let me share equally with you whatever gold and silver you have in your possession, and let my ownership of you then be as lasting as that of Ḥunayn.²² That way, perhaps God will prevent me from having to sell you for a price and, instead, I will make no further demands upon you,²³ for it is only proper that I should follow my father's kind views, and adopt the gentle methods and norms that were his custom.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So the judge thanked the young man for the course he had decided to follow, he manifested sympathy for the youth's compassion and affection for me, and said to them:

Go with the accused, to his dwelling,²⁴ and take possession of all his belongings, great and small,²⁵ leaving nothing²⁶ behind, and sharing equally with him both what is withered and fragile and what is green and supple for, by God, this youth has lavished his kindness on the accused. We have never before seen a man like this youth who, being in a position of authority, nonetheless performs

²² According to al-Maydānī, a certain Ḥunayn claimed descent from Asad ibn Hāšim ibn 'Abd Manāf. He came to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, grandfather of the Prophet, who was himself the son of Hāšim ibn 'Abd Manāf, wearing two red slippers, and said: "O paternal uncle, I am a son of Asad ibn Hāšim," but 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib rejected his claim, so that he returned home with his slippers. This incident is said to have inspired the following proverb applicable to any person who is a failure and a loser: "He returned with the two slippers of Ḥunayn," i.e., 'he returned empty-handed, without having achieved his mission, having failed, etc' (See *M.A.*, II, 40, no. 1567). The young man is, therefore, saying that if al-Sā'ib will share his property with him, he will agree to renounce his claims against al-Sā'ib.

²³ Literally, ". . . I will surrender your leanness to your fatness."

²⁴ Literally, ". . . to his nest."

²⁵ Literally, ". . . of his fat and his lizard eggs."

²⁶ Literally, ". . . no hem or sleeve."

a kind deed; who, though he mentions the facts of the case, nonetheless shows sympathy; who performs a pious act in such a way that it remains concealed.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we went toward my visible and hidden, my measured and weighed property, which the young man divided up dishonestly, while taking all kinds of liberties, like the spoiled son that he was, all in the presence of a sequestrator, and under the supervision of a trustee deserving and worthy of confidence, toward whom he displayed the face of one much obliged, as he simultaneously manifested the energy of an expert in the field.²⁷ For my part, within my soul could be found what lies in the soul of the cheated, and of him who goes from peace into a fierce battle. Sorrow wrapped me in its mantle, both smooth and rugged terrains became all the same to me, I was about to burst with grief, and could assign no worth to my mind. And, once that incident had occurred, in which I bade farewell to my bundles and belongings, I privately confided to the youth as follows:

By God, I wish you would inform me of the secret of this ignominy, and of who has tied me to this old man with a rope! ²⁸

Then he smiled, and said [*munsariḥ*]:

This Age has tied you to him with a rope. If only you were a man of experience and skill!

It does no injustice to the young, two-year old camel, that this Age should tie him to a stout, robust camel,

For the freeborn man is the one who goes along with the Age, and does not wrap the garments of his reason around ignominy.

Prudence is a fortress whose summit spares you the need of sedentary life, and of filth,

And Fate, whenever it grants a noble youth freedom, makes up for it with defiance and stubbornness.

²⁷ Vowelizing *muftann* with Ḍ, rather than *mufattan* with W, as the rhyme requires.

²⁸ *Qaran* is 'a cord with which a refractory camel is bound to a docile one'.

Fate is endowed with storax²⁹ that deceives human beings, induces stumbling, and causes wounds.

Every day, Fate's piercing arrows, drawn from its leather quiver, strike you down unerringly.

You act as though you are a man over whom my hand has never before gained mastery by means of human trickery, and as though you have never seen me before,

Therefore, do not accost human beings in a careless fashion, but be on the alert whenever you accost them.

Then he departed from me, dragging the halter of his error after him, and deeming his wicked deed to be a virtuous act, whereupon I realized that he was the treacherous master, the grand impostor and liar, the backbreaking scourge of Time, and the marvel of impunity!

²⁹ A fragrant incense obtained from the storax tree (*styrax officinalis*).

Maqāmah 56¹
(*Rhymed in the Order of the Arabic Alphabet*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

When I was middle-aged and mature, I decided to withdraw into seclusion. I closed the pages of *belles lettres*, effaced the traces of their scars, forever rejected the temptations of youth, donned the woolen cloak and coarse garment of repentance,³ and replaced the second and third strings of lutes with second and third invocations of God's name. I attired myself in the coat of mail of darkness, and prolonged my wanderings and the means of satisfying my thirst, with the sign of piety.

Once, when the beauty of dawn was spreading, and the reign of the lamp was ending, I developed an obsession for a certain kind of food⁴ which no amount of sermonizing could eradicate, until staying up at night in prayer overwhelmed me, kneeling and prostration felled me,⁵ and I seemed to see myself in the capital city of Baghdad, where I was rained upon by a cloud producing a fine rain and a drizzle, followed by a heavy downpour that fulfilled all the hopes and desires I harbored within me. Then I arose, as though I were in a hurry, prompted by speed and haste to seek shelter among people of knowledge and justice, and to rely upon men of broad accomplishment. I averted my glances from those favored by fortune, and repaired instead to hermits and men of piety and abstinence, whereupon I was guided to one of their most outstanding and important men; one who was stricken and ailing from overwork, whom I greeted with the greatest respect, and whom I told about my dreams.

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 37 in D.

² In this *maqāmah*, the final rhyme-consonants are arranged alphabetically, in pairs. Since the Arabic alphabet contains twenty-eight consonants, this means that extreme concision is required, resulting in a considerably shorter text than normal. The alphabetical order followed in the prose section is not that in standard use today, but rather: ' , b, t, ṭ, j, ḥ, ḥ, d, ḍ, r, z, ṣ, z, k, l, m, n, s, ḍ, ' , ḡ, f, q, s, š, h, w, (ā), y. This is followed by an eight-line poem with the rhyme -*lmā*.

³ The woolen cloak was the garb of a *sufi* mystic.

⁴ Literally, "... a certain kind of food became firmly lodged within my soul."

⁵ Reading *waqada-nī* with D, rather than *waqada-nī* with W.

He said:

What joyful tidings are yours, my good man! Congratulations for being so graciously favored! Knowledge is either general or specific; it consists of analogies and sources, while your vision is a portent of vast wealth, of fresh hope, of a lofty abode, and of a provider of good fortune who will intercede for you. Therefore, rejoice in an abundant life and in a superior wealth, from which you will obtain everything you need to live, and on which you will lavish your piety and virtue. The truth of this good news, and the authenticity of its sign and portent, require you to strive to be friendly, and to acquaint it with every kind and variety of piety, for the best and most comfortable life is the one that knows how to share its worldly possessions and how to provide others with the necessities of life. A gift is the alms offered by honor, and a true friend is hardly one who would insult, and send one away, empty-handed.

Al-Sā'ib said:

I understood the meaning of his hint, and hastened to give him a *dīnār* of red gold, saying:

Your honesty with me is most deserving, and you would honor and favor me by accepting this coin.

Hardly had I said this, than he unveiled his face, smiled at me, greeted me, and declared [*madīd*]:

Many a meal have we offered others in the form of a dream,⁶
and many a fool have we restrained with our forbearance,

And many an ignorant man, whom a people's appearance has
deceived, when he approached them, thinking that ignorance
was knowledge.

You, O Sā'ib, are a generous friend, who has never come across
a friend among his contemporaries.

You, and others like you, have failed to win the brilliance of
many a disappointing flash of lightning, emitted by smiling
front teeth.

⁶ I.e., 'Many an insubstantial meal have we offered others'. This hemistich may also be interpreted to mean: 'Many a meal have we gathered from another's dream', therefore, it is an amphibology.

Life is merely a phantom of the imagination, and an image seen in dreams, so wrest your life from Su'ād and Salmā.⁷

Such is Fate: both peace and war. Therefore, consider its two alternatives: war and peace.⁸

Fate wounds and heals, for all Time desires is to impose healing and wounding upon a freeborn man.

Fate is most oppressive and unjust; therefore, strive to outdo Fate in injustice and oppression.

⁷ Women's names of the sort often found in Arabic love poetry.

⁸ This line is found only in D.

Maqāmah 57¹
(Also Rhymed in the Order of the Arabic Alphabet)²

Al-Sā'ib ibn Tammām said:

I alighted in al-Abwā',³ at the home of a noble youth descended from the Adwā',⁴ whose lines of descent were indisputably clear, and whose virtues were resplendantly bright, yet whose lineage Time had attacked, and whom the days had lifted and lowered. I confessed all my emotion and grief to him, informing him of the positive and the negative aspects of my case,⁵ but he turned my interest toward the description of swords, and of the pointed iron heels of lances, for he was extremely fond of stories about al-Muhallab⁶ and al-Ḥajjāj,⁷ and of knowing from whence their hot and cold winds blew. He said:

Al-Ḥajjāj was a towering, firmly fixed mountain; a boulder that scattered everything in its path; he was truly endowed with a keen mind and an accurate judgment.

Then the noble youth interrupted his words and emitted them singly and in pairs, saying to me:

O descendant of the *anṣār*,⁸ have you ever heard the story of Ṣaṣār?⁹ The first and second hemistiches of his verses were incom-

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 38 in D.

² As is the case with the previous *maqāmah*, the final rhyme-consonants of this one are also arranged alphabetically, in pairs, and in the same non-standard alphabetical order. The prose section is followed by a seven-line poem rhymed in *-raṣī*.

³ A place on the road from Mecca to Medina (see *E.I.* 2, I, 169).

⁴ Plural of *ḍū* ('possessor of . . .'), and title of those kings of the Ḥimyarite dynasty, whose names began with that word (see M30, n. 13, above).

⁵ Literally, ". . . of the fat and the lean."

⁶ The general al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufrah (7/628-83/702), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 357) governed Basra for Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 649-650) and, in 78/698, he practically exterminated the Azraqis (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, I, 810-811), an extremist Ḥārījite sect, after having struggled against them for nineteen years. He also governed Khorasan and was famous for his heroism.

⁷ Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714), (on whom, see M13, n. 11).

⁸ The Prophet's Medinan supporters (see M12, n. 4).

⁹ The name of a *jinni* who is said to have transmitted the news of the Prophet's appearance to his *protégé*, the soothsayer Ḥanāfir ibn al-Ta'um al-Ḥimyarī who, on the spot, converted to Islam, and who alludes to the incident in the following two lines of poetry:

patible, and eloquence and concision avoided him. He was neither curly nor straight-haired; he was neither fruit nor fodder.¹⁰ The transmitters of poetry rejected him without vouching either for his signified or for his signifier, therefore, avoid such nonsense, and beware of following such examples. Here we have a noble, learned man, a pious hermit, who has divulged culture and the sciences, and healed sores and wounds, who has borrowed the beauty of his truth and the splendor of his eloquence from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan himself,¹¹ and who has sought refuge in God against such tall tales,¹² praying that their transmitter might suffocate and choke to death for mingling the sound with the unsound, and for failing to aim his arrow at the right target. He has further wondered at how any transmitter listening to such a story could have allowed himself to be deceived by its lightning-flash, and at how the truth could not have been obvious to him, so that he had to demean it with falsehood.

Then I replied:

Yes indeed, skill certainly illuminates that man,¹³ and your claim in his favor is convincing, yet who will take me to him, seeing that you have produced such a fascinating description and such a delightful account of him?

Then he led me to a plundering wolf; a seated man of letters who was ready to tear me to pieces, who had unsheathed his sword for the contest, and who said:

Can you familiarize people with similarities and correspon-

Šašār invited me to that which, were I to decline it, I would roast over the live coals of a fearful, blazing fire.

I have been saved, praise the Lord, from every death-kindling danger, on the day it sides with Šāšir.

See W, 511, n. 5; Ḍ, 443, n. 1. Šāšir is a variant form of the name Šašār.

¹⁰ Both these expressions are equivalent to the English "he is neither fish nor fowl."

¹¹ W thinks this is the transmitter of *ḥadīṡ* Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿĪsā (343/954-440/1048) son of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Muqtadir Billāh (295/908-320/932), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, VII, 541-542). Ḍ, in contrast, thinks that this is the far more famous Basran philologist Ibn Durayd (d. 322/934), (on whom, see *E.I.* 2, III, 757-758).

¹² Namely, the legend concerning Šašār.

¹³ Read *ʿalay-hi* with Ḍ, rather than *ʿalay-ka* with W.

ces? Do you have anything written or erased to your name? Is it your purpose or intention to acquire knowledge?

So I replied:

Certainly! Of course it is, nor will I be a burden or a load to you!

He said:

Then you have satisfied¹⁴ your hunger and thirst, and your fragrance and perfume will be sweet.¹⁵

And he recited [*mujtatt*]:

Never disregard my quarrelsomeness, since you have mentioned my deceptiveness.

Do you not observe that asceticism is my condition, my vocation, and my bedding?¹⁶

For I have rejected a Time when the back of a noble steed was my bed.

One day, I am at Sal¹⁷ and another, at Irāš.¹⁸

Ḥudayl¹⁹ preserves my youth by means of Tābit²⁰ and Ḥirāš.²¹

I am a lamp exhausted from long burning, whereas other people are moths.

I am the leading jurist of my Time. If only Time would provide me with someone to bribe me!

¹⁴ Vowelizing *nilta* with D, rather than *niltu* with W.

¹⁵ Vowelizing *ṭibta* with D, rather than *ṭibtu* with W.

¹⁶ *Iftirāš* ('my bedding') can also mean 'the means of my wrongful seizure of property', hence this is a pun.

¹⁷ The name of a place near Medina, of a mountain in the ancestral lands of the tribe of Ḥudayl, and of a place between Najd and the Ḥijāz (see *J.G.W.*, I, 5, and *passim*).

¹⁸ The name of a mountain (see *J.G.W.*, I, 181, and *passim*).

¹⁹ A famous North Arabian tribe (see *E.I.* 2, III, 540-541).

²⁰ Possibly the famous pre-Islamic outlaw poet Tābit ibn Jābir ibn Sufyān, known as Ta'abbāṭa Šarran (see M53, n. 18, above).

²¹ Possibly Ḥuwaylid ibn Murrah, Abū Ḥirāš al-Ḥudalī (d. ca. 15/636), another warrior and outlaw poet (see *E.I.* 2, I, 136).

Maqāmah 58¹

(Also Rhymed in the Order of the Letters of the Arabic Alphabet)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

Weakened³ by exhaustion and fatigue, felled by traveling night and day, and with my strength depleted from climbing and descending, I tarried with a certain tribe. One day, as its men were beginning to bridle and saddle their horses for the hunt, I suddenly saw a noble youth, bright as a torch or a lamp, who was strutting proudly in his striped Bedouin robe and long sword-suspensory.⁴

He said:

Have you seen that arrogant old man who, when he goes down to water, roils its purity, draws up all that remains of it, complains of his need, claims to be a native of Ahwaz,⁵ often encourages generosity, and forbids obstinacy and stubbornness; the one who demeans and degrades himself by begging, who displays profundity and depth in his conversation, of whom riders and mounts complain, to whom gifts and presents are offered; the outlaw of all outlaws and slave⁶ of all slaves, whom no predicament incapacitates, and whom no relationship or undue assumption reduces to poverty? I swear by God that, if I only knew his direction and proximity, I would violate the oath and compact I made with him, and that, even if I had to climb as high as the clouds, and tear my reins to pieces to reach him, I would wreak vengeance upon him, and bring about his death single-handedly.

Al-Sā'ib said:

So we asked him:

O very remarkable sir, and very obedient friend, of whom is this

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 39 in D.

² As is the case with the previous two *maqāmahs*, the final rhyme-consonants of this one are also arranged in pairs, but the alphabetical order followed is different: ' , b, j, d, h, w, z, ḥ, t, y, k, l, m, n, š, ' , f, d, q, r, s, t, ṭ, ḥ, d, z, ġ (plus three lines of verse rhymed in -rūḡī), š (plus five lines of verse rhymed in -nāšī).

³ Reading *radīyati* with D, rather than *radīyati* with W.

⁴ This means that he was very tall.

⁵ A city in southwest Iran, on the Kurun River. It was an important Arab trading center in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD (see *E.I.* 2, I, 305).

⁶ *Mamlūk*, specifically, 'a white slave'.

description? May the storming wind not abandon him for, in you, he has stirred up a vicious, hissing serpent, and imposed the task of coming and going upon you.

The youth said:

The old man of whom I speak crossed my path in Wādī l-‘Aqīq,⁷ simultaneously exhibiting a coarse appearance and a refined tongue. I had a mare possessing honorable qualities and good breeding, mounted on which, I was able to leave other horsemen far behind me, and defeat any enemy who strove to prevail against me. But that cowardly old man averred that he had no food or shelter for the night, and that he could make good use of my mare to hunt over the bare sand dunes, so I came to his rescue, by providing him with one groom to arouse, and another to move the animal forward. Thereupon, he went off to the soft sands and salt flats, and said to the two men:

Have you no sense?⁸ Don’t you know that I am the cleverest of the clever, and the most excellent of those who flee and depart?

Al-Sā’ib said:

The elegance of the youth’s expressions moved me, while his plight deeply offended me, so I journeyed along with him until, suddenly, we beheld a rider with some buckets and vessels in hand, who was avoiding, and evading us, while saying [*mujtatt*]:

O my soul, avoid, elude, and evade your companion,

And be content with the lizards and vessels you have found in the desert.

You are depleted, my sustenance, though I have done as much as possible to avoid your depletion!

Al-Sā’ib said:

So I said:

Abū Ḥabīb?

He replied:

⁷ Between Medina and al-Far‘, the latter lying a four-day journey south of the former (see *J.G.W.*, I, 874, and *passim*).

⁸ Emending Ḍ and W’s *ṭabbāḥ* to *ṭabāḥ*.

No. I am, instead, Abū l-Našnāš.⁹ Don't you see the lizards and snakes¹⁰ I possess?

Then he turned away from me, saying [*ḥafīf*]:

O Abū l-Ġamr, do not blame a needy man whom exile has dubbed Abū l-Našnāš.

Long have I striven, but I have only had luck in hunting lizards and snakes.

My sustenance has been consumed, and my efforts are distressing, but the luck of a noble youth increases as life advances.

In God's name, have you ever seen the like of a freeborn man deceived by the idle words of a drunk?

Leave aside the derivative text, and get to its source, so that you may flout traditional principles.

⁹ A legendary highwayman of al-Saraqustī's tribe of Tamīm, who used to hold up caravans in the company of small bands of Arabs. He was one of those who boasted of highway robbery, and expressed his astonishment at any noble youth who was able to accept poverty when spoils were readily available to the outlaw. He is said to have composed the following lines of verse:

For a noble youth, death is preferable to the passive acceptance of want, or to a patron whose watering places are hovered over.

Even a desolate wasteland against which the sandgrouse wage war, and through which his camels convey Abū Našnāš by night, is preferable to it.

See Abū l-Faraj al-Isbahānī, *Kitāb al-aḡānī* (n. pl., 1868), XI, 45.

¹⁰ Consumed by Bedouins in times of dearth.

Maqāmah 59¹
(*In the Order of the Arabic Alphabet*)²

Al-Sā'ib said:

Opinions and passions made a mockery of me, and happiness and adversity gripped me by turns, until I bade farewell to youth and parted from my loved ones. Then, I went about my business down a certain path, directed by the star that shines in the dark, feeling enthusiasm for hermits and ascetics, traveling at a swift camel-trot in the course of my endeavors, save that, because of my soul's love of glory and prestige, it acquired the disposition of one who oppresses and rejects people. Despite this, I advanced slowly, discovering that I was vain, and proud of my knowledge, until I heard that a preacher had arrived from the land of Ḥijāz;³ one who was gifted with purposefulness and concision, who left good in men's minds and very much improved their souls, as if he had rent their hearts and written lines of right-guidance upon them.

Al-Sā'ib said:

Therefore, I sought him out, I heard him read one verse from the Qur'ān, and comment upon another, and I observed a wonder and a miracle in what he was doing. Then he began to say:

O people, the greatest piety lies in asceticism, as the greatest fragrance lies in musk. Lo, intention is the mainstay of any act, just as an act is an advance scout for hope. Vanity is destructive, the lucky man is the one who seeks to restrain himself and repents, for Satan the deceitful has various kinds of ropes and bonds that capture an intelligent man he has hunted down, and that prevent his escape. Among the most seductive of these, and the most ominous to overcome, is the love of glory and honor, and riding on the mount of carousal and intemperance, which can turn a highland into a lowland, leave a glance lowered in shame, transform obedience into rebellion, and the barren into the pregnant. Therefore,

¹ This *maqāmah* appears as no. 40 in D.

² In this *maqāmah*, the rhyme-consonants of the prose section are arranged in the same order as in the previous one. This is followed by a ten-line poem rhymed in -šāšī.

³ A highland region in northwest Arabia (see *E.I.* 2, III, 362-364).

O friend of Time's days and months, what good will superficial distractions do you?⁴ Despair, O despair of this creation! Otherwise you will suffer misery and harm! Watch out for Death and your final hour, and beware of hatred! How close to your affairs it stands, and how it tarnishes them! Your drink becomes vitiated, and your food, adulterated! Oh woe unto him in whose soul arrogance is well established and firmly rooted, so that he eradicates and deletes piety from his breast! O my Lord, in You do we seek refuge, and from You do we seek shelter!

Al-Sā'ib said:

Thereupon, I marveled at his command of words, at the intensity with which he feared God and safeguarded all things holy, and I said:

This is an ample⁵ form of merit and a gifted⁶ tongue.

I scrutinized him, and lo, he was Abū Ḥabīb, so I asked:

Is this sincere advice or a deception? Is it dew, or a drizzle?

Then he scrutinized me, and recited [*ḥafīf*]:

O Abū l-Ġamr; O light-hearted one: my dew, my downpour, and my drizzle are all yours.

How often does Time lead you far away, decking you in the camel-halter and nose-ring⁷ of its adversity,

When, of old, every sort of brave and active man has attained glory and achieved his hopes!

Among humans, you are of ancient, noble lineage, hence, why do you associate with sparrows?

When the eagle cries out, small birds in their nests are wary of it.

⁴ Vowelizing *mā la-ka* with D, rather than *mālīkun* with W.

⁵ Adopting the manuscript variant *sābiġ* (D, 451, n. a), rather than *šā'ir* with D and W, since the alphabetical sequence requires that the rhyme-consonant be *ġayn*, not *'ayn*, in this position.

⁶ Adopting the manuscript variant *nābiġ* (D, p. 451, n. a), rather than *nā'ir* with D and W, since the alphabetical sequence requires that the rhyme-consonant be *ġayn*, not *'ayn*, in this position.

⁷ Reading *ḥiṣāṣ* with D, rather than *ḥuṣāṣ* with W.

Go along with people according to their wishes, or else, beware of the slender arrows shot by archers.

The man of forbearance and intelligence will go astray among a people whom any fraudulent swindler can deceive.

Thus does Fortune circulate among the creatures of this world, causing some to weep and others to laugh for joy.

As for want, it is forever hovering overhead: at times, over al-Ġazālī⁸ and, at times, over al-Šāšī.⁹

Therefore, let God water the abode of everyone in need, moistening it with a copious downpour of rain!

⁸ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (450/1058-505/1111), the famous Islamic mystic and anti-philosopher (see *E.I.* 2, III, 1038-1041).

⁹ There are several individuals who bore this name, among whom the most famous was Abū Bakr al-Šāšī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥāmid (d. 485/1092), a Šāfi‘ite scholar, who studied in Ghazna, Herat, and Nishapur, and served as one of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī’s instructors. See Ibn al-‘Imād, *Šaḍarat al-dahab fī aḥbār man ḍahab*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā’ūt, et al. (Damascus and Beirut, 1989), V, 365; *E.I.* 2, I, 126b.

APPENDIX 2

AL-MUBARRAD'S "EPISTLE ON POETRY AND PROSE"

*The Epistle of Aḥmad ibn al-Wāṭiq
to Abū l-‘Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Ṭīmālī,
Asking Him Which of the Two Genres of Eloquence, Namely Poetry
or Prose, is Superior, and the Reply of Abū l-‘Abbās to it.*¹

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!

Aḥmad ibn al-Wāṭiq wrote to Abū l-‘Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Ṭīmālī, the grammarian:

May God prolong your duration and make your glory endure. I would like—may God strengthen you—to know which of the two genres of eloquence is the more eloquent: (1) That of poetry, or (2) That of orations, prose discourse, and rhymed prose <and which of the two, in your opinion—may God strengthen you—is more eloquent>.² Inform me about the above subject, may it please God.

Thereupon Abū l-‘Abbās wrote back to him:

May God prolong your duration and make your glory endure. You have asked—may God strengthen you—concerning the two genres of eloquence, namely poetry arranged in regular order, or the irregular discourse of prose, which of the two is worthier of pre-eminence, and more deserving of all-inclusive perfection, while the subject about which you have enquired—may God strengthen you—is one of the problems studied by the intelligent and the learned. All that follows, of which you are the culmination and summit—may God therefore increase, not diminish you, and elevate, not bring you down—is the answer to what you have asked, namely, that it is the duty of eloquence for the signifier to enfold the signi-

¹ Abū l-‘Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Ṭīmālī is al-Mubarrad, the famous eastern philologist. Born in Basra in 210/826, he studied there, and refers repeatedly to the famous Basran Mu‘tazilite, al-Jāḥiẓ, whom he met in person. After 246/860, he settled in Baghdad, where he died in 284/898. He was the leader of the Basran, as opposed to Kufan, school of philologists. His *al-Kāmil* is a major *adab* work. See *E.I.* 2, VII, 279-282. The identity of Aḥmad ibn al-Wāṭiq is unknown, as is that of several other individuals mentioned in the “Epistle.” The Arabic text and a study of this previously untranslated epistle, which provides some background for al-Saraquṣṭī’s “*Maqāmah* 40 (On Poetry and Prose),” may be found in Gustave von Grunebaum, “al-Mubarrad’s Epistle on Poetry and Prose,” *Orientalia* (new series), X:4 (1941), 372-382.

² Redundancy in the original.

fied, for the words to be carefully chosen, and for the composition to be skillful, so that each word will be in harmony with the one that follows, and support its partner; so that what is unclear will be made clear by it, and so that superfluous wording will be omitted from it. If these requirements are met equally, both in the irregular discourse of prose and in the regular discourse called poetry, neither of the two genres is superior to the other. Nevertheless, the composer of regular, poetic discourse is more laudable, insofar as he produces the same product as his opponent, while adding rhythm and rhyme to it, for rhythm causes constraint, and rhyme requires ingenuity. Yet one feature remains common to the two types of composer, that is not part of the requirements mentioned above, which are encountered when one listens to their words, but which must be taken into consideration when they speak, in order to determine which of the two composers exhibits stronger mastery, greater liberality, less effort, and less harshness in speech, so that it may be recognized which of them is pre-eminent, while the eloquent have investigated what is even less significant than this feature. Concerning the above, they have noted that al-Jumāḥī³ delivered an oration which he composed skillfully and expertly, yet he had a gap between his two buck teeth so that he used to whistle when he spoke, hence Zayd ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn⁴ replied to him in words couched in the same rhythm and exhibiting the same excellence in composition as that found in al-Jumāḥī’s speech, save that Zayd surpassed him in oral delivery because he was free of any such defect of whistling. Thus, ‘Abdallāh ibn Mu‘āwiyah ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ja‘far⁵ said [*kāmīl*]:

Its critics were few, and its measure was full, whereby Zayd gained an undeniable pre-eminence over al-Jumāḥī.

Let me provide you with an example of what has been said about the two genres, to clarify what follows for you, may it please God. Al-A‘šā⁶ said [*mutaqārib*]:

³ Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī was an early rhetorician and student of poetry (see *E.I.* 2, III, 927-928).

⁴ He was a great grandson of the Caliph ‘Alī, and died *ca.* 125/743 (see *E.I.* 2, I, 402b).

⁵ He was a great grandnephew of the Caliph ‘Alī (see *E.I.* 2, I, 44, and *passim*).

⁶ A famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a *mu‘allaqah* (see *E.I.* 2, I, 689-690).

Even in summer, she feels as cool as the chill of the bride's girdle, on which saffron has been sprinkled,

And she feels warm on a night so cold that dogs cannot bark, but merely whine.⁷

These words were, at first, accepted and considered beautiful; then it was alleged, to find fault with them, that al-A'šà couched them in two lines of poetry, thereby unduly prolonging his discourse, and that the following words by Ṭarafah⁸ were better [*kāmil*]:

She drives off the cold with her intense warmth, and the strong heat of midsummer, when it arrives, with her coolness.⁹

It was claimed that the above single line was more compact and concise, while fault was found with Ṭarafah's words [*ramal*]:

They are lions of the thicket, for after they have drunk, they bestow every surefooted, fiery steed, as a gift.

Then they depart in the evening, with the redolence of musk on them, wrapping the ground in the fringes of their mantles.¹⁰

Then it was stated: "Such people give gifts only when their minds are befuddled; as for what is truly superior, it is what 'Antarah¹¹ said" [*kāmil*]:

For when I drink, I squander my wealth, while my honor remains intact, unharmed,

And when I am sober, I am not remiss in generosity. My qualities and my generous behavior are exactly what you know them to be.¹²

⁷ Al-A'šà, *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1966), p. 76, ll. 8-9. He was a pre-Islamic poet, and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 43, above).

⁸ A famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 15, above).

⁹ Ṭarafah ibn al-'Abd, *Dīwān*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut, n. d.), p. 53, l. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 55, ll. 5-6.

¹¹ A famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see M30, n. 32, above).

¹² 'Antarah ibn Šaddād, *Dīwān* (Beirut, n. d.), p. 122, ll. 10-11. The passage is from the poet's *Mu'allaqah*.

In this way, ‘Antarah announced that his generosity was constant, and that he did not suffer, while drinking, from what might later besmirk his honor. Then it was said: “It is skillful and beautiful, save that he couched it in two lines of poetry. Surely he did not speak as well as Imru’ al-Qays”¹³ [*tawīl*]:

This is true munificence, this is true beneficence, this is true loyalty, and this is true bounty both when he is sober and when he is drunk.¹⁴

As for words in prose and in verse, let me inform you how their content is expressed, and of the superiority of either over the other, according to the standards prescribed above for composers in either of the two genres. Somebody said to al-Rabīʿ ibn Ḥuṭaym when his pious exertions, his immersion in devotion, his total dedication to fasting, prayer, and the remaining paths that lead toward virtue had been noticed: “You have killed your soul.” He replied: “I seek its rest,” while one of the poets¹⁵ said to his family, on this same subject [*tawīl*]:

I will wish my house to be remote from you, so that you may draw near again; and my eyes will shed tears, so that they may be dried again.¹⁶

He means: “I will go abroad and shed tears which will eventually prolong my stay with, and proximity to you.” Similar to the above are the words of the early poet¹⁷ [*tawīl*]:

Sulaymā says: “If you had stayed, it would have given me joy,” yet she does not know that I am wandering around with the ultimate intention of staying.

This second line is clearer and more lucid than the first. Yet the

¹³ A famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a *muʿallaqah* (see M30, n. 7, above).

¹⁴ Imru’ al-Qays ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ibn Abī Šanab, (Algiers, 1974), p. 248, l. 19.

¹⁵ The ‘Abbāsīd love poet al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf (d. ca. 191/807), (see *E.I.* 2, I, 9-10).

¹⁶ This line is not included in the poet’s *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1965), but see al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil* (Beirut, 1986), I, 263, n. 2, where it is attributed to him.

¹⁷ The pre-Islamic poet ‘Urwah ibn al-Ward (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 1047). See al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, I, 262, where the line given below is attributed to him.

most beautiful and skillful version of this theme that has ever been produced is that found in the words of Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Ṭayyī¹⁸ [*wāfir*]:

O mistress well-versed in lamentation, pray, how many separations have come about in earnest, yet have been the heralds of reunion.

The joy of homecoming touches him alone who has become acquainted with the grief of separation.¹⁹

The above is beautiful and skillful, in contrast to its source, which we have cited before it. Among the statements I will quote, on account of the similarity of their themes, is that of al-Ḥasan: "A man who cannot count a living ancestor between himself and Adam is related to him by death." This is close to what he borrowed from the words of Labīd²⁰ [*tawīl*]:

And if your knowledge does not avail you, take warning; perhaps the fate of former centuries will console you.

For if you cannot find any ancestor since 'Adnān and Ma'add²¹ still alive, let reproachful females restrain you.²²

The words of al-Ḥasan are more concise, while the words of Labīd are more rhythmical, but the first usage of this theme is to be found in the words of Imru' al-Qays²³ [*wāfir*]:

Spare somewhat of your blame, reproachful mistress mine, for my experiences and descent are enough to guide me.

My roots are intertwined with the Root of the Earth, while death snatches my youth from me.²⁴

¹⁸ The famous 'Abbāsīd panegyrist (d. ca. 236/850), (see *E.I.* 2, I, 153-155).

¹⁹ Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ed. Iḥyā al-Ḥawī (Beirut, 1981), p. 353, ll. 3-4.

²⁰ A famous pre-Islamic poet and author of a *mu'allaqah* (see *E.I.* 2, V, 583-584).

²¹ Descendants of Rabī'ah, and ancestors of the Northern Arabs (see *E.I.* 2, V, 894-895).

²² Labīd ibn Rabī'ah al-ʿĀmirī, *Dīwān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Kuwait, 1962), p. 255, ll. 3-4.

²³ See n. 13, above.

²⁴ Imru' al-Qays ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī, *Dīwān*, p. 223, ll. 1-2.

The “Root of the Earth” is Adam—may peace be upon him—while the poet’s words “my descent is enough to guide me” mean “When I trace my descent, I discover that my forefathers and ancestors are all dead, from which I deduce, without a doubt, that I am mortal.” This is a purely Arab way of expressing oneself and—may God strengthen you—it represents a competition among similar and equal members of creation. But if the words of the Prophet—may God bless and save him—were to appear, you would observe that he is clear in every kind of discourse, that he rises above every genre of speech, and triumphs over every form of expression. For this reason, concerning the influence of Time and the passing of lifespans, different statements have been made, all with the same meaning. Thus, the Prophet—may God bless him—said: “[.]”²⁵ Therefore, try to understand the difference between the two forms of speech and the low rank of all such statements in contrast to what the Prophet said—may peace be upon him—even if his words were the goal toward which other speakers aimed. Labīd ibn Rabī‘ah²⁶ said [*kāmil*]:

My lance never softened because the straightener pressed it;
instead, my experiencing of dawns and nightfalls has softened
it.

While still in good health, I have fervently asked my Lord to
heal me, for health is a disease.²⁷

Labīd means: “Today’s health inexorably brings me nearer to the appointed hour of my death,” and similar to that statement are the words of al-Namir ibn Tawlab²⁸ [*tawīl*]:

Lasting health and wealth make the brave young hero happy,
yet how do you think lasting health will act eventually?

The brave young hero suffers a reversal after having stood
upright and enjoyed good health: he collapses when he wants
to rise, and must be carried.²⁹

²⁵ Lacuna in the original.

²⁶ See n. 20, above.

²⁷ Labīd ibn Rabī‘ah al-‘Āmirī, *Dīwān*, p. 371.

²⁸ A ‘Transitional’ poet (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 951-952).

²⁹ Al-Buḥturī, *al-Ḥamāsah*, ed. L. Šayḥū, 2d ed. (Beirut, 1967), pp. 95-96, no. 432.

Al-Ḥumayd ibn Ṭawr³⁰ said [*tawīl*]:

I see that my eyesight has betrayed me after I have enjoyed good health, yet it is enough of a disease to be sound and in good health.

The two faces of Time do not tarry; neither its daytime nor its night, when both seek to reach that for which they have aimed.³¹

On this theme Abū l-Ḥasan said: "A Bedouin was informed: 'So-and-So died in the best of health'. He replied: 'Can one at whose neck lies death be healthy?'" Observe such words containing no superfluity and no lack, whose theme is not overly lengthened or unduly shortened; contemplate their splendor and purity. Abū l-Ḥasan means: "Health is enough of a disease," yet what words could be more full of warning, and what rebuke could be gentler to the heart? Indeed, these words are beyond comparison, and the idea they express is above being encompassed by any other statement. Yet should the subject of the Qur'ān arise, you would observe a thing that is unique, and words that are set apart from all others. Do you not see that God made it the Evidence, the Announcement, the Summoner, and the Proof? Lo, the lamp was placed only before the seeing man who sought light, not before the blind man who had lost his sight. One of the poets³² said, in describing a group of people who knew poetry by heart but did not understand whether or not its composer excelled in any given statement, or enjoyed pre-eminence over the words of many other members of creation <so he said>³³ [*tawīl*]:

They are beasts of burden carrying poems; they have no knowledge of which among those poems is excellent, apart from the knowledge camels might possess.

By your life, the camel does not know, as it bears its loads in

³⁰ An Arabic poet of the seventh century AD (see *E.I.* 2, III, 537).

³¹ Al-Buḥturī, *al-Ḥamāsah*, p. 96, no. 435.

³² He was Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣah, a poet from the end of the eighth century AD (see *E.I.* 2, VI, 625-626).

³³ Redundancy in the original.

the morning or in the evening, what is inside the sacks of grain it carries.³⁴

How different is the above from the words of God—may He be exalted—"Verily those who have been laden with the Torah, but then failed to bear it, are like the example of the donkey laden with books."³⁵ Al-Ḥansā'³⁶ said, while mourning for her brother Ṣaḥr [*wāfir*]:

Were it not for the abundance of those who bewail their brothers around me, I would have killed myself from grief,

Yet none of them weep for anyone as remarkable as my brother, despite which, I console myself for the loss of him by adopting resignation.³⁷

God—may He be glorified and exalted—said to the polytheists: "It will be of no avail to you, on the Day of Judgment, if you have committed an injustice, that you will be partners in punishment."³⁸ In his epoch, Ardašīr ibn Bābak³⁹ declared: "The Ancients among us used to say: 'Killing decreases killing'." He meant: "When a murderer is killed, another is shielded from exposure to being murdered," while such words are better than others similar to them. But when [God's] words—may He be exalted and glorified—appeared: "And for you, in the law of equality, there is life, O men of understanding,"⁴⁰ there appeared that against which there can be no objection, and of which there can be no imitation, while His words "O men of understanding" constitute a second artistic excellence. Let us, therefore, bless God Who has no equal.

³⁴ See al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, II, 1037.

³⁵ Qur'ān, 62:5.

³⁶ She lived from ca. AD 575 to 24/645, and is famous for the elegies she composed on the death of her two brothers (see *E.I.* 2, IV, 1027).

³⁷ See al-Ḥansā', *Dīwān*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut, n. d.), pp. 74-75, ll. 9, 12.

³⁸ Qur'ān, 43:39.

³⁹ A Sāsānid emperor (see *E.I.* 2, I, 626; VIII, 70-83).

⁴⁰ Qur'ān, 2:179.

*The epistle is recorded in the handwriting of
 'Alī ibn Hilāl
who praises God—may He be exalted—for His favors,
 and calls down blessings
on His Prophet Muḥammad,
 and upon the latter's
 family.*

APPENDIX 3

ARABIC BIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS
ABOUT AL-SARAQUSṬĪ

And I recited, by the *littérateur* Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Aškūrī [*sic*],² so named after a village of his in the province of Zaragoza [*basīl*]:

O branch, whose dew causes it to quiver; whose poise prevents it from swaying,

Youth does not sway your flanks, nor does pride incline your neck toward it.

Passion has deceived you about our union, so contend with passion and avoidance.

Every careworn person but you has become enamoured, lacking in stature, madly in love.

How many a lofty hilltop of glory have you won while you are yet a youth,

And how many a trenchant utterance about generosity have you emitted, since you are a just guarantor

Who awes with his splendor, is glorious in his rank, escapes with his sword, and surpasses in his generosity.

From it comes:

If you encounter him, he is all of mankind in one, although he is singular and unique.

I will give encomium its full share of you; a share that Time will preserve, so that it does not perish.

¹ Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Bassām al-Šantarīnī, *al-Daḥīrah fī maḥāsīn ahl al-Jazīrah*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1979), part 3, II, 909-912. Ibn Bassām fled Santarem when it was taken by Alfonso V of Castile, and went to Córdoba in 493/1100. Later, in Seville, he compiled his *al-Daḥīrah*. He died in 543/1147. He wrote largely about his contemporaries, but on many occasions, he goes as far back as the beginning of the eleventh century. See *E.I.* 2, III, 734.

² One MS records the form al-Aškādīrī.

From another poem of his, in which he addresses Raḡ al-Dawlah ibn Ṣumādiḥ,³ comes [*tawīl*]:

Lo, you who convey greetings from me to al-Raḡ, as the perfumed breeze awakens the garden,

I lacked a messenger to convey my greetings to him, hence passion and longing carried them on my behalf,

While a disturbing love reminded me of him, time and again, as an agèd wine causes one to take one draught after another.

Hence, would that I knew whether a single thought of his will turn my way, and if a single word of mine will convey remembrance of me.

I fear lest a secret enemy become palatable, and I am wary of the deceit of public enemies, and much concerned.

You are not the one who sunders the bonds of love, and you are not the one by whom one is tested and worn out.

And he composed, to thank him for a favor he had done for one of the sons of al-Rāḡī, Yazīd ibn al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbād [*tawīl*]:⁴

Toward you, Raḡ al-Mulk, are praises directed, and because of your name do places of martyrdom become eminent with the passing of Time.

You have traversed an initial path in generous acts; yours is the excellence, O leader and guide who traverse it.

And you have unsheathed, in front of glory, a sharp sword of generosity; how excellent is the defender and protector of the sanctuary of glory.

³ Abū Yahyà Raḡ al-Dawlah was a son of al-Mu'taṣim ibn Ṣumādiḥ, king of Almería. The latter reigned from 443/1051 to 484/1091 (See *E.I.* 2, VII, 775-776). His son was a poet in his own right. For examples of his poetry, see al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, *Maṭmah al-anfus wa-masrah al-ta'annus fī mulah ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣawābikah (Beirut, 1983), pp. 222-225.

⁴ Al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbād, the poet-king of Seville, was born in Beja in 432/1040, ascended the throne in 461/1058 and, after being deposed by the Almoravids in 484/1091, he died in Aghmat, in 487/1095. His sons did not reign (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 766-768).

You relate to the raincloud, whose downpour is universal; before your generosity, he who is absent and he who is present are equal.

Because of you, the generous acts of others become jealous, for whenever you perform such acts, they return as profits, by reason of your abundance.

The wonders of your glory cause every individual to speak, for you are singular, unique in creation.

And when you saw that conquest was a garden for dominion, a ripe fruit in it withered, and its wells dried up.

So sweet were the waterholes of that garden, that a wanderer halted, and a scout pitched his tent in them.

He was given to drink from a great bucket holding the fresh, cool water of your favor, and was rained upon by one of your generous clouds,

For he found that the bough of his life was succulent and leafy; that the sides of the branch of his youth were pliantly swaying.

And Fate brought peace back to him, after many a stubborn enemy, brought on by Fate, had waged war against him!

He was an offspring of glory whose rope Fate had severed, but one far more glorious joined his rope together again.

Your father is Ibn Ma'n,⁵ and al-Mu'ayyad⁶ is his grandfather; a heroic grandfather and a father have elevated both of you.

You have given generously of your kindness and conferred honor with your munificence, hence, in me, a grateful one praises and salutes you.

I am a guarantor, and my rhymes are the guarantee for a gratitude that poems offer to Time,

⁵ Ibn Ma'n is al-Mu'taṣim ibn Ṣumādiḥ, king of Almería (r. 443/1051-484/1091), (see *E.I.* 2, VII, 775-776).

⁶ Al-Mu'ayyad is Hišām II, Umayyad Caliph of Córdoba (r. between 365/976 and 399/1009, and again between 400/1010 and 403/1013), (see *E.I.* 2, III, 495-496).

Hence, while glory takes pride in you despite the passing of the days, remain with your luck intact and your fortune on the rise.

He composed a long poem, in which he addressed al-Raḥī from Granada, while he was on the road, the beginning of which goes [*tawīl*]:

Lo, have my greetings reached al-Raḥī, as a seal is broken to release fragrant musk?

And has eulogy visited him on my behalf, as his wine intoxicates the flank of Time?

May God's peace be with you: As for my longing, it is felt in sorrow; as for my tears, they flow in a stream.

Just as a sword trembles on the day it fears you, I have been familiar with you and generosity, through my remembrance of you as an intimate friend.

And my inclinations turn me toward you, just as a lover becomes used to ardor and desire.

Your loftiness keeps me company in every town, as if my moving about in the country were a state of being settled,

And if I stray during my night travels, you raise for me your domes and tents that tower above al-Suhà.⁷

You wage war against princes and eminent rulers who erected them at the beginning of time.

Hardly had they heard you mentioned, when my riding camels yearned, and I too was made to yearn by the longing and lowing with which they crossed the desert.

For they arch their necks like bows, while we, in our determination to travel through the land, are arrows.

I give them the hope that your eminence lies ahead of them, so they will abandon the fragrant *marw*⁸ growing on rugged

⁷ A very dim star in Ursa Major, that is hard to see, and was, therefore, considered a symbol of the unattainable (see M31, n. 20, above).

⁸ *Silex* or *marum*, an aromatic plant favored by camels (see M47, n. 6, above).

ground, and find it foul-smelling in comparison with you.

Has it reached them that your abodes are far away, and that what lies behind is followed by what lies ahead?

So I said to them, when the pain in their footpads had hurt them, and their withers and humps had been obliterated:

“When you set down your camel-saddle before Ibn Ṣumādih, night-travel will be forbidden to you; yes, prohibited.”

Who will avail my riding camels, so that they may kneel beneath his protective shadow, for him to remove their halters and their reins?

And who will avail me, so that I may find myself in the garden of his protection, where clouds pour down the rainflow of his generosity,

So that I may graze on the sides of the great *sarḥah*⁹ of his generosity, on which doves sing magnanimous deeds,

And so that I may remove the veil from a bright face showing affection, just as the veil is removed from the face of dawn?

These are water holes in which excellence has loosened its waist wrapper, and its rule has joined loftiness to glory.

Greetings to such virtues, whenever mention and greetings are echoed among mankind.

He also composed the following, in imitation of Abū l-Faḍl ibn Ḥasḍāy's¹⁰ poem beginning [*basīl*]:

Lubnā made a vow, the fulfillment of which commitments required: She departed, without fulfilling any of my desires.

For Abū l-Ṭāhir said [*basīl*]:

‘Ilwāh made a promise that desires would be fulfilled. Misfor-

⁹ A large tree with overspreading branches, native to Najd, under which camels shade themselves.

¹⁰ On this poet, see Ibn Bassām, *al-Daḥīrah*, part 3, I, 486-498. The imitated poem, which is itself an imitation of an earlier poet's work, is on p. 492.

tunes distracted her on the day of impending departure.

Your rending sighs did not satisfy her, until your collar and breast were rent asunder.

She said, when she saw my anguish at parting from her: “Despair not, for Fate is variable,

And for the sake of love and passion, that the terrors of separation produce, be not grieved by any further fears.

Replace your despair and distress with hope for, although the nights may well depart, they can experience reversals.

Between you and me there is a vow I pledge to keep, even though commitments are sometimes broken.”

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh al-Tamīmī was an inhabitant of Zaragoza who settled in Córdoba, was called Abū l-Ṭāhir, and was our friend. He attended many of the lectures of Abū ‘Alī al-Ṣadaḡī,² as well as those of Abū Muḥammad ibn Ṭābit, Abū ‘Imrān ibn Abī Talīd, and Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd.³ He did so both in Córdoba and in Seville, and from more than one of our masters. He was outstanding in lexicography and Arabic philology, and was an excellent poet, who has to his credit some *maqāmāt* of his own composition that have been studied under him and are greatly appreciated. He died—may God have mercy on him—in Córdoba in Jumādā I of the year 638 [*sic*].

¹ Ibn Baṣkuwāl, *Kitāb al-ṣilah* (al-Maktabah al-Andalusīyah, nos 4-5 [Cairo, 1966]), II, 588a, biogr. 1291. Ibn Baṣkuwāl was born in Córdoba in 495/1101 and died there in 578/1183. He finished the *Kitāb al-ṣilah* in 534/1139. See *E.I.* 2, III, 733-734.

² Ḥusayn ibn Firruḥ ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Ṣadaḡī, Abū ‘Alī was born in Zaragoza in 444/1052. He studied in Valencia and Almería. In 481/1088 he went east, where he spent nine years studying in Mecca, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. After returning to al-Andalus in 490/1096, he taught *ḥadīṭ* in Murcia and Almería, where he also served as judge. He died in the battle of Cutanda, near Daroca, in 514/1120. See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Muʿjam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī l-imām Abī ‘Alī al-Ṣadaḡī*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1886), pp. v-x. He was a student of Abū ‘Alī al-Ġassānī, and a major Andalusī representative of *ḥadīṭ* studies in his period. He taught the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Buḥārī and Muslim, and the *Jāmiʿ* of Tirmidī. The *Muʿjam* lists 315 of his students. See María Jesús Viguera Molíns, *et al.*, *Los reinos de taifas: al-Andalus en el siglo XI* (Historia de España Menéndez Pidal, VIII [Madrid, 1994]), p. 515.

³ He was a grammarian and philosopher, born in Badajoz in 444/1052. He died in 521/1127 at Valencia. There, he taught Ibn Baṣkuwāl. He is the author of some twenty works of which few have survived. His *Kitāb al-ḥadāʾiq* influenced Jewish philosophy of religion. His lost *Commentary* of al-Maʿarrī’s *Saḡt al-zand* was criticized by Ibn al-ʿArabī, and provoked a surviving counterblast by Ibn al-Sīd. See *E.I.* 2, I, 1092.

The book of the fifty *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah*, composed by the reliable master, secretary, and literary scholar Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf, al-Tamīmī, al-Saraqustī—may God have mercy on him. My transmission of it was based on his authority.²

The works of the master, the secretary, the literary scholar, Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf, al-Tamīmī—may God have mercy on him—namely *al-Maqāmāt*, *al-Musalsal*, and other collections of his, as well as what he composed in prose and in verse. My transmission of everything that he transmitted from his teachers was all based on his authority.³

¹ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ḥayr ibn ‘Umar ibn Ḥalīfah al-Lamtūnī al-Amawī was a philologist and traditionist of Seville. His *Fahrasah* (ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera [repr. Baghdad, 1963]) is a catalogue of the works he read and of the teachers who gave him their *ijāzāt*. He was born in Seville in 502/1108, became *imām* of the Mosque of Córdoba, and died in that city in 575/1179. See *E.I.* 2, III, 837.

² Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr, *Fahrasah*, p. 387.

³ Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr, *Fahrasah*, p. 450.

Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Aštarkūnī. Al-Faṭḥ² referred to him as being “Zaragoza with regard to his physical place of origin; Iraqī with regard to his intellectual homeland,” praising him and reciting, of his poetry [*wāfir*]:

Lo, O [. . .], contemplate the horizon of an ardent lover who, one day, is worried by profound cares.

Hopes, which are unreliable, distract him, yet you do not care that his hope distracts him.

O imperious lady, in him you took possession of a noble man whose passion caused him harm, although he himself never acted with injustice.

Should you call down punishment on his soul, the full moon would desire to harm you, if it could only do so by sacrificing itself for him.

And if you are stingy in doing him good, why, how often has his hand been lavish in doing good!

Nay, by your love, he will never complain to you, even if his grave should engulf³ him in your presence.

¹ Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿĀmirah, al-Ḍabbī, *Kitāb buḡyat al-multamīs fī taʾrīḥ rijāl ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (Madrid, 1885), p. 517, biogr. 1552. The poem quoted below is not found in al-Saraqustī’s *al-Maqāmāt al-luḏūmiyah*. Al-Ḍabbī was born in Vélez, west of Lorca, and spent most of his life in Murcia. He died in 599/1203. See *E.I.* 2, II, 72.

² Probably al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, who died at some time between 528/1134 and 55/1160, most probably in 529/1134. The following quotation is to be found neither in his *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān fī mahāsīn al-aʿyān* (ed. Muḥammad al-ʿItābī [Tunis, 1966]) nor in his *Matmaḥ al-anfus wa-masraḥ al-taʾannus fī mulaḥ ahl al-Andalus* (ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣawābikah [Beirut, 1983]), but the latter existed in three versions, large, medium, and small, of which only the last has survived. See *E.I.* 2, II, 838.

³ Reading *zafarat* ‘to take possession of, for the text’s impossible *tafarat* ‘to leap over something’ (said of a horse).

Abū l-Ṭāhir Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Uṣkurkī [sic]:²

From *al-Mushib*:³ He was a leader in the science of lexicography with whom my paternal uncle was acquainted. He informed me that in this field he was an ocean, and that he enjoyed honor and stature among the kings of the frontier, namely, the Banū Hūd, as well as among other *mulūk al-tawāʾif*, and that most of his panegyrics were devoted to al-Muʿtaṣim ibn Ṣumādih, king of Almería.

From *al-Simṭ*:⁴ He is the fragrant garden of *belles lettres*; when his clouds are poured out, they flow in abundance. The intention of his verse is fully achieved in the following words he recited [*basīl*]:

O branch, whose dew causes it to quiver; whose poise prevents it from swaying,

¹ Ibn Saʿīd al-Maġribī, *al-Muġrib fī ḥulā l-Maġrib*, ed. Ṣawqī Dayf (Ḍaḥāʾir al-ʿArab, no. 10 [Cairo, 1964]), II, 447-448, biogr. 634. Ibn Saʿīd was born near Granada in 610/1213, and died in Tunis in 685/1286 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 926). The biography of al-Saraqusṭī is included in Book V of that part of *al-Muġrib* dealing with the east of al-Andalus, and entitled *Kitāb ibtisām al-ṭaġr fī ḥulā jihāt al-Ṭaġr* ('The Book of the Smiling Mouth on the Ornaments of the Regions of the Frontier'). The specific section in which the biography is found is entitled *Kitāb al-bastah fī ḥulā madīnat Saraquṣṭah* ('The Book of Extension on the Ornaments of the City of Zaragoza').

² The *nisbah* form *Uṣkurkī* implies a place-name *Uṣkurkah*. In this biography, we are informed that the place is in the east of al-Andalus and associated with Zaragoza. Elsewhere in this same work, that place appears transliterated as *Uṣkurtah* (see Ibn Saʿīd, *al-Muġrib*, II, 433). Since some of the poems attributed below to Abū l-Ṭāhir *Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad* (incorrect sequence) "al-Uṣkurkī/Uṣkurtī" are the same as those attributed by Ibn Bassām (*al-Daḥīrah*, III, 909-912) to Abū l-Ṭāhir *Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf* (correct sequence) "al-Aṣkūrī/Aṣkadīrī," it is clear that we are dealing with corruptions of the name al-Aṣṭarkūwī.

³ In 530/1135 Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Hijārī finished his *Kitāb al-mushib fī ġarāʾib al-Maġrib*, accounting for events in al-Andalus between the conquest of 93/711 and the year 530/1135. This work was added to by several generations of members of the Banū Saʿīd family, and was finished in Egypt, in 641/1243, by Ibn Saʿīd al-Maġribī, with the title of *al-Muġrib fī ḥulā l-Maġrib*. See *E.I.* 2, III, 926.

⁴ ʿUṣmān ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿUṣmān, Abū ʿAmr, ibn al-Imām al-Šilbī (d. 550/1155) is the author of *Simṭ al-jumān wa-siṭt al-laʾālī wa-siṭt al-murjān*. See Maribel Fierro, *Historia de los autores y transmisores andalusíes* (H.A.T.A.), (forthcoming).

Youth does not sway your flanks, nor does pride incline your neck toward it.

If you encounter him, he is all of mankind in one, although he is unique among mortals.

The flanks of poetry quiver on account of him, while encomium inclines its neck toward him.

The following words of his are quoted from an ode in which he addresses al-Raḡī ibn al-Muʿtaṣim ibn Ṣumādīḥ [*ṭawīl*]:⁵

Lo, you who convey greetings from me to al-Raḡī, as the perfumed breeze awakens the garden,

I lacked a messenger to convey my greetings to him, hence passion and longing carried them on my behalf,

While a disturbing love reminded me of him, time and again, as the aged wine causes one to take one draught after another.

Hence, would that I knew whether a single thought of his will turn my way, and if a single word of mine will convey remembrance of me.

He recited, in another poem addressed to him [*ṭawīl*]:

Toward you, Raḡī al-Mulk, are praises directed, and because

⁵ Muḥammad ibn Maʿn ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṣumādīḥ al-Tujībī of Almería was the second ruler of the Tujibid dynasty (r. 443/1051-484/1091). Like his neighbor and contemporary, al-Muʿtamid of Seville, he was a poet. Apart from al-Raḡī, he had another son named Aḥmad Muʿizz al-Dawlah. See *E.I.* 1, VI, 785-786. Aḥmad succeeded al-Muʿtaṣim in 484/1091, but soon after his accession, he retired before the Almoravids, and ended his life in Bougie. See *E.I.* 1, VIII, 819. The Tujibids were an Arab family. In al-Andalus, they split into two branches: (1) The Banū Hāšim of Zaragoza, and (2) the Banū Ṣumādīḥ of Almería. The family had originally settled in Aragón at the time of the conquest (see *E.I.* 1, IV, 156-158). The second branch was driven out of Aragón by the first, and gained possession of the kingdom of Almería. See *E.I.* 1, VIII, 819. As far as is known, al-Raḡī never reigned, but he was a vizier and an accomplished poet. For examples of his poetry, see al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān, *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus wa-masrah al-taʿannus fī mulah ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣawābikah (Beirut, 1983), pp. 222-225.

of your name do places of martyrdom become eminent with the passing of Time.

You have mastered an initial path in generous acts; yours is the excellence, O leader and scout who traverse it.

And he recited [*wāfir*]:

Is he a vicinity whose refreshing shadows are abundant, and a pre-eminence whose cool waters quench one's thirst?

Awake, dear lady! He is the most generous of dignitaries, and the noblest of those for whom camel-saddles are fastened,

For no lightning bolt toward which I travel by night can fail to produce rain, and no ocean toward which I ascend can turn out to be a morning mirage.

As for the clan of Tamīm ibn Murr ibn Udd ibn Ṭābiḥah ibn Ilyās ibn Muḍar, Ibn Ḡālib² also mentioned that they are a numerous people in al-Andalus, and from them came Abū l-Ṭāhir, the author of *al-Maqqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*. As for Ḍabbah ibn Udd ibn Ṭābiḥah, he mentioned that they are few in al-Andalus. The latter are descended from Ḥindif of the branch of ‘Adnān.

¹ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Naṣḥ al-ṭīb min ḡuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1968), p. 291. Al-Maqqarī was born in Tlemcen in 986/1577, and died in Cairo in 1041/1632. See *E.I.* 2, VI, 187-188.

² Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Ġarnāṭī, ibn Ḡālib lived in Granada in the sixth/twelfth century. He served Abū Sa‘īd ‘Uṭmān, son of the Almohad Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (r. 542/1147-558/1163), and left al-Andalus in 565/1169. He wrote the lost *Farḥat al-anfus fī ta’rīḥ al-Andalus*, which is rich in its account of the Arab tribal settlement of the Iberian Peninsula, and which is quoted here. See *E.I.* 2, III, 771-772.

*Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb*¹

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī. He was one of the inhabitants of Zaragoza who entered Granada, and studied there with Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Bāḍiṣ. He is called Abū l-Ṭāhir, and he composed the well-known *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*.

His Status

He was a secretary, grammarian, and poet, relied upon in *belles lettres*, being singular and outstanding in that field during his time. He composed the well-known *al-Maqāmāt*, and his poetry is abundant and has been collected into a *ḏūwān*.

His Teachers

He transmitted knowledge on the authority of Abū ‘Alī al-Ṣaḍafī,² Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd,³ Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Aḥḍar, Abū ‘Abdallāh ibn Sulaymān known as Ibn Uḥt Gānim, Abū Muḥammad ibn ‘Attāb, Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Bāḍiṣ, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Tujībī al-Duklī,⁴ Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ṣawābihi,⁵ Abū ‘Imrān ibn Abī Talīd, and others. The judge Abū l-‘Abbās ibn

¹ Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭah fī aḥbār Ġarnāṭah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ‘Inān (Cairo, 1974), II, 521-522. Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb was of Yemeni Arab descent. He was born in Loja in 713/1313, and educated in Granada. Late in life, he was accused of heresy and died, in Granada, strangled in prison, in 776/1375. See *E.I.* 2, III, 835-837.

² Ḥusayn ibn Firruḥ ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Ṣaḍafī, Abū ‘Alī was born in Zaragoza in 444/1052. He studied in Valencia and Almería. In 481/1088 he went east, where he spent nine years studying in Mecca, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. After returning to al-Andalus in 490/1096, he taught *ḥadīṭ* in Murcia and Almería, where he also served as judge. He died in the battle of Cutanda, near Daroca, in 514/1120. See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī l-imām Abī ‘Alī al-Ṣaḍafī*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1886), pp. v-x.

³ On whom, see biogr. 2, n. 3, above.

⁴ ‘Al-Raklī’ in Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam*, pp. 140-141, biogr. 124.

⁵ ‘Ibn Ṣawāb’ in Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam*, *loc. cit.*

Maḍā⁶ acquired knowledge from him; he learned from him the *Kāmil* of al-Mubarrad.⁷ Ibn Maḍā' said: "I relied on Abū l-Ṭāhir in writing it down." The elderly Qur'ānic reciter and preacher Abū Ja'far ibn Yaḥyà al-Kutāmī transmitted knowledge on his authority, and both he and Ibn Maḍā' mentioned him.

He died in Córdoba at noon on Tuesday, on the 21st of Jumādà I, in the year 538, as a result of a chronic illness that troubled him for close to three years—God help him!

His Poetry

[*Wāfir*]:

O moon, do you rise from a waistband upon a tender branch
made arrogant by every kind of wine?

Enchantment distributed an agèd wine from his eyes, where-
upon he intoxicated every sober person.

When he swayed, he exuded every kind of fragrance, like the
supple willow branch in the hands of the breeze.

When he gave greetings, he revived the soul of a lover who was
in the grip of predestined love.

Time and again, he made his blame of me palatable, and time
and again, he distracted me with libations of wine.

He allowed me to gather the fruit of my aspirations in safety,
while the wing of night's gloom was lowered.

He also said [*kāmil*]:

I remember one whose sides were soft, whose deep-red lips

⁶ Andalusī *faqīh* and grammarian born into a famous Cordovan family in 513/1119. He studied grammar at Seville and *ḥadīṭ* at Ceuta. The Almohad Caliph Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Mu'min appointed him *qāḍī al-jamā'ah*. He simplified the study of Arabic grammar, and was the most notable grammarian of his age. He died in 592/1195. See E. García Gómez, *Andalus* XIII:1 (1948), 238-240; *E.I.* 2, III, 855-856.

⁷ He was a famous eastern philologist (see "Preliminary Study," n. 7; "Appendix 2," n. 1, above).

were honey-sweet; in whom could be found all the rare beauties one might desire.

When I won a single night of union with him—and nothing but a love-union can cure the ardent lover—

I moistened the rose of his cheek with my sighs, and remained drinking its water from his mouth.

He also said [*kāmīl*]:

The choicest wine resembled his attributes; its drops issuing from his mouth, and its taste, from his kisses.

It turned red, and resembled the anemones on his cheek; it turned fragrant, for he pastured it on his perfume.

Its surface was pure, for it was as though it were fashioned from the beauty and grace of his radiant cheeks.

It toyed with men's minds, and felled their bodies, as does his glance.

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī, Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Saraqūṣī was also called al-Aṣṭarkūwī, because Aṣṭarkūy is a fortress, in one of the districts of Tudela, where his ancestors originated. He attended the lectures of Abū ‘Alī,² transmitted many of his works, and authorized others to transmit the works he had learned from him. Among the works to which I devoted myself, which he also studied with Abū ‘Alī, are *al-Mu’taliḥ wa-l-muḥṭaliḥ* by al-Dāraqūṭnī³ and ‘Abd al-Ġānī,⁴ along with the latter’s work *Muṣṭabih al-nisbah*, and the *Riḡād al-muta’ allimīn* by Abū Nu‘aym,⁵ the *Adab al-ṣuḥbah* by al-Sulamī,⁶ the *Ḥadīṭ* of al-

¹ Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī l-imām Abī ‘Alī al-Ṣaḍāfi*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1886), pp. 140-141, biogr. 124. Ibn al-Abbār was born in Valencia, in 595/1199, and died in 658/1260. His *Kitāb al-takmilah li-kitāb al-ṣilah* was published by Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1887). The beginning of *al-Takmilah* (letters *alif* to *jīm*) was published by Bel and Ben Cheneb, Algiers, 1920. See *E.I.* 2, III, 673. Another work by Ibn al-Abbār is the *Durar al-simṭ fī ḥabar al-sibt*, on the family of the Prophet and the ‘Alids, ed. A. Ghedira (see *Andalus*, XX:1 [1957], 31-54). In this work, Ibn al-Abbār expresses violent hostility to the Umayyads and gives clear signs of Šrī tendencies (see *E.I.* 2, III, 673). Also ed. ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Umar Mūsā (Beirut, 1987). Spanish translation: Santiago Martínez de Francisco, *Epopeya de los alíes: los enfrentamientos entre shī’itas y sunnitas relatados por un andalusí del S. XIII/Ibn al-Abbār* (Madrid, 1990).

² He is Abū ‘Alī al-Ṣaḍāfi, about whose disciples the biographical dictionary from which this biography is translated (Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam*), was written. His full name was Ḥusayn ibn Firruh ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Ṣaḍāfi, Abū ‘Alī. He was born in Zaragoza in 444/1052. He studied in Valencia and Almería. In 481/1088 he went east, where he spent nine years studying in Mecca, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. After returning to al-Andalus in 490/1096, he taught *ḥadīṭ* in Murcia and Almería, where he also served as judge. He died in the battle of Cutanda, near Daroca, in 514/1120. See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu’jam*, pp. v-x.

³ Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī was born in a large quarter of Baghdad called Dār al-Quṭn, in 306/918. He knew by heart the *Dīwān* of al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, for which reason he was accused of being a Šrī. He was a famous traditionist, and died in 385/995. See *E.I.* 2, II, 136.

⁴ ‘Abd al-Ġānī ibn Sa’īd (d. 409/1018) was an Egyptian traditionist who specialized in *isnād* criticism. See, María Jesús Viguera Molins, *et al.*, *Los reinos de taifas: al-Andalus en el siglo XI* (Historia de España Menéndez Pidal, VIII [Madrid, 1994]), p. 518.

⁵ Abū Nu‘aym al-Isfahānī was an authority on *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf*. See *E.I.* 2, I, 142-143.

⁶ An older contemporary of Abū Nu‘aym. See *E.I.* 2, I, 142-143. He died in

Ḥasan ibn ‘Arafah, the *Amālī* of Ibn Abī l-Fawāris, and the *‘Awālī* of Ibn Ḥayrūn. He frequently heard some of these works all over again because of the length of time he remained attached to Abū ‘Alī, and his extreme care in learning everything the latter transmitted. He was an indefatigable traveler in search of knowledge who studied, in Valencia, under Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd; in Játiva, under Abū ‘Imrān ibn Abī Talīd, Abū Muḥammad ibn Tābit, and Abū Muḥammad al-Raklī, and in Córdoba, under Ibn ‘Attāb,⁷ Abū Baḥr, and Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ṣawāb,⁸ while he attended the lessons of Abū ‘Alī in Murcia. Abū Bakr Ġālīb ibn ‘Aṭṭyah and Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Bādīš⁹ corresponded with him from Granada, Ibn Uḥt Ġānim from Málaga, and Ibn al-Aḥḍar and Ibn al-‘Arabī from Seville, while he even met some of these individuals. He mastered lexicography and *belles lettres*, composed *al-Musalsal*, wrote *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, taught the Qur’ān and transmitted the *ḥadīth*. The last to be reached,¹⁰ among those who transmitted his works directly from him, was Abū Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyà, the preacher in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. It was on his authority that our friend, the judge Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, transmitted Abū l-Tāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī’s *al-Maqāmāt* to us, from the very mouth of their author, whom Abū Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyà had heard recite them. One of his poems contained in them is [*kāmil*]:¹¹

Far from the sin of the wrongdoer is regret, though in committing terrible sins, he strays from the right path.

They said: “He is free, allowed to roam over the broad earth.”
Yet how can he possibly be free, when he is bound by the shackles of error?

412/1021. His *Adab al-ṣuḥbah* is a work on mysticism. See María Jesús Viguera Molins, *Taifas*, p. 530, and n. 158.

⁷ See María Jesús Viguera Molins, *Taifas*, p. 550.

⁸ Died in 514/1120. See, María Jesús Viguera Molins, *Taifas*, p. 547.

⁹ ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥalaf ibn al-Bādīš (d. 528/1133) was a Granadan traditionist and student of Abū ‘Alī al-Ġassānī. See María Jesús Viguera Molins, *Taifas*, p. 515.

¹⁰ Reading *mu’tan*, rather than *mawtan*.

¹¹ This poem is contained in al-Saraqustī’s “*Maqāmah* 18” (W, p. 177).

O sinner, you do not know how hot the live embers of *ḡaḏā* wood¹² are, yet the thorns of the tragacanth will be soft as cotton in comparison with your forthcoming punishment.

Try to turn your grief into the repentance of one who would make a fresh start, for remorse and regret may well be beneficial to you.

How excellent was the sorrow that joined Jacob to right-guidance, until Joseph summoned him to safety.¹³

He died in Córdoba from a chronic illness that troubled him for close to three years, until it killed him in Jumādā I of the year 538. Abū Muḥammad ibn Ġalbūn, the Qur'ānic reciter, informed us, among others, on the authority of Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr, on the authority of Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī, saying:

Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī studied under Abū 'Alī al-Šadaḡī, while I [?] ¹⁴ was attending the latter's lectures in Murcia, during the year 508. Then he studied with him a second time, when I was present, during the following year 509. Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī told me:

I read, under the direction of Abū l-'Abbās al-Rāzī, on the authority of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ḥawfī, on the authority of al-Ḥasan ibn Rašīq, on the authority of Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Dā'ud ibn 'Abd al-Ġaffār al-Ḥarrānī, on the authority of Abū Muṣ'ab Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Zuhrī, on the authority of Mālik ibn Anas, on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd, on the authority of 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, on the authority of 'Ā'īšah, on the authority of the Prophet of God—may God bless and save him—that the latter said: "I have made God's love¹⁵ incumbent upon those who have been provoked but have behaved with restraint."

¹² An Arabian shrub of the genus *Euphorbia*, the wood of which produces extremely hot coals (see M6, n. 14, above).

¹³ A reference to the story of Joseph, as it is presented in Qur'ān, 12.

¹⁴ Here, the Arabic text is syntactically garbled, possibly due to a lacuna.

¹⁵ Reading *maḥabbah* 'love' for the edition's *majabbah* 'pathway', which is, however, not impossible.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Alī ibn Salmā al-Madadī: Madad is a clan of the tribe of Ġāfiq, of the people of Valencia. He was called Abū Marwān and known as Ibn al-Ḥallād [*sic*]. He learned from Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī the latter’s *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyah*, and transmitted knowledge on the authority of Abū l-‘Arab ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Muḥammad al-Tujībī, with whom he studied in Valencia along with Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Sa’d al-Ḥayr in the year 551. He participated in the science of medicine and practiced it professionally. Abū ‘Abdallāh ibn Nūḥ transmitted the *Maqāmāt* of Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī on his authority. He died around the year 574 or 575. Ibn Sālim mentioned the above to me.

¹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Kūtab al-takmilah li-kūtab al-ṣilah*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1887), II, 618-619, biogr. 1722.

And Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī, known as al-Aštarkūnī, the author of *al-Maqāmāt al-luẓūmiyah* said, in the poetry he collected by Abū Bakr ibn ‘Ammār,² the vizier of the Banū ‘Abbād: “Among what is attributed to him is . . .” and he mentioned the two lines beginning:

It astonishes me that I yearn for them . . .

but as for the line following these two, he does not include it after them.³

. . . as Abū l-Ṭāhir, al-Tamīmī, al-Saraqūṣī recorded in the *Dīwān* of Ibn ‘Ammār’s poetry that he collected, when he edited the above piece.⁴

Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī compiled Ibn ‘Ammār’s poetry, and arranged it in alphabetical order, by rhymes. There is no question that he searched for it in all the right places where it was thought to be, and exhausted every effort in gathering it, while it would not have been possible for him to do so had he not panegyricized al-Mu‘taḍid,⁵ yet I believe he did it all as a service to his son al-Mu‘tamid.⁶

As for Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī, he recorded that Ibn ‘Ammār wrote to al-Mu‘tamid in a forlorn state:⁷

Abū l-Ṭāhir said: al-Mu‘tamid had addressed Abū l-Walīd ibn

¹ Ibn al-Abbār, *Kitāb al-ḥullāh al-siyarā’*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu’nis, 2d ed. (Dahā’ir al-‘Arab, no. 58 [Cairo, 1985]).

² A famous Andalusī poet who lived from 422/1031 to 479/1086 (*E.I.* 2, III, 705-706).

³ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥullāh*, I, 204-205.

⁴ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥullāh*, II, 132, biogr. 133.

⁵ ‘Abbādīd ruler of Seville from 433/1042 to 461/1069.

⁶ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥullāh*, II, 134.

⁷ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥullāh*, II, 137.

Zaydūn,⁸ when he first became attached to the dynasty, with lines of poetry, some of which he called back to mind in the following piece, to wit:⁹

And Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī commented on the above piece in his edition of the poetry of Ibn al-‘Ammār, saying: “And he wrote to the glorious Vizier Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, with whom he had exchanged pleasantries when he was informed that Alfonso, King of the Christians, had given him a seal-ring when he had gotten together with him and because of his seeking refuge in flight from the cold relations that had developed between him and Ibn ‘Abbād, and from fear of the latter. So he asked: ‘Is this a ring of rulership or of protection?’ Ibn ‘Ammār replied, determining to send the lines to him, and mentioned the lines, adding at the end of them.”¹⁰

I do not find the above three lines in the collection of Ibn ‘Ammār’s poetry edited by Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī, therefore I have added them to it, writing them down in my copy of Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī’s edition, since they do appear in some of the manuscripts of Ibn ‘Ammār’s poetry.¹¹

⁸ Considered by many to be the greatest classical Andalusī poet, he was a native of Córdoba, where he was born in 394/1003. He fled his birthplace after a famous and unrequited love affair with the Umayyad princess Wallādah, and joined the ‘Abbādid court of Seville in 441/1049. He died in that city in 463/1071 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 973-974).

⁹ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Hullah*, II, 138.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Hullah*, II, 142.

¹¹ Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Hullah*, II, 165.

Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī al-Saraqṣṭī: He is known as Ibn al-Aštarkūnī, Abū l-Ṭāhir. Ibn al-Zubayr² said:

He was a grammarian, a *littérateur*, a poet, and was relied upon in *belles lettres*, being singular and outstanding in that field during his time. He transmitted knowledge on the authority of Abū ‘Alī al-Šadaḡī,³ Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Sīd,⁴ Ibn al-Bāḡṣī,⁵ and Ibn al-Aḡḡar, while Abū l-‘Abbās ibn Maḡā’⁶ acquired knowledge from him. Ibn Maḡā’ said: “It was upon him that I relied in the *Commentary to al-Mubarrad’s Kāmil*,⁷ because of his thorough familiarity with philology and the Arabic language.”

¹ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḡmān al-Suyūṭī, *Buḡyat al-wu‘āt fī ṭabaqāt al-luḡawīyīn wa-l-nuḡāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḡl Ibrāhīm (Beirut, 1964), I, 279, biogr. 514. Al-Suyūṭī was the most prolific Egyptian writer in the Mamlūk period. He lived between 849/1445 and 911/1505. See *E.I.* I, VII, 573-575.

² Abū Ja‘far Aḡmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Zubayr was born in Jaén in 627/1230 and died in Granada in 708/1308. He is described as “the *muḡaddīf* of al-Andalus and the Maḡrib.” He left a *Šilat al-šilah*, which is a continuation of Ibn Baškuwāl’s *Takmilah*. It is his only surviving work. See *E.I.* 2, III, 976.

³ Ḥusayn ibn Firruḡ ibn Ḥayyūn ibn Sukkarah, al-Šadaḡī, Abū ‘Alī was born in Zaragoza in 444/1052. He studied in Valencia and Almería. In 481/1088 he went east, where he spent nine years studying in Mecca, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. After returning to al-Andalus in 490/1096, he taught *ḡadīf* in Murcia and Almería, where he also served as judge. He died in the battle of Cutanda, near Daroca, in 514/1120. See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu‘jam fī aṣḡāb al-qāḡī l-imām Abī ‘Alī al-Šadaḡī*, ed. Francisco Codera y Zaydīn (Madrid, 1886), pp. v-x.

⁴ On whom, see biogr. 2, n. 3, above.

⁵ ‘Alī ibn Aḡmad ibn Ḥalaḡ ibn al-Bāḡṣī (d. 528/1133) was a Granadan traditionist and student of Abū ‘Alī al-Ḡassānī. See María Jesús Viguera Molíns, *et al.*, *Los reinos de taifas: al-Andalus en el siglo XI* (Historia de España Menéndez Pidal, VIII [Madrid, 1994]), p. 515.

⁶ Andalusi *faḡīḡ* and grammarian born into a famous Cordovan family in 513/1119. He studied grammar at Seville and *ḡadīf* at Ceuta. The Almohad Caliph Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (r. 558/1163-580/1184) appointed him *qāḡī al-jamā‘ah*. He simplified the study of Arabic grammar, and was the most notable grammarian of his age. See E. García Gómez, *Andalus XIII:1* (1948), 238-240 (see *E.I.* 2, III, 855-856).

⁷ He was a famous eastern philologist (see “Appendix 2,” n. 1; “Appendix 3:7, n. 3, above).

He composed the famous *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmīyah*, and his poetry is abundant. He died in Córdoba on Tuesday, the 21st of Jumādā I, in the year 538. One of his poems goes [*kāmil*]:

I remember one whose sides were soft, whose deep-red lips
were honey-sweet, and in whom could be found all the rare
beauties one might desire.

When I won a single night of union with him—and nothing but
a love-union can cure the ardent lover—

I brought the rose of his cheek into full bloom with my sighs,
and remained drinking its water from his mouth.

To Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī, al-Saraqusṭī, author of *al-Maqāmāt al-luzūmiyyah*, which are fifty *maqāmāt* he based on the principle of rhyming the last two consonants of the rhyme words,² belong the following verses [*munsariḥ*]:

O you who pine for a coquettish and bashful creature, you have glued your mighty cheek to the dust!

Beware of the sin of passion, and of its stumbling, for the sin of passion is unforgivable.

He who struggles against love will never gain mastery over it, even though he has many partisans and supporters,

But as for him who shows up early, with silver as his mediator, how deserving of victory is he!³

The following verses are also his [*basīl*]:

Every beloved manifests coquetry, but sometimes boredom alters him.

As for you, you are my beloved, yet the crescent moon is closer to me than any relief you will ever provide.⁴

¹ ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Aḥmad al-‘Abbāsī is the author of a book on poetics entitled *Ma‘āhid al-tanṣīṣ ‘alā šawāhid al-talḥīṣ*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut, 1980). The quotation, below, is taken from III, 306. The author died in 963/1556.

² *Luzūm mā lā yalzam*.

³ This poem is found in al-Saraqusṭī’s “*Maqāmāh* 9” (W, pp. 89-90).

⁴ This poem is found in al-Saraqusṭī’s “*Maqāmāh* 39” (W, p. 367).

Ibn al-Aštarkūnī: Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Ṭāhir al-Māzinī, al-Saraqusṭī, al-Andalusī, known as Ibn al-Aštarkūnī, the Māliki *littérateur* who died in the year 538. He composed the *Commentary* to the *Kāmil fī l-luġah* by al-Mubarrad, and *al-Maqāmāt al-Saraqusṭīyah*, comprising fifty *maqāmāt*.

¹ Ismā‘īl ibn Muḥammad Amīn Pāšā, al-Baġdādī (Baġdādli) (1255/1839-1339/1920), *Hadīyat al-‘arīfīn: asmā’ al-mu’allifīn wa-’āṭār al-muṣannifīn*, ed. Rifat Bilge and Ibnülemin Mahmud Kemal Inal (Istanbul, 1951-1955), II, col. 89. See too *E.I.* 2, IV, 193.

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5. *Hadīl* references

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 I am only a human being, yet you appeal to me to render a judgment in your litigation. Perhaps some of you will be cleverer than others in adducing arguments in your defense 537.
 I have made God's love incumbent upon those who have been provoked but have behaved with restraint 585.
 One cannot cut his fruit or palm spathe 292.
 Remorse is repentance and one who repents of a sin is like one who has not sinned 280.
 Souls are enlisted soldiers, hence harmony is approved, and disharmony is disapproved, in them 493.
 Verily the most enviable of my supporters, in my opinion, is the believer who is light of back, rich in prayer 393.
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 Whoever has seen me in a dream, has really seen me, for Satan does not take on my image 98, 494, 500.

6. *Poetic references*

- A herd appeared before us, the gazelles of which seemed to be maidens of Dawār in trailing, striped garments (Imru' al-Qays) 335.
- A true hero is one with whom the nights of Time and the waterless deserts are familiar; one who resembles the tongue-flicking serpent (Abū Tammām) 413.
- And I get up in the morning when the birds are still in their nests (Imru' al-Qays) 179.
- And the saying of the crier is: "The people have nearly entered upon the time of dawn: prosecute the night-journey" (al-Šammāḥ ibn Ǧirār) 360.
- Because of its understanding, my monkey can almost speak, and because of its graceful beauty, it is almost loved passionately (Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl) 389.
- Bring an excuse for the tribe, 'Adwān; they were the serpents of the earth (Dū l-Iṣba' al-'Adwānī) 410.
- By the latter part of the forenoon, the encampment had been emptied, for its inhabitants had departed, and it was smitten by what smote Lubad (al-Nābiḡah al-Dubyānī) 189.
- Do not enquire about a man, but observe his companion instead, for all men imitate their companions ('Adī ibn Zayd al-'Ibādī) 177.
- For a noble youth, death is preferable to the passive acceptance of want, or to a patron whose watering places are hovered over (Abū l-Našnāš) 549.
- For the horsemen, the night, and the desert know me; and the sword and the lance, and the paper and pen (al-Mutanabbī) 394.
- Greet the springtime habitation of Salmā in Dū Salam . . . (Abū Tammām) 288.
- Her lower veil slipped down, though she did not wish it to fall, so she reached for it and put it back with her own hand, in our presence (al-Nābiḡah al-Dubyānī) 439.
- His ponderous shield . . . (John Milton) 104.
- I and my mad passion for 'Azzah, after she and I gave up what existed between us . . . (Kuṭayyir 'Azzah) 318.
- I conjure you by God, O monkey / to show me how the fat lady dances (Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl) 389.
- I crawl toward him as does slumber, and rise toward him as does a sigh . . . (Abū 'Āmir ibn Šuhayd) 287.
- I have never loved your land, and yet I kiss the trace left by one who steps on its surface (Qays ibn al-Darīḥ) 321.
- I will pine for Da'd as long as I live and, when I die—woe unto Da'd!—who will pine for her after me? (Nuṣayb) 319.
- Let me traverse the open spaces of the earth, for al-Karaj is not the whole world nor is all mankind Qāsim (Maṣṣūr ibn Bāḡdān or Bakr ibn Niṭāḥ) 305.
- Most small birds have several chicks, but the mother of the falcon has only a few (Kuṭayyir 'Azzah or 'Abbās ibn Mirdās al-Salmī) 344, 457.
- O neighbor of ours, we are both strangers here, and every stranger is related to another stranger (Imru' al-Qays) 267, 493.
- O 'Umar, son of 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb, equivalent in nobility of ancestry, to perfume . . . (Kuṭayyir 'Azzah) 316.
- O you who are marrying Turayyā to Suhayl, by your life, how will the two ever meet? ('Umar ibn Abī Rabī'ah) 196, 316, 333.
- Šašār invited me to that which, were I to decline it, I would roast over the live coals of a fearful, blazing fire (Ḥanāfir ibn Ta'um al-Ḥimyarī) 545.

- The companionship of bears taught me how to struggle, and showed me that corruption could be turned into good behavior (Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl) 367.
 The land whose soil first touched my skin . . . (Riqā' ibn Qays al-Asadī) 228.
 They keep the Feast of Palms, when maidens pale . . . (al-Nābigah al-Dūbyānī) 115.
 This is Fleetfoot, the son of Fleetfoot, the son of Sabal: If they are unremitting in their running, he is fleetfooted; and if they are fleetfooted, he is most vehement in his running (Jahm ibn Šibl) 356-357.
 This morning, as I looked for Laylā, I was like one gazing at dawn in the wake of westerly wandering stars (Qays ibn al-Mulawwah) 321.
 To see a world in a grain of sand . . . (William Blake) 101.
 Upon every tribe you have conferred a benefit, therefore Ša's deserves a bucket of the dew of your generosity ('Alqamah) 311.
 Weep for a year, and then, may the name of peace be upon you, for whoever weeps for an entire year may be excused (Labīd ibn Rab'ah) 313.
 Whoever performs a good deed will not lack his reward, for the recognition of what takes place between God and mortals does not perish (al-Ḥuṭay'ah) 314.
 Yesterday, we repaid the Banū Šaybān for their loan, returning from whence we had gone, for returning is most admirable (Mālik ibn Nuwayrah) 511.

7. Proverbs

- Do not seek a trace after having seen the one who left it 292.
 Every sheep will be hung by its leg 499.
 Every region, O Umaymah, has its place of perdition 279.
 He is today's or tomorrow's owl 345.
 He returned with the two slippers of Ḥunayn 538.
 He was a brave young hero, yet not quite up to the standards of Mālik 326.
 If he were to strike fire with the *nab'*, he would kindle it 411.
 Juwayn stirred together his porridge from another's meal 307.
 Live close to a king or a sea 149.
 More blameworthy than Mādir 295.
 More incompetent than Bāqil 341.
 More liberal than Ka'b ibn Māmāh 467.
 More remorseful than al-Kusa'ī 249.
 The Banū Sa'd ibn Zayd are to be found in every land 204.
 The promises of 'Urqūb 195.
 This is good pasture, but not as good as one full of *sa'dān* 352, 536.
 This is good water, but not as good as that of Šaddā' 352.
 To begin over again, with a clean slate, would be most laudable 459, 511.
 To the true believer, wisdom is a stray sheep 130.
 What is behind you, O 'Išām? 230.
 When dawn comes, people praise their night journey 224, 248, 301.
 You only have to desire a friend and you will be far away from him 292.
 You only have to mention an absentee and you will see him 293.
 Your hearing of the little Ma'addi is better than your seeing him 320.
 Your preoccupations have caused you such distress 267.

8. *Meters*¹

- Basīt* 118, 123, 126 (2 poems), 130-132, 140, 146, 164, 217, 219, 226, 245-247, 254-256, 261, 267, 299, 300, 361, 399 (4 poems), 412, 420, 446, 450, 494, 499-500.
- Ḥafīf* 163, 185, 195, 245, 252, 254, 260, 293, 332, 450, 494, *513*, *523*, *525*, *549*, *551*.
- Kāmil* 238.
- Madīd* 351, *542*.
- Mujtatt* 124, 128, 133, 141, 147, 156-158, 173-174, 212, 232, 289, 308, 337-338, 377, 380, 413, 459, 488, *514*, *546*, *548*.
- Munsariḥ* 171-172, 182, 270, 287, *539*.
- Mutadārik* 479-480, *520*.
- Mutaqārib* 136, 138, 187, 350 (3 poems), 430, 456.
- Rajaz* 129, 150, 162, 166 (2 poems), 179, 200, 204, 210, 368 (2 poems), 495.
- Ramal* 169, 240, 385, 387, 402, 469.
- Sarī* 131, 137, 145, 161, 175, 189, 226, 234, 239, 264, 265 (2 poems), 271, 274, 276, 294, 339, 345, 353, 364-365, 366, 392, 394 (2 poems), 411, 423, 439, 443, 451, *531*.
- Ṭawīl* 188, 255, 304, 464, 465 (2 poems), 466, 467 (2 poems), 468.
- Wāfir* 222, 283, 473, 484, 485 (2 poems), 486, *519*.

¹ The page numbers of those poems included in Appendix 1 (M51-M59) are provided in italics. Unless otherwise indicated, there is one poem per page listed, throughout the work, adding up to a total of 161 poems. In order of frequency, the meters in which they are composed may be broken down as follows: *basīt* 34, *sarī* 31+1, *mujtatt* 24+3, *ḥafīf* 16+5, *rajaz* 12, *ṭawīl* 10, *wāfir* 8+1, *mutaqārib* 8, *munsariḥ* 6+1, *ramal* 6, *mutadārik* 3, *madīd* 2+1, *kāmil* 1.